



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Care aides at Lynn Valley Care Centre seek union representation from HEU

Care aides at Lynn Valley Care Centre, site of B.C.'s first long-term care COVID-19 outbreak, are taking steps to join the Hospital Employees' Union.

The union filed an application at the Labour Relations Board earlier this week, after a majority of the care aides working at the North Vancouver care home signed union cards.

Today the Employment Standards Branch is mailing out ballots to about 120 care aides as part of a Branch-administered union representation vote that will wrap up later this month.

HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside says care aides found themselves in a high risk and uncertain situation as COVID-19 took hold at the site in early March.

"In the face of this unfolding tragedy, and despite the risks they faced, these workers showed courage, and a deep commitment to the care of their elderly residents at Lynn Valley," says Whiteside.

"Now they are uniting together with HEU to advocate for safer working and caring conditions, and fair treatment from their employer."

The care aides at the Lynn Valley Care Centre are employed by Pro Vita Care Management – a subcontracting company established after the previous BC Liberal government opened up long-term care homes to contracting out in 2002.

HEU represented care aides at the site before their work was contracted out more than 15 years ago, and care aides have been without union representation since the care home replaced its previous subcontractor with Pro Vita in 2007.

HEU represents Pro Vita staff at nine other care homes.

"Essential workers are realizing during this pandemic that unions can help negotiate higher wages and improve working conditions," says Whiteside. "By speaking up together, they can accomplish more than they can do alone."

The union pushed for the levelling up of wages across the whole long-term care sector, and is determined to re-establish a common standard, as had been the case prior to 2002.

HEU is also assisting health authorities implement public health measures limiting workers to a single site in order to protect residents and workers during this pandemic.

Lynn Valley Care Centre was the site of Canada's first COVID-related death, and the outbreak claimed 20 lives before it was declared over in early May. More than 50 residents and two dozen staff were infected with COVID-19.

HEU represents more than 50,000 health care workers in British Columbia, including more than 15,000 care aides.

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