



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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HEU calls for urgent action on staffing crisis in B.C. seniors' care homes

On the heels of a new report showing that 85 per cent of B.C.'s residential care facilities are not funded to meet government's own minimum staffing guidelines, the 49,000-member Hospital Employees' Union is calling for urgent action to improve the situation.

Today, B.C.'s Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie released her third annual *Residential Care Facilities Quick Facts Directory*, which again shows the vast majority of the province's seniors' care homes are understaffed.

"When there are not enough staff on shift to do their jobs to the highest possible standard, seniors and those who provide their care are put at risk," says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

"Staff simply cannot provide the level and quality of care needed to keep themselves and their residents safe."

She says when care aides are literally rushed off their feet there's not enough time to provide seniors with regular baths or timely toileting, answer call bells, make sure residents are well hydrated, and little or no time to comfort residents who may be distressed, confused, or afraid.

"Certainly, this is not the kind of care any one of us would want for ourselves or for our loved ones," says Whiteside.

The situation has improved marginally since last year when the seniors' advocate reported that nearly 91 per cent of care homes were not funded adequately.

"We clearly need to fast-track plans to improve staffing levels," says Whiteside.

"At this pace, it will take at least another six years before 50 per cent of care homes receive enough funding to meet minimum guidelines. We must do better."

All three parties in the legislature are on record supporting the need for higher staffing levels in residential care.

The former government announced a four-year, \$500 million plan to add more staff before the last election. And improved staffing levels are a key commitment contained in the NDP-Green Confidence and Supply Agreement.

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In advance of February's budget, Whiteside is calling for an immediate investment in the funding needed to bring all facilities up to the current minimum of 3.36 hours per resident per day, along with strict accountability measures to ensure those funds reach the front line and are not diverted to profits or administration.

And she stresses that beyond an immediate injection of funds, staffing levels need to be legislated and enforced.

“Clearly, guidelines are not enough.”

The 49,000-member Hospital Employees' Union, represents about 20,000 residential care staff working in facilities across the province.

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