

Surrey North Delta Leader

Staffing changes at care homes riles nurses' union

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Byline: Sheila Reynolds

Registered nurses are being laid off at long-term care facilities throughout the Fraser Health region, but while the B.C. Nurses' Union (BCNU) says patient care will suffer, the health authority argues the changes will actually result in patients receiving more care.

The BCNU held a press conference in Surrey on Wednesday to raise concerns about the reduction of RNs in nursing homes.

"With seniors needing the skills and knowledge of registered nurses more than ever, it's a disgrace that Fraser Health is eliminating RNs from their residential care facilities," said BCNU president Debra McPherson.

However, Fraser Health says while 68 RNs are indeed being laid off, 85 new Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) positions and 33 care aide positions are being created across the 17 facilities operated by the authority.

Heather Cook, executive director for residential care and assisted living for Fraser Health, said \$12 million is being invested in the care plan this year, with another \$8 million pegged for next year.

The current standard of care in long-term facilities is about 2.44 hours of care per patient per day. Cook said Fraser Health, through "adjusting the staff skill mix," aims to increase that to 2.79 hours by the end of the month, while working toward its ultimate goal of 3.36 hours of care per day.

The BCNU argues the reduction of RNs leaves patients with just 40 minutes a day of care by professionals. Because they aren't licensed, LPNs aren't considered professionals.

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