



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Health care workers, seniors broad-sided by long-term care bed closures on Vancouver Island

HEU members are reeling from a surprise announcement by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) that more than 250 regular care staff will lose their jobs over the summer with the planned closure of hundreds of long-term care beds.

The unexpected news that the island will lose 350 public, residential care beds and put skilled, experienced workers on the street, can only cause further turmoil in a sector already stressed by inadequate funding, contract-flipping and a skilled labour shortage, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

"Given the ongoing turmoil in seniors' care, this news creates more chaos for seniors, their families and workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Disruptions are extremely difficult for residents to deal with. They rely on the care and support provided by dedicated, familiar staff," she says. "But the way VIHA has handled this restructuring will cause a serious break in continuity of care for these seniors while further demoralizing staff."

HEU members affected include care aides, LPNs, activity aides, rehab assistants, unit clerks, housekeeping, laundry, and food service workers.

The union will be meeting with VIHA on Monday to press the health authority to retain jobs for skilled and experienced workers and ensure appropriate relocation plans are put in place for seniors.

In addition to the full closure of Cowichan Lodge in Duncan, beds will be closed at Cairnsmore Place (Duncan), Dufferin Place (Nanaimo), Trillium Lodge (Parksville), as well as at The Priory, Aberdeen-Lansdowne, Glengarry and Gorge Road in Victoria.

The closure of the public beds is part of the government's privatization plan for seniors' care. The vast majority of new beds opening on the island will be owned and operated by private, for-profit companies.

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