



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Stressed health authority budgets leave little room for progress on seniors' care

Urgent calls to address a growing crisis in seniors' care have been largely ignored in a provincial budget that will see a continuing erosion in front-line health services, says the 46,000-member Hospital Employees' Union.

HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside says that inflationary pressures, population growth and population aging will cancel out annual budget increases to B.C.'s health authorities that will average less than two per cent.

"No one questions the urgent need to address rising levels of dementia and other complex care needs in the province's long-term care homes," says Whiteside.

"Ensuring access to safe and accessible residential and home care services would take pressure off our hospitals, improve the quality of life for our seniors, and reduce unsustainable injury rates for those who provide their care.

"And yet there is no commitment in today's budget to improve staffing levels or to take other actions which would provide a more dignified standard of care for B.C. seniors requiring residential care services."

Since 2001, British Columbia has slipped from second to eighth place among Canadian provinces in its per capita investment in the health care of its citizens.

Relief welcome, but government misses opportunity on MSP

Whiteside says that MSP premium relief for families with children is welcome, but says the B.C. Liberal government missed a golden opportunity to eliminate this regressive tax altogether.

"Rolling premiums into a progressive tax structure is the kind of sharing economy British Columbians really need," says Whiteside. "Instead, B.C. stands alone in collecting more than \$2.5 billion in unfair health premiums."

Changes to the MSP premium structure announced for January 2017 will result in a net increase in revenue generated by the regressive tax of nearly \$80 million annually when fully implemented.

HEU is B.C.'s largest health care union with members working in a wide range of occupations in hospitals, residential care, home care agencies, First Nations health centres and logistics and supply operations.

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