



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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450 care aides terminated in largest mass firing of health care workers since B.C. Liberals' first term in office

Campbell Liberals' labour policies are wreaking havoc in seniors' care, says HEU

Four hundred and fifty care aides who provide personal care for seniors at three taxpayer-funded facilities in the Lower Mainland have been handed termination notices in the largest mass firing in health care since the Campbell government's first term in office.

It's a move that will disrupt care for hundreds of seniors and result in economic hardship for a workforce that is almost entirely female, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

The layoff notices were handed out late yesterday by Simpe Q Care Inc. after it abandoned its commercial contracts with long-term care operators in North Vancouver, Vancouver and Coquitlam.

The HEU, which represents the workers, applied to the Labour Relations Board on Monday for mediation to assist in reaching a first collective agreement with the company.

Earlier this month, 168 front-line care staff were fired at Nanaimo Seniors Village by another sub-contractor just weeks after a first collective agreement was signed. It was the third time workers at that facility had been fired in three years.

HEU's assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic says government labour laws giving special treatment to companies in taxpayer-supported care facilities have created a near-constant state of chaos in seniors' care as contracts are flipped to bust union contracts and keep wages low.

"The Campbell government has handed these for-profit companies license to make a quick buck off publicly-supported seniors' care," says Bosancic. "But it's seniors and their caregivers who will pay the highest price. The close personal bonds that are critical to good care will be sacrificed."

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Simpe Q is one of many sub-contractors that have sprung up in the wake of *Bill 29*, the B.C. Liberals' 2002 law that excluded health care workers from key B.C. Labour Code protections and removed contracting out protections from health care collective agreements.

Those laws do not apply in any other sector of the economy.

In 2003, the B.C. Liberals passed *Bill 94*, a law that further expanded these exemptions.

The termination notices issued by Simpe Q take effect on September 30. The care aides work at North Vancouver's Inglewood Care Centre, Vancouver's Windermere Care Centre and Coquitlam's Dufferin Care Centre.

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