



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Sunridge Place dispute heads to arbitration

The long-standing struggle to secure a fair collective agreement for health care workers at Sunridge Place in Duncan is not yet over, although job action has been averted.

On June 10, the Hospital Employees' Union – which represents 200 care and support workers employed by the facility's private contractor CareCorp – accepted a labour board mediator's recommendation to resolve the dispute through a mediation and binding arbitration process.

“Despite many months at the bargaining table, CareCorp has been unwilling to negotiate an agreement that will address the low wage and high staff turnover problem at Sunridge Place,” says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “You simply cannot provide the seniors living at Sunridge Place with the continuity and quality of care they deserve, if you don't maintain a stable, experienced staff team.”

Whiteside says that since CareCorp came into B.C.'s private long-term care market the union has seen a disturbing trend where the company seeks to lower staff wages and benefits to support its business model.

The starting wage for a care aide working at Sunridge Place, for example, is currently \$17.00. But prior to CareCorp acquiring the contract in May, 2014 the starting wage for a care aide was \$18.56.

With the drop in wages, Sunridge Place has seen a staff turnover of more than 40 per cent.

At New Horizons Care in Campbell River, health care workers who are also employed by CareCorp have come up against the same problems in attempting to resolve low wage and high turnover problems. The union says since the company acquired the contract more than a year ago, there's been a staff turnover of more than 55 per cent.

And at Inglewood Care Centre in West Vancouver, where CareCorp recently cancelled its contract, the new service provider immediately raised workers' wages by as much as nine per cent.

“Our members deserve a fair wage that respects their skill, commitment and dedication to the seniors they care for at Sunridge Place,” says Whiteside.

At the present time, the union is awaiting the appointment of a Labour Board mediator who will arbitrate a first collective agreement for Sunridge Place workers.

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