



Newsletter

Campbell Liberals make deep cuts to seniors care, hospital beds — report

BC'S LIBERAL GOVERNMENT not only failed in its promise to create 5,000 long-term care beds, but a new report shows its funding cuts have resulted in fewer services that are costing taxpayers and seniors more money.

While the BC Liberals boast of improved home health services for seniors and decreased wait times for care beds, Continuing Care Renewal or Retreat?, a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, uses government statistics to show how the Liberals have offloaded financial responsibility to individuals and their families.

According to the study, cuts to continuing care were made at the same time acute care beds were closed; “by 2001, BC already had the leanest in-patient hospital care system in Canada; and from March 2002 to March 2004, an additional 1,279 hospital beds were closed – a 19 percent reduction in capacity when population increases in BC over the same time period are taken into account.”

Since 2001, 70 hospitals have been downgraded, downsized and closed under the Campbell Liberals.

“The shortage of services is forcing seniors and their families to pay for care privately or provide care themselves,” says Joyce Jones of the BC Seniors’ Network. “Those who can’t afford to pay or who don’t have families to support them often simply go without until they are admitted to a hospital emergency ward in crisis.”

Many are concerned, and some health authorities have admitted that the supply and demand crisis in long-term care has burdened overflowing emergency units, doctors’ offices, and the more expensive acute care units.

In the Capital Regional District alone the costs to house seniors in acute care are running between \$2 and \$4 million per year.

Still, the Campbell Liberals claim they have created 171 new long-term care beds, but the study shows BC has lost a total of 2,529 beds in the last four years.

“As far as we can tell, they are counting replacement and refurbished beds as new beds, as well as seniors’ housing where care is not provided,” says one of the report’s authors Marcy Cohen. “It’s astounding that the government is cutting funding and reducing beds while the population is getting older and relying on these services.”

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The CCPA report is calling for an external review to develop the planning required to rebuild a non-profit care infrastructure that can take the pressure off the acute care system and meet the population's real needs.

"There's been a serious downward spiral under this government," says Cohen, a CCPA research associate and HEU research and policy planner. "The end result is that it's costing everybody more money for less service, and it has undermined confidence in the public health system.

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