



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

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## New Horizons dispute heads to arbitration

The long-standing struggle to secure a fair collective agreement for health care workers at New Horizons Care home in Campbell River is not yet over, although job action has been averted.

On June 10, the Hospital Employees' Union – which represents 130 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 New Horizons,” says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “You simply cannot provide the seniors living at New Horizons 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 New Horizons, for example, is currently \$17.50. But in 2010, when the facility opened, the starting wage for a care aide was \$18.57. With the drop in wages New Horizons has seen a 55 per cent turnover in staff since CareCorp took over in May 2014.

At Sunridge Place in Duncan, 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 40 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 and reasonable wage that respects their skill, commitment and dedication to the seniors they care for at New Horizons,” 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 New Horizons workers.

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