



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## HEU acts to protect jobs and services in response to VIHA's planned bed closures

### *Locals rally support for seniors care in Island communities*

In the wake of VIHA's June 20 surprise announcement that it plans to close about 350 long-term care beds across the Island – including the total closure of Duncan's Cowichan Lodge – the union has been meeting with the health authority to determine the impact on HEU members and seniors, and to explore all potential alternatives.

The union is pressing the health authority to consider all options needed to retain the more than 250 skilled and experienced health care workers who are facing lay-offs as a result of the planned closures, and is demanding VIHA develop a comprehensive plan aimed at keeping workers in the residential care system.

The union is also exploring whether legal avenues exist to challenge the planned closures.

In the meantime, HEU's regional office on Vancouver Island has been in touch with all local unions affected by the bed closures and has ensured HEU local representatives will be involved in any discussions with the health authority that affect local members.

Earlier this week, HEU put out a public call for VIHA to reverse its decision, in light of the fact that B.C. has the lowest number of residential care beds in the country. The latest numbers from Stats Canada (2005-2006) show there are only 36.5 beds for every thousand seniors in B.C., compared to a national average of 47.1.

HEU locals have also been working with seniors, families and other community advocates who are alarmed at the pending bed closures. In Port Alberni, a June 24 Town Hall meeting drew about 800 community members who expressed their outrage at VIHA's refusal to properly fund badly needed beds for residents in their community.

In Duncan, about 200 family members, community advocates and health care workers turned out for an organizing meeting to plan future actions to protect services for seniors. A Town Hall meeting, hosted by MLA Doug Routley is set for June 28.

June 27, 2008

