



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Province prepares to pull the plug on common standards in seniors' care

Government says it will let a number of independently operated care facilities abandon province-wide labour agreement on wages and working conditions in the future even though they receive public funds

The provincial government is preparing to let publicly funded, but independently operated, care homes opt out of a provincially negotiated collective agreement that sets out a common standard for wages and working conditions for nearly 40,000 health care workers.

The Hospital Employees' Union says the private nursing home operators who've been pushing for the change are looking to increase profits by squeezing wages and benefits and undermining working conditions.

The resulting increase in staff turnover, says the union, would seriously disrupt continuity of care for seniors in a sector that's already been rocked by under-funding and privatization.

"Seniors who need residential care, and their families, have every right to expect that if a facility receives public dollars that they will provide a similar standard of care," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"If government gives in to private operators, one set of negotiations in the sector would be replaced by two dozen or more – a tremendous waste of resources that will contribute to further instability in the sector and to a patchwork of collective bargaining arrangements.

"It would also weaken government's ability to work with unions on implementing progressive health care policies through the collective bargaining process."

The Health Employers Association of B.C. – the legislated bargaining agent for funded health care facilities – informed health unions last week that the province intends to make regulatory changes that would allow contracted care facilities to eventually opt out of HEABC membership and province-wide agreements.

If the plan proceeds and some independent operators are successful in withdrawing from HEABC, union members employed at these sites would continue to be covered by the terms of the current collective agreement until it expires and new terms and conditions are negotiated.

The plan would not affect the vast majority of HEU members in the Facilities Subsector because they are employed directly by health authorities.

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