



News Release

THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VHA to lay off more than 1,000 health care workers

Move will affect patient care and impact the economic base of island communities, says union

The Vancouver Island Health Authority's move to fire more than 1,000 health care workers and turn over critical infection control and dietary services to the British corporation Compass Group is bad news for patients and workers, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

The union says the British company – which has annual revenues of CDN\$25 billion a year – will pay its staff about \$9.50 an hour with minimal benefits.

Those low wages will mean high staff turnover in areas such as operating room and intensive care unit cleaning and in patient food services – and lead to a decline in service quality, says HEU.

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says privatizing of cleaning and food services was not necessary.

“This health authority rejected a proposal from our members that would have produced three-year savings of \$20 million,” says Allnutt. “We subsequently invited them to put their privatization plans on hold while province-wide collective bargaining took place, an offer they've also rejected.

“It seems that ideology has as much to do with this decision as economics. And it's patients and workers who will pay for it, along with Vancouver Island communities that will lose decent jobs.”

Ninety per cent of the workers affected by today's announcement are women.

Allnutt notes that the Northern Health Authority cancelled requests for proposals for housekeeping, laundry and food services last week after coming to an agreement with health unions to explore alternatives that would preserve quality, in-house services.

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