



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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New seniors' advocate role will be limited by lack of independence from government

[Burnaby, B.C.] Legislation introduced by the B.C. Liberal government this afternoon will limit the independence of a proposed new seniors' advocate, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

Bill 10, the *Seniors' Advocate Act*, contemplates a seniors' advocate that is part of government rather than independent of government like the B.C. Ombudsperson, or the Representative for Children and Youth.

Both those positions are independent of government and report to the B.C. Legislative Assembly directly.

Under Bill 10, the Seniors' Advocate would be appointed by cabinet rather than by the legislature.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson credits the government with finally taking action to establish a seniors' advocate but expressed concern that the position is not been given the same independent status as the children and youth representative or the ombudsperson.

"During community and stakeholder consultations last year, the overwhelming consensus was that a new seniors' advocate must be independent of government," says Pearson.

"The legislation provides a new seniors' advocate with the ability to investigate and report on a wide range of systemic issues, but ultimately will serve at the pleasure of cabinet which is problematic.

"We can do better for B.C. seniors."

HEU's membership includes about 20,000 health care staff that work in residential care facilities and provide for the daily care needs of seniors.

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