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## **For-profit not the answer for long-term care**

*Concerned citizens hear the evidence at Vancouver Forum*

VANCOUVER - Public health care supporters and concerned citizens gathered at a community forum last night to discuss the problems and perils of for-profit long-term residential health care in B.C.

The event, entitled "Who's Minding the Store? The privatization of long-term care and what it means for care quality" was sponsored by the Canadian Doctors for Medicare, the BC Health Coalition, and the BC Association of Geriatric Care Physicians.

Forum organizers aimed to raise awareness about problems associated with the growth of for-profit long-term care facilities in the province and its negative effect on care quality for seniors and people with disabilities.

U.S.-based professor and researcher Charlene Harrington outlined the ongoing challenges faced by residents in a system dominated by private, for-profit companies. She noted that up to 30 per cent of care homes in the U.S. provide inadequate care, and warned of the low staff to resident ratios, high staff turnover rates, low wages and lack of regulation and oversight endemic to for-profit care homes.

Dr. Margaret McGregor shared research that compared for-profit and not-for-profit residential care facilities in B.C., and showed for-profit facilities to have higher resident hospitalization rates because of poor care quality. McGregor, a family physician, health services researcher and member of Canadian Doctors for Medicare, said that policy makers in government should base their decisions on the evidence and reject the for-profit care model.

Victoria-based advocacy activist Lyne England shared personal stories from staff and residents alike, showing how for-profit care hurts both workers and residents.

Participants shared their personal experiences with for-profit care and discussed strategies to make complaints procedures open and accountable and ensure that the provincial government and health authorities invest in not-for-profit care beds.

"Seniors and people with disabilities deserve high quality, not-for-profit facilities. They do not deserve to be shuffled into beds designed to make profits for corporate shareholders", said British Columbia Health Coalition co-chair Joyce Jones, who encouraged participants to endorse the BCHC seniors' care campaign and get active in their communities.

-30-

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