



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Health authority cuts will impact patient care, says HEU

Union calls on government to expand public innovations proven to reduce costs and enhance health care services

The B.C. health minister's hard line on balanced budgets means British Columbians will lose critical services at a time when they need them most, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

Health authorities today announced plans that include service and program cuts designed to rein in budget shortfalls of more than \$360 million. The union says that some of the reductions will directly impact access to diagnostic and treatment services as well as placement for seniors needing long-term care.

"It's clear that economic pressures present challenges," says HEU assistant secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson. "But cuts now will hurt patients, residents and clients at a time when they rely on them the most, and are likely to increase costs in the future.

"Strategic investments in health care, like comprehensive home support programs, public primary care clinics and coordinated human resources planning have immediate benefits and would save money in the long run," Pearson says.

Initiatives such as Richmond Hospital's Hip and Knee Reconstruction Project, the Fraser Health Authority's early intervention program for youth with psychosis, and the realignment of primary care and home and community care as in the Northern Health Authority, have all increased access and treatment, reduced wait lists and saved money.

"Our members work in every area of health care – hospitals, seniors' care and in the community," Pearson says. "They see first-hand the human and financial costs when people are left without the care and support they need, especially in times of economic hardship."

B.C.'s health spending has fallen from second to seventh place among Canadian provinces since 2001.

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