

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

B.C. government breaks promise to build more residential care beds in Interior

New numbers released today by the BC Health Coalition show that there are fewer residential care beds in the Interior Health Authority (IHA) than when the BC Liberals were elected in 2001. The overall number of residential care beds in the IHA has decreased by over 350 since 2001.*

In 2001, the BC Liberals promised to “work with non-profit societies to build and operate an additional 5,000 new intermediate and long-term care beds by 2006.” Instead, the government has failed to increase overall bed numbers. Any new beds built are almost exclusively in the for-profit sector with contracts awarded to companies like Retirement Concepts instead of not-for-profit societies.

The recently published IHA Service Plan** notes that the IHA continues to have one of the lowest bed rates in its residential care and assisted living facilities. The report also notes that lack of capital funding will mean that capital improvements will be delayed, resulting in further facility deterioration.

“The province must invest in not-for-profit residential care beds in the interior, and ensure that people are able to continue to live with dignity in their own communities,” says Joyce Jones, co-chair of the BC Health Coalition. “Increasing the number of residential care beds will also help to take the pressure off acute care services.”

“Our community is still suffering because of cuts to residential care beds, and the transfer of residential care contracts to for-profit operators,” says Gary Lancaster, a Cranbrook health care activist.

“The B.C. government must respond to health authorities and live up to its promise to provide adequate funding for residential care,” adds Jones.

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* *Bed number statistics are posted on the BC Health Coalition website at: www.bchealthcoalition.ca*

***IHA Service Plan available at: <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/Information/Health+Service+Planning/>*

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