

**MEDIA RELEASE:****Scale up proven public solutions to tackle surgical backlog, says BC Health Coalition****For immediate release****May 13, 2020**

**Vancouver** – As the BC government takes steps to address the growing surgical backlog, the BC Health Coalition urges the government to scale up proven public surgery solutions province-wide and cautions against increased use of for-profit surgical clinics.

As a result of the postponement of thousands of non-urgent surgeries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BC is now facing a large surgical backlog. However, the BC Health Coalition is concerned that the recently announced Surgical Renewal Plan escalates use of for-profit surgical clinic facilities before it puts forward concrete plans to scale up public system improvements that can reduce wait times.

“Ramping up the use of for-profit surgical clinics further entrenches profit-driven health care facilities in BC. And in a time when BC already faces shortage of critical health care practitioners, greater use of for-profit clinics will pull needed health professionals out of the public system, draining our public system of resources as we struggle to recover from the impacts of the pandemic,” warns Edith MacHattie, co-chair of the BC Health Coalition.

Canadian and international evidence shows that public health care is better quality, safer for patients, and more cost-effective.

“The good news is that the government made some bold commitments to public solutions, including expanding public OR (operating room) hours,” said MacHattie. “But BC has the ability to go even further and reduce surgical wait times now and into the future by building upon public innovations that the province has already introduced.”

The BC Health Coalition is calling on government to scale up proven system improvements including:

- Optimize public hospital capacity before contracting out procedures to for-profit clinics;
- Scale up the five hip and knee central intake and team-based rapid access clinics, announced in 2018;
- Increase OR efficiencies like the Richmond Hip and Knee Reconstruction Project by improving the scheduling of surgeries and recovery beds;
- Streamline waitlists by moving them from individual surgeons’ offices to centralized health authority waitlists;
- Improve access to seniors’ home and community care, which can reduce hospital use.

“We know that British Columbians deeply value our public health care system,” said MacHattie. “This is an opportunity to implement proven innovations that will make our public system stronger and more resilient now and into the future.”

Following the release of the province's Surgical Renewal Plan, the BC Health Coalition has launched a campaign calling on the BC government to scale up proven public solutions that will help BC work down the backlog and reduce wait times over the long term.

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