



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Whistleblower protection good for B.C. patients and seniors

B.C.'s largest health care union says that patients and seniors would benefit from comprehensive whistleblower legislation that protects health care workers from employer reprisals when they expose harmful or illegal practices.

The *Whistleblower Protection Act* – a private members' bill introduced in the B.C. legislature today by Vancouver-Hastings MLA Shane Simpson – would extend these protections to both workers employed directly by health authorities and their affiliates – and to those employed by for-profit sub-contractors or contracted community social services agencies.

Hospital Employees' Union secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says that many of the union's 43,000 members feel that their jobs are on-the-line if they speak up about the problems they witness on the front lines of health care and community social services.

"All too often, these workers are subjected to intimidation by their employers and pressured not to speak out about situations that put patients, residents and clients at risk," says Darcy.

"Comprehensive whistleblower legislation will signal to all health care workers – including those that work for private corporations – that they can safely and in confidence disclose practices that are dangerous, wasteful or illegal.

"How much sooner would government have acted on reports of abuse, neglect and low care standards at places like Beacon Hill Villa in Victoria if the privately-employed workers had the protection of whistleblower legislation?"

Darcy adds that with at least \$750 million worth of hospital cleaning, dietary, laundry and security services contracted out over the last five years, it's more critical than ever to safeguard employees who blow the whistle on corporate practices that cut corners to boost profits at the expense of patient care.

While it's unlikely that the private members' bill will be passed, Darcy says comprehensive whistleblower legislation would improve care and should be supported by all parties in the legislature.

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