



Provincial Health Officer issues new order limiting long-term care, assisted living workers to single site

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced at her daily briefing Thursday that a new emergency order under the Public Health Act restricting workers in long-term care, assisted living and provincial mental health facilities to working in a single site.

The Order will be implemented on a regional basis, but the union does not expect this to take place over the long weekend.

An additional Order under the Emergency Programs Act will provide for equitable wages and scheduling stability without financial hardship for workers as they move to a single work site.

At her Thursday briefing, Dr. Henry acknowledged that workers in the sector are “continuing to respond courageously to the monumental challenge that we’re facing and to do their very best...to protect our elders and seniors in long-term care and assisted living.”

Hospital Employees’ Union secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside says measures have been put in place to ensure that care homes and vulnerable seniors aren’t left short-staffed as a result of limiting workers to just one of the sites at which they currently work.

“In a sector where many operators provide wages below the provincial standard, many workers must hold two or more jobs make ends meet. This new order will assign workers to one of those sites only, but will be accompanied by measures that will level up wage rates at all sites to the provincial standard as the move to single site staffing takes place.

“A number of factors, including continuity of care for residents and safe staffing levels, will be considered as decisions are made about the single site workers will be assigned to during the pandemic emergency.

“Many HEU members also indicated their site preference in an online Provincial Health Office survey late last month. Those preferences will also be considered in these decisions.”

Dr. Henry’s Order does not restrict long-term care and assisted living workers from also working outside the sector in a hospital, community health or community social services or in another sector.

Whiteside says she hopes the new orders will help bring more clarity to a process that has been at times confusing for front-line workers.

The orders have not yet been published, but will be posted along with other information about the transition details when they become available..

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