



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Health minister urged to investigate impact of mass firings on seniors' care

Another round of pink slips brings the number of care staff laid off in less than a month to more than 650

The Hospital Employees' Union is calling on B.C.'s health minister to investigate a recent flood of termination notices – issued to staff at several publicly-funded long-term care homes – to determine the impact on seniors' care.

The call comes as 41 care aides at West Vancouver Care Centre employed by a sub-contractor, CareSource, received their layoff notices. This brings the number of staff fired over the last three weeks to more than 650 as commercial contracts for care services are flipped by facility operators.

The union is urging Health Minister George Abbott to use his existing powers under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* to launch an investigation to determine how constant staff turnover will affect the quality and continuity of care for seniors living in these facilities.

HEU is also calling for a moratorium on termination notices and further contract-flipping pending the outcome of the investigation.

“The health minister can no longer claim that the endless flipping of contracts in long-term care is simply a labour relations matter,” says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

“In fact, it's a massive disruption in the continuity of care for thousands of seniors caused by government policies that openly encourage sub-contracting and de-unionization in the sector.”

In particular, the union points to *Bill 29*, the 2002 legislation that removed contracting-out protections for health care workers and allowed health employers to sidestep key provisions of the *B.C. Labour Code* that apply in every other sector of the economy.

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Bill 94, a companion law passed by the B.C. Liberal government in 2003, extended these special exemptions to sub-contractors operating in the sector.

In addition to layoffs at West Vancouver Care Centre last Friday, 450 care aides and licensed practical nurses received pink slips last week at West Vancouver's Inglewood Care Centre, Coquitlam's Dufferin Care Centre and Vancouver's Windermere Care Centre.

In early May, 168 staff were laid off at Nanaimo Seniors Village.

"Seniors and their families deserve the stability that comes with a consistent and caring environment," says Darcy. "And their caregivers deserve a secure workplace along with the right to free collective bargaining."

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*Contact: Patty Gibson, HEU communications officer
604-328-7393 (cell) or 604-456-7007 (direct)*