

NEWS RELEASE



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VIHA commits to holding 70 beds for Cowichan residents until appeals concluded

BCNU says VIHA's decision to halt pressured transfers is morally correct decision

BCNU was relieved to learn through recent media reports that the Vancouver Island Health Authority will hold 70 beds at Sunridge Place in reserve for residents of Cowichan Lodge until appeals of Dr. Richard Stanwick's waiver of the 12 month notice of closure is concluded. Dr. Stanwick is the VIHA Chief Medical Officer who granted the Authority the ability to close the Lodge with only 60 days notice. The Community Care & Assisted Living Appeal Board will hear the families' appeals during the week of August 25, 2008.

"The health of these vulnerable seniors was being adversely impacted by pressure to quickly move from the Lodge. I'm relieved that VIHA has finally made a moral decision for these people and has guaranteed them spots at Sunridge Place until their appeals are concluded," said Anne Shannon, Vice President of the BC Nurses' Union.

On Friday July 25, the Appeals Board granted Cowichan Lodge residents a stay of VIHA's ability to close the Lodge on short notice which was leading to the involuntary transfer of residents from the Lodge to other facilities. BCNU received reports that residents who wanted to remain at the Lodge felt pressured by VIHA to leave the site for other facilities (such as Sunridge Place) before they reached capacity. This pressured situation was adversely affecting the health of frail seniors and was tantamount to creating the 'involuntary transfer' situation forbidden by the Board. Medical evidence is clear that abrupt and involuntary change in routine of vulnerable seniors increases morbidity and mortality.

"I want to thank the nurses, other care givers and the community of Cowichan who worked so hard for Lodge residents and their families to get this commitment from VIHA," said BCNU's Anne Shannon. "VIHA now needs to communicate that commitment in writing to residents and families."

The BC Nurses' Union is convinced the Lodge has an important role to play in delivering public healthcare for the area's senior citizens. As demand for long term care accelerates on Vancouver Island, with moderate renovations, Cowichan Lodge can provide excellent facilities for seniors with various medical conditions.

British Columbia Nurses' Union

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