



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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No plan for health care in B.C. budget

[Victoria] The B.C. Liberal government's refusal to make long-term investments to support health care in the province's growing communities undermines innovation and spells more uncertainty in the year ahead, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

The union estimates that including new funding in the 2007 provincial budget, B.C.'s health authorities have had average funding increases of about 3.75 per cent since 2001, well short of what's required to address population growth and inflationary pressures.

"And by refusing to let B.C.'s health authorities plan more than one year at a time, the finance minister has all but guaranteed another year of instability and frustration for patients and health care workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"How can we put in place solutions to reduce surgical waits, relieve pressure on ERs and deal with a shortage of health care providers when government refuses to plan for the future?"

"Instead, they continue to make doomsday predictions about health spending and promise 'fundamental' and controversial changes to health care – without telling us what they are."

Darcy says that the \$100 million Innovation Fund could provide an opportunity to put in place evidence-based public solutions to deal with challenges in health care.

"But it will be a lost opportunity if this fund is used to bankroll a series of unproven and costly privatization schemes, or pay for band-aid solutions.

"My advice to British Columbians is to hang on to your tax cuts because you'll need them to pay for user fees and more private health care."

B.C. health facts:

- B.C. government per capita spending on health care has slipped from second to sixth place since 2001, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information.
- B.C. government health spending has remained relatively stable as a proportion of the provincial economy over the last 15 years – about seven cents on the dollar.
- But private spending on health care in B.C. – by individuals and employers – has risen by 50 per cent since 2001.

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