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B.C. Federation of Labour calls for moratorium on further privatization in Interior Health Authority Pink slips at Kamloops long-term care facility show need for independent audit of long-term care services for Interior seniors

Kamloops—Interior residents deserve a moratorium on further privatization in Interior Health Authority (IHA) until there is an independent audit of long-term care services for Interior seniors, said B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair.

Workers at Pine Grove Centre, a publicly-funded, long-term care facility in Kamloops, operated by Park Place Seniors Living, have been issued pink slips ending their jobs this August. Services have now been contracted out to Simpe Q, a private company that despite a shortage of health care workers in the IHA, plans to lower wages and benefits.

"Lower wages and fewer benefits in the face of a regional shortage of health care workers is going to undermine quality care for Kamloops' seniors," said Sinclair. "This privatization scheme should be put on hold pending an independent audit of long-term care services in the IHA."

Fred Muzin, President of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU), pointed to the troubled history the IHA has had in providing care for Interior seniors. "Lower wages will result in a recruitment and retention crisis at Pine Grove and that will negatively affect the quality of care for local seniors. It's time for the IHA to put seniors' care before private profits."

"Nurses are working hard to improve support needed to provide safe patient care, including sufficient numbers of registered nurses to meet the complex care needs of these residents" said Debra McPherson, President of the BC Nurses Union. "Privatizing our jobs is a step backward for nurses and the seniors we care for. "

"There's been no evidence to suggest privatization will improve patient care or save taxpayer dollars," said Sinclair. "It's time the IHA, the provincial government and Park Place come clean. They should release their business plan and the contract with Simpe Q to the public."

Sinclair, Muzin and McPherson were in Kamloops along with other labour leaders attending a meeting of the B.C. Federation of Labour's Executive Officers.

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