



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Access to quality health care and affordability for families keeps B.C. on track

Today's provincial budget supports a multi-year plan for higher staffing levels in seniors care, faster access to primary care and diagnostic testing and major investments in health care infrastructure, says the 50,000-member Hospital Employees' Union.

“British Columbians are benefiting from this government's ongoing investments in health care, including \$6.4 billion over three years for expanding and upgrading hospitals,” says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

“Whether it’s quicker access to primary care, a renovation of their local hospital, or reduced wait times for MRIs, these investments in health care are making a real difference in people’s lives.

“Nursing home residents are getting more help – a million more hours of care last year – as part of a three-year plan that will see improve staffing and reduce workload-related injuries for our members,” says Whiteside.

The union says more needs to be done to repair the damage done to seniors care by the previous government. Just last week, B.C.'s seniors' advocate reported that for-profit operators delivered 207,000 hours of care less per year than they were funded to provide.

“We need more accountability for the \$1.4 billion provided to contracted care home operators each year,” says Whiteside. “And we can do more to stabilize the sector.”

HEU has been calling on government to develop a capital plan to expand the number care homes operated by health authorities and non-profits, and for a return to standardized wages to address a serious staff recruitment and retention crisis.

The union is also concerned that health authorities will struggle to deliver health care services with modest budget lifts that may fall short of what's required to keep up with inflation and a growing and aging population over the three-year fiscal plan.

But the union says government initiatives that make life more affordable for families – eliminating MSP premiums, controlling housing costs and building new units, and investing in childcare, will have important downstream impacts on health outcomes.

“The elimination of MSP premiums, along with a new tax bracket for the highest one per cent of income earners introduces more fairness in our tax system,” says Whiteside.

HEU is B.C.'s largest health union with more than 50,000 members working in hospitals, care homes, community agencies, First Nations health centres and other settings.