



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Burnaby care home lays off 50 care staff

Move undermines efforts to address staffing crisis in long-term care, says HEU

As the province moves to address the shortage of care staff in B.C.'s nursing homes, a Burnaby care facility is firing its workforce today, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

Finnish Manor is contracting out nearly 50 care aides and other staff in order to slash wages and benefits. Virtually none of the existing staff will continue working at the site.

HEU, which represents the workers, says the move disrupts continuity of care for the residents who rely on familiar, trusted staff to provide for all their personal care.

And it sends the wrong message to anyone considering a career in seniors' care, says HEU's secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

"Secure employment and decent working conditions are the bedrock of safe, quality care for our seniors," says Whiteside. "This is a step backwards.

"And it's why our new provincial government must reverse the ongoing practice of contracting out in residential care established by the former BC Liberal government."

B.C.'s Seniors Advocate recently reported that 85 per cent of B.C. care homes are not funded to meet minimum staffing guidelines, and the provincial government has started to release additional funding to begin to address the crisis.

Ironically, B.C.'s private care home lobby group has launched a campaign to recruit more care staff promising "excellent starting wages" and secure employment.

While the sub-contractors haven't disclosed the wages they'll pay at Finnish Manor when the current workforce is replaced Monday, the union expects the hourly rate for care aides to drop by up to five dollars an hour, with minimal benefits and no pension.

"If the BC Care Providers Association is serious about solving the recruitment and retention crisis, they should walk the walk and work harder with their members to establish decent working and caring conditions in the sector," says Whiteside.

The Jubilee Multi Generational Housing Society, operators of Finnish Manor, are slashing labour costs to finance the site's redevelopment. Its board includes prominent members of the BCCPA who also operate some of the largest care home chains in B.C.

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