

For Immediate Release
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VIHA TAKES OVER CARE CONTRACTS FROM RETIREMENT CONCEPTS
Care Aides Receive Layoff Notice at Three Island Facilities

VICTORIA—Care aides that work at Retirement Concepts-run assisted living facilities on Vancouver Island have been served layoff notices and families are being informed the contract to provide personal services will be taken over by the Vancouver Island Health Authority, New Democrats have learned.

Retirement Concepts is a private, for-profit care company that has received lucrative contracts from the Campbell Liberals to provide care at fifteen seniors care facilities around B.C. VIHA will take over personal care contracts and care aides will lose their jobs at three assisted living facilities operated by the company including Casa Loma in Courtenay, Nanaimo Seniors Village in Nanaimo and the Wellesley in Victoria.

“The Campbell Liberals have a miserable record of failing our seniors. This chronic cycle of staff layoffs disrupts continuity of care and threatens the ability to attract more people into seniors care professions,” said NDP Leader Carole James.

“It is important for residents to form bonds and trusting relationships with the people who assist with bathing and other services. Why is it that one and half years into this contract, VIHA is taking over? Will the minister let the public know what went wrong?”

“The repeated layoffs of needed care aides in Comox, Nanaimo and across B.C., is a continuing legacy of Bill 29. This is a deliberate and failed B.C. Liberal policy that disrupts the lives of seniors and health care workers alike,” said Adrian Dix, NDP health critic.

The New Democrats have learned that over the last two days meetings were held to inform staff, residents and their families that personal service contracts will be taken over by the health authority. VIHA has not explained why Retirement Concepts or its sub-contractors will no longer have the contract or how and why the contract has been ended. This action affects seniors in 35 assisted living units in Courtenay, 40 units in Victoria and 30 units in Nanaimo. Staff layoffs will be effective as early as May 5th.

“Government entered into the largest contract on Vancouver Island ever with Retirement Concepts at a time when it was under investigation for abuse and neglect at Beacon Hill Villa in Victoria and Summerland Seniors Village,” said Guy Gentner, NDP critic for seniors.

“If they can't be trusted to provide services at these three facilities and can't run Beacon Hill Villa, how is it that the government trusts them to take care of seniors and trusts them with millions of taxpayer dollars?”

In July 2006, VIHA announced Retirement Concepts was awarded the contract to provide 90 residential care beds and 60 assisted living units at Casa Loma. The assisted living units are funded through BC Housing and Independent Living BC Program. The cost of the entire expansion project is estimated to be \$20 million and will be the largest facility of its kind on Vancouver Island.