



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Increase in MRI access important step in renewal of B.C.'s public health system, says HEU

The B.C. government's commitment to add 37,000 more magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) exams over the next 12 months helps with the ongoing renewal of B.C.'s public health care system, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

The announcement was made by health minister Adrian Dix today in Surrey, and follows on last week's announcement to renew B.C.'s surgical strategy by adding capacity to complete 9,400 more surgeries in the public system by the end of March 2019.

Right now, 50 per cent of B.C. patients scheduled for an MRI exam must wait an average of 41 days, while 10 per cent wait more than 199 days. B.C.'s per capita rate for public MRI exams is currently 37 per 1,000 British Columbians – a full third below the national average.

HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside says the announcement today of more investment in MRIs is welcome news for patients, and for the health care workers that deliver the care.

“Timely access to necessary health care services is the right of all British Columbians,” says Whiteside. “Citizens should not be forced to choose between waiting for months for a needed medical service, or paying privately.”

“The previous government's lack of investment in the public provision of services like MRIs needlessly undermined patient care and put B.C. well behind the rest of Canada,” says Whiteside.

“The health minister's announcement of 37,000 more MRI exams – along with other new initiatives like the five new hip and knee replacement centres – puts B.C. firmly on the road to renewal when it comes to building the capacity of our public health care system.”

HEU is B.C.'s largest health union with 49,000 members working in hundreds of occupations in hospitals, care homes, home care agencies, First Nations health centres and other settings.

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