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If only they would have listened to the Doctor: Liberal response to the H1N1 report

Edmonton – It's been more than a year after the unforgettable H1N1 vaccination debacle in Alberta, and the Stelmach administration is only now answering for their complete mismanagement of the H1N1 response.

From the beginning, Official Opposition Leader David Swann pleaded with former Health Minister Ron Liepert and the Premier to offer a clear vaccination plan. Instead what Albertans got was an array of mixed messages, resulting in one of the country's lowest vaccination rates, and among the highest H1N1 death rates.

Today's release of the Health Quality Council of Alberta's (HQCA) report on the H1N1 pandemic supports everything Swann and the Alberta Liberals initially said concerning the H1N1 vaccination program.

Report says...

- *" Continued pandemic planning had not been a priority for either AHW or the previous health authorities during the transition to the new organizational structure of AHS." - HQCA H1N1 Report – p.1*

Swann said...

- *"This government has been warned for the past year that its handling of Alberta Health Services was creating an organizational train wreck. Albertans are now living that train wreck, and they're angry. Yesterday this government said that it had only days to get ready for the pandemic vaccine, yet national news stories since September 16 were telling the country that vaccines would be out in the third week of October. To the Premier: what is he doing to hold this minister of health accountable for this mess in the health care system today?" - Alberta Hansard – p.1570 Oct 27, 2009*

Report says...

- *" There were many lessons learned from the pandemic response. Perhaps the greatest learning was that future pandemic responses must implement plans to ensure the maximum number of people at greatest risk are immunized as a top priority." - HQCA Report – p.5*

Swann said...

- " to the Premier: when the immunization clinics open later this week, will the Premier ensure that these clinics have the capacity to not keep the most vulnerable people waiting for four hours for their injection? Will you guarantee that?" - Alberta Hansard – p.1658 Nov 2, 2009

Report says...

- "Over approximately the last two decades cost reductions in health care have resulted in lean staffing levels with limited resilience to take on significant additional capacity. At the time of the pandemic, AHS had implemented a vacancy management program that limited hiring new staff."
- HQCA Report – p.51

Swann said...

- " This spring I made several suggestions to the Premier prior to H1N1 arriving. To the Premier: how will the Premier demonstrate that there are enough doctors and nurses for this outbreak, as I suggested?" - Alberta Hansard – p.1634 Oct 29, 2009

The proof is ultimately in the pudding.

Swann and the Alberta Liberals were heckled as fear mongers for pointing out flaws with the rollout. A look back at what was said and what transpired shows the fear only came from a lack of government leadership.

"Hindsight may be 20/20 for this government, but everyone else could clearly see what was going on during the H1N1 pandemic," says Swann. "The long line ups, the deaths, the confusion. All of that could have been avoided with better leadership from the government."

Swann says it's time for the Stelmach administration to hit the road.

"We took them to task on H1N1 day in and day out for at least two weeks. But it's the overall system that is flawed. Our website, "LiepertMustGo.com," received more than 1000 stories detailing the shortcomings of the Alberta health system," says Swann. " Liepert isn't the only one who needs to go as far as I'm concerned. Stelmach and his bloated cabinet must be sent packing."

The Alberta Liberal Caucus...There's a better way.

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For more information contact:
Alberta Liberal Caucus Communications
1-866-633-4214