



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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BC Liberals closed more long-term care beds than they opened – report

The B.C. Liberal government failed to live up to its promise to build 5,000 new, non-profit long-term care beds, according to a new study released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

Despite the fact that the government claimed to have met its target last year (two years later than they had originally promised), health authorities' numbers obtained by CCPA show that B.C. actually lost more than 800 long-term residential care beds between 2001 and 2008.

As a result, B.C. now has the second worst access to residential care in the country, after New Brunswick.

And the number of individuals who die in residential care increased 60 per cent between 2001 and 2006. That's because access to limited beds is often restricted to those in very poor health and with more complex care needs.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says HEU members who work with seniors won't be surprised by the numbers.

"The BC Liberals' cuts to long-term care are having a direct impact on the ability of our members to deliver good care," says Darcy.

"A lack of beds means that residents are more frail and their needs are more complex than ever – but staffing levels haven't kept up.

"The long-term care bed shortage also puts additional pressure on our hospitals where seniors often find themselves in a holding pattern, waiting for placement in a more appropriate care setting."

The CCPA study, *An Uncertain Future for Seniors: B.C.'s Restructuring of Home and Community Health Care 2001-2008*, points out that the BC Liberals padded the numbers on their promise to provide 5,000 long-term care spaces by including assisted living units, supportive housing and a number of other forms of housing that involve little or no care.

"It's important to set the record straight on bed numbers, but the government's failure to deliver on its 5,000-bed promise is just a symptom of deeper problems," says Marcy Cohen, study co-author, CCPA research associate, and research director at the Hospital Employees' Union.

You can find the study – which includes a regional breakdown of the impact of bed cuts – at http://www.policyalternatives.ca/news/2009/04/uncertain_future/.

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