



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Liberal candidate uses false facts to cover up impact of care home privatization in election ad

BURNABY – False claims by a BC Liberal candidate that the replacement of two public care homes in Sechelt by a privately operated facility won't impact wages of health care workers are irresponsible, says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

Shorncliffe Care Centre and Totem Lodge will be closed by Vancouver Coastal Health in 2018 and replaced by a private facility, operated by Trellis Seniors Services Ltd.

In an April 28 election ad, Powell River-Sunshine Coast Liberal candidate Mathew Wilson says: "Workers should not be worried. Wage rates will be the same as they are for Shorncliffe and Totem Lodge. Any other information being circulated is untrue."

But in a November 2016 fact sheet issued by Trellis to Shorncliffe Care Centre and Totem Lodge staff, the company revealed that care aides will see wage cuts of approximately \$5 an hour, along with an inferior benefits package.

Care aides currently earn \$23.48 an hour at the two publicly run facilities. According to Trellis' fact sheet, those same care aides will earn between \$18-\$19 an hour – that's if they're rehired by the company.

Whiteside says Mr. Wilson should stop spreading false information about the impact of privatization on the community of Sechelt.

"There's a lot of anger, uncertainty and frustration about what will happen to seniors, their caregivers and this community when the two facilities close and workers are fired," says Whiteside.

"It's irresponsible for Mr. Wilson to spread false facts to bolster his election bid.

"For more than 15 years, the BC Liberals have pushed ahead with extensive contracting out and privatization in the province's residential care system," says Whiteside. "In fact, the lion's share of public funding for new residential care beds is in the for-profit sector, where wages are typically 15 to 20 per cent lower than the public sector.

"Lower wages may produce profits for Trellis and other private care home operators, but it invariably leads to greater staff turnover and an overall reduction in the quality of care," says Whiteside. "Mr. Wilson supports the BC Liberals' privatization agenda but seems unwilling to own up to its consequences for seniors and health care workers."

HEU represents 46,000 health care workers across B.C., including about 20,000 working directly with seniors in residential care and other care settings.

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