



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Victoria's failure to disclose documents serious roadblock in Bill 29 talks – HEU

Documents related to \$650 million in health privatization deals kept under wraps; government says reports or evaluations of cost effectiveness don't exist

The Hospital Employees' Union has filed more than a dozen freedom of information (FOI) requests for documents related to the awarding of commercial contracts by B.C.'s health authorities worth an estimated \$650 million.

HEU filed the FOI requests after government refused to release the information during ongoing talks on the implementation of last June's Supreme Court of Canada ruling that struck down key sections of *Bill 29*. The 2002 legislation gutted health care contracts, clearing the way for the privatization of services and thousands of layoffs.

Health unions first asked for the commercial contracts on October 4. Government representatives said on October 23 that they would only consider giving access to the commercial contracts if union representatives signed restrictive confidentiality agreements – and only then if corporate contractors consented to releasing the information.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy, who speaks for the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) in the talks, says the government is stalling.

"This government claims that it wants to conclude these discussions by year's end," says Darcy. "If they are serious about this they should stop stonewalling and produce the information now."

In its June 8 ruling, the Court was especially critical of government's failure to hold meaningful consultations with unions before passing *Bill 29*. The Court cited government's failure to produce evidence supporting its actions, or to consider alternatives.

But despite both the Court's direction to engage in good faith bargaining – and a precedent-setting decision by B.C.'s information and privacy commissioner that forced one health authority to release full details of a \$100 million cleaning contract – government representatives have so far refused to publicly disclose privatization contract details.

And in response to a specific request by health unions for "reports or evaluations" of the cost effectiveness of contracting out an estimated \$750 million of services, government responded that the documents do not exist.

Darcy says that government's unwillingness to release information on *Bill 29* privatization deals runs counter to the direction set out by the Supreme Court this past summer.

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“The provincial government has a clear obligation to explore alternatives to contracting out,” says Darcy. “Instead, government representatives continue to assert that contracting out has been a success and that they are determined to carry on with the practice – despite a frightening lack of evidence to support their conclusions.”

The lucrative privatization deals to provide cleaning, dietary, laundry and security services at B.C. hospitals resulted in concerns about service quality, the loss of thousands of health care jobs, and lowered wages throughout the sector.

HEU filed FOI requests on Tuesday for the following contracts as well as for the business cases and other materials prepared by health authorities to justify contracting out.

Health Authority	Contractor	Service	Length of Contract	Estimated Value
Vancouver Coastal/Providence*	Sodexo	Dietary Services	10 years	\$330 million
Vancouver Coastal	Compass	Cleaning (non-clinical VGH /Richmond)	Unknown	Unknown
Vancouver Coastal/Providence*	K-Bro	Laundry	10 years	\$60 million
Vancouver Coastal/Providence*	Paladin	Security	3 years	\$23 million
Fraser Health	Compass	Retail Food	Unknown	Unknown
Fraser Health	Sodexo	Cleaning	5 years	\$73 million
Fraser Health	K-Bro	Laundry	10 years	Unknown
Fraser Health	Intercon	Security	5 years	\$16.6 million
Provincial Health Services	Compass	Dietary and Cleaning	5 years	\$40 million
Provincial Health Services	Aramark	Cleaning (Ambulatory Care)	Unknown	Unknown
Vancouver Island	Compass	Dietary and Cleaning	5 years	\$100 million

*Separate FOI requests filed for Vancouver Coastal and Providence Health Care

Note: HEU has obtained materials related to a Vancouver Coastal/Providence Health Care’s \$100 million, five-year cleaning contract with ARAMARK as a result of a July 31 ruling by B.C.’s Information and Privacy Commissioner David Loukidelis (Order F07-15).

The Facilities Bargaining Association has held six days of talks with government and health employer representatives since October 2. The Supreme Court suspended its June 8 declaration for one year in order to give the B.C. government an opportunity to deal with the repercussions of its ruling.