



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

BACKGROUND

Budget 2008: The real sustainability crisis facing health care is the shortage of skilled health care workers

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN to entrench sustainability in provincial medicare legislation is based on its claim that current health spending is out of control. But provincial health expenditures have been stable compared to the overall economy, and B.C.'s per capita support to health care has fallen in comparison to other Canadian provinces.

B.C. health spending facts *(all figures from Canadian Institute for Health Information):*

- Since 2001, the B.C. government has **fallen from second to sixth place** among the provinces in its per capita support for health care. In 2007, the B.C. government's **support for health care is forecast to have increased less than any other province.**
- **B.C.'s spending on health care has remained relatively stable** as a proportion of the provincial economy over the last 16 years – about seven per cent of GDP.
- Private health spending on a per capita basis in B.C. has outstripped provincial per capita spending on health care since 2000 (54 per cent vs. 39 per cent).

Future shortages of workers the real threat to health care sustainability

Last week's throne speech included plans to expand job duties for existing health professionals but **no details on how to better coordinate the training and recruitment of new workers.**

Without more workers, expanded duties will just mean more overtime for already overburdened staff. It's a serious problem that puts health care delivery at risk.

- Vancouver Coastal Health predicts major shortages by 2015 including a 25 per cent shortfall for job categories represented by HEU in hospitals and long-term care facilities; and a 16 per cent shortfall for positions in community health.
- That includes a seven per cent shortfall for care aides; five per cent shortfall for community health workers; 16 per cent shortfall for licensed practical nurses; and a 20 per cent shortfall in unit clerks.
- Budget 2008 indicates funding for 900 training spaces for health care professionals **but** the shortfall in Vancouver Coastal Health alone will total more than 1,000 positions right now.

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