



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

The Remaining Light prompts stories, actions on seniors' care in Kamloops

An evening screening of the documentary film on seniors' care in B.C., *The Remaining Light*, drew more than 50 people to a downtown hotel in Kamloops on June 22.

The event, cosponsored by the Kamloops Health Coalition and the Hospital Employees' Union, also featured a guest panel and an audience feedback and question period during which people shared their experiences and got ready to act on opportunities to improve and initiate improved services and programs for seniors.

Following the film, guest panelist and HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy told the group that B.C. Ombudsperson Kim Carter made ten recommendations to improve services and programs to seniors in her December 2009 report and that the provincial government has failed to act on the majority. And where there has been action, it has not been to the level recommended by the Ombudsperson.

Darcy urged people to support the Ombudsperson's report and to watch for the second report, due out in the fall that will be larger and more comprehensive and contain more recommendations.

HEU care aide Niki Bone, who works at The Hamlets at Westsyde in Kamloops, spoke about the real experiences of her and her colleagues in caring and supporting those in residential care.

"Workloads are heavy in residential care. Over the last decade, they've grown heavier," Bone said.

"The cost of heavy workloads is not enough time to be with residents when they need us – when they are anxious or afraid, when they are worried and restless, when a few minutes and some kind words can make all the difference."

Dr. Margaret McGregor talked about research that found that the leading factor that made a resident in a care facility feel good was feeling close to at least one staff member.

McGregor also said that the recreational and social programs highlighted in *The Remaining Light* are critical to the ongoing health and well-being of seniors who often struggle with isolation and depression.

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She described health prevention as a social model of initiatives and activities that support and interact with seniors rather than the more common and narrower medical model that focuses on medications and treatment interventions.

As attendees came to the microphones, there were many stories of appreciation to hard-working staff as well as questions on what to do to make the system better for seniors and their families who are frequently overwhelmed. There were also comments about the importance of strong family councils, the lack of community and home-based services and programs for seniors, the fee structure in long-term care, and the necessity for some married couples to seek involuntary separation in order to secure financial resources for both.

Rick Turner, co-chair of the Kamloops Health Coalition, moderated the evening and asked that people stay in touch so that they can act when concerns over seniors' care come to light and when measures to improve residential and community care are initiated. Turner presented two municipal motions that have emerged as a result of *The Remaining Light* and are being endorsed or considered by a number of jurisdictions around B.C. The audience wholeheartedly endorsed both motions after Turner read them out and asked for a show of support to take these to Kamloops city council.

The Remaining Light is being screened by interested citizens and groups across the province. Some upcoming events can be found on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-BC website. Those who would like a copy of *The Remaining Light* or to host a screening can contact the CCPA-BC: 604-801-5121 x226 or email: shannon@policyalternatives.ca.

HEU members and locals are encouraged to contact their union servicing representative for information and assistance in sponsoring a screening in their workplace or community.

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