



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Health minister must assure seniors that health authorities won't raise drug costs in care homes

VIHA exec considers hiking drug charges at publicly run long-term care homes in response to higher costs at private facilities

B.C.'s Health Minister George Abbott should take immediate steps to stop health authorities from raising drug costs for residents of long-term care homes, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

The chief operating officer of the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Mike Conroy told the *Globe and Mail* that his organization would be reviewing drug costs in publicly run long-term care homes to determine whether their residents should pay more for prescriptions and vitamins.

VIHA's move was in response to reports that a newly opened private facility in Duncan is charging residents \$200 to \$400 more each month for medications than at Cowichan Lodge, a public care facility in that community that is in the process of being shut down.

Many of the residents of the privately operated, but publicly funded Sunridge Place were transferred from Cowichan Lodge, which is closing next year despite widespread protests from residents, their families and residents of the Duncan area.

HEU's secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says it is an outrage that excessive drug costs in private facilities would be used to justify charging seniors more because they live in public, non-profit care homes.

"Minister Abbott needs to send a clear signal to health authorities that higher drug charges for seniors will not be tolerated by his government," says Darcy.

"Instead of penalizing residents of public facilities, the minister should take steps to investigate the extra-charging of seniors for everything from drugs to incontinence items that is taking place at the growing number of private facilities funded by his government."

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