



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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

Nearly 180 food service workers rejoin the public sector

[Burnaby, B.C.] – Today, the Hospital Employees' Union welcomes the return of nearly 180 food service workers back into the public sector at Royal Jubilee Hospital and Victoria General Hospital under the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).

“For nearly 20 years, hospital support service workers have been working in sub-standard conditions under private companies alongside other members of the health care team,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard. “This is a good day for these workers on Vancouver Island, who will finally see justice and respect for their vital work.”

This is the second wave of health care workers to be brought back into the public sector, to be employed by the health authority, since the provincial government's August 2021 announcement about its plans to end 21 commercial contracts in health authorities.

Housekeeping and food services in hospitals and health-authority-operated care homes were contracted out to for-profit, multinational corporations when the former BC Liberal government enacted the *Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act* (Bill 29) in 2002.

“The policies of the previous government devastated the lives of thousands in a sector made up mainly of racialized and women workers,” says Brisard. “It fragmented our public health care delivery, making our hospitals less safe for workers and patients.”

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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 year.

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.

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

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.