

All Woodlands victims deserve restitution: Dix

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02 August 2011 01:05

Unjust and unfair.

That's what NDP Leader Adrian Dix calls a government decision to deny hundreds of former Woodlands School patients compensation because of a legal loophole.

The infamous New Westminister mental institution has a long history of abuse and indignity to its patients, yet the government is standing by a court decision that only allows patients who attended the facility after Aug. 1, 1974 — the year legislation was enacted allowing the government to be sued — to claim restitution.

That means more than 300 people still alive cannot claim a compensation package by the Sept. 19 deadline despite the fact they suffered in the government-run institution, said Dix as he called on Premier Christy Clark to reverse the decision yesterday.

"People who know the history of Woodlands will tell you the most serious of abuses took place before 1974," said Dix. "The government is using a legal technicality to divide Woodlands survivors into two groups: One that gets compensation and one that doesn't. It's morally and politically wrong."

If the decision isn't reversed immediately, Dix plans to introduce a motion in the Legislature in September and have MLAs vote on the issue.

"What I saw here, nobody should ever have to go through," said former patient Bill McArthur. "I witnessed children being thrown in straight jackets, given drugs to knock them out, get thrown in isolation. I've seen kids beaten, dragged by their hair down a staircase. I myself have been sexually abused."



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NDP leader Adrian Dix speaks with Woodlands School survivor Bill McArthur about his experience at the infamous government-run mental institution.

Metro Vancouver