



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Victoria gambles by ignoring high court and pushing ahead with plan to lay off Okanagan health workers

HEU demands public disclosure of any commitments given to foreign banks about the future of Bill 29

The provincial government today issued a list of qualified bidders for hospital projects in the Okanagan that could include firing hundreds of health care workers using legislation ruled unconstitutional by the country's highest court earlier this month.

The Hospital Employees' Union says that the province is exposing taxpayers to future liability if it pushes ahead with plans to turn over hospital cleaning and maintenance to the three foreign banks that are backing bids to expand hospitals in Kelowna and Vernon.

More than 300 hospital employees could lose their jobs as a result.

On June 8, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down key sections of Bill 29, the 2002 legislation that removed contracting out protections from health care collective agreements.

HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic says it would be "prudent" for the provincial government to consider the full ramifications of using the unconstitutional legislation to turn over public services to for-profit companies.

"Victoria is in total denial about the court's ruling," says Bosancic.

"The court gave them one year to deal with the repercussions of the ruling. But they did not hand this government a free pass to continue to fire workers or make long-term business deals based on an unconstitutional law."

Bosancic adds that if government has provided any commitments concerning the future of Bill 29 to the three foreign banks backing the approved consortiums, it must disclose that information to the public immediately.

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