



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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B.C. Budget 2012: Silence on seniors' care, higher MSP premiums for families, and B.C. slides to ninth place in investment in its citizens' health care

B.C.'s largest health care union says today's provincial budget represents a lost opportunity to make strategic investments in seniors' care and in the health of its citizens.

The 43,000-member Hospital Employees' Union says the budget confirms that the Clark government won't implement any of the substantial recommendations made by the provincial ombudsperson Kim Carter last week to improve seniors' care in B.C.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says that it is disappointing that the province did not take up the ombudsperson's challenge to establish regulatory standards on basic care issues like bathing frequency – or to implement minimum staffing levels in the sector.

“Seniors deserve better treatment than they are getting from this government,” says Pearson. “It may serve their own political objectives to put off investments to improve care standards, but that is not a luxury that many of our frail seniors have.”

Pearson notes that nearly every health authority has failed to meet the recommended staffing guidelines for residential care facilities, and that they will continue to miss the mark without additional investments in the sector.

Today's budget also confirms that B.C. families will see another four per cent hike in MSP premiums next year and that for the first time, the government will collect more than \$2 billion through this regressive health care tax.

“Working families and the frail elderly definitely take a back seat to luxury condo buyers and real estate developers in this budget,” says Pearson.

The budget documents releases today also confirm that B.C. has now slipped from second to ninth place in terms of its investment in the health care of British Columbians.

“The finance minister wears our relatively low level of health spending as a badge of honour,” says Pearson. “But the fact of the matter is that the positive health outcomes that we enjoy today are the results of the strategic investments we made in the past.”

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