



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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HEU celebrates the first group of hospital workers brought back in-house on Vancouver Island

235 housekeeping and food service workers first of thousands who will rejoin the public sector over the next year

[Burnaby, B.C.] – Today, the Hospital Employees' Union welcomes the return of more than 200 housekeepers and food service staff back into the public sector at six health care sites operated by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).

“This day has been long overdue for privatized health care support service workers who work tirelessly to keep our hospitals clean, and patients nourished,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard. “A reunited health care team is better for patients and better for workers.”

Following the provincial government's August 30 announcement about its plans to end 21 commercial contracts with a number of health authorities, HEU has been working to ensure a seamless transition that will see more than 4,000 workers brought back under the direct employment by health authorities from their current private contract employers within the next year.

Two-hundred-thirty-five workers at six sites—Saanich Peninsula Hospital, Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, Glengarry Hospital, Aberdeen Hospital, Gorge Road Hospital, and Priory Hospital—are among the first workers to be returned in-house since the government's announcement.

These sites were among many hospitals and health-authority operated care homes to have housekeeping and food services contracted out to for-profit, multinational corporations when the former BC Liberal government enacted the *Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act* (Bill 29).

“The BC Liberals' privatization of health care services in the early 2000s devastated the lives of thousands of health care workers,” says Brisard. “And it fragmented our public health care system putting patients and the public at risk, as the pandemic has shown us.”

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The health care workers coming back under health authorities will be covered by the province-wide Facilities collective agreement and will see improved wages and benefits as a result.

Even with the planned repatriation of thousands of workers in the coming year, there are hundreds of privatized workers at public-private partnership (P3) sites whose return back under the health authorities has not been confirmed.

“Our union will continue to push until all privatized housekeepers and food service workers have been repatriated,” says Brisard. “Every single health care worker is critical to quality health care delivery and should be part of a reunited team.”

HEU is B.C.’s largest health union representing more than 50,000 workers in various health occupations and settings, including more than 4,000 contracted hospital support workers currently and previously employed by multinational corporations under contract to Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Island Health, Fraser Health and the Provincial Health Services authorities.