



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 19, 2013

BC Liberals balance election budget by cutting planned health spending; MSP revenues to outpace corporate tax revenues by 2015

[VICTORIA, B.C.] The B.C Liberals will balance their pre-election budget by making significant cuts to planned spending on front-line health care services and increasing MSP premiums, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

That means health authorities will fail to meet targets for direct care hours in seniors in care facilities, despite recommendations by B.C.'s ombudsperson that government take action to address inadequate staffing levels.

Planned health spending announced last year for the fiscal year 2013-2014 has been reduced by \$234 million in today's budget.

The budget documents forecast that health authorities and societies will spend \$90 million less on front-line health care services than forecast in last year's plan.

At the same time, a four per cent increase to MSP premiums next January means B.C. families are on the hook for more than \$2.39 billion by 2015-2016. MSP revenues will then outstrip corporate taxes despite the modest increase announced today.

"This budget represents another huge hit to B.C. families and will make it even more difficult for our members to deliver quality services to the public," says HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson.

B.C. lags behind the rest of the country in terms of its per capita investment in the health care needs of its citizens. Since taking office in 2001, the B.C. Liberals have taken B.C. from second to ninth place compared to other provinces.

"Despite the finance minister's claims, it doesn't necessarily follow that cuts to planned spending results in a more efficient health care system," says Pearson.

"But these cuts do make it more difficult for health authorities and front-line staff to deliver quality health care to the public."

"British Columbians have benefited from past investments in the health of our citizens," says Pearson.

"Unfortunately, this budget fundamentally fails to address the critical investments we need to make today to improve health outcomes and control costs in the future."

-30-

Contact: Mike Old, HEU communications director, 604-828-6771 (mobile)

