



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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April 20, 2022

Fraser Health brings privatized housekeepers back in-house

Reversing 18 years of privatization, contracted out housekeepers at Royal Columbian, Burnaby and Eagle Ridge Hospitals are reunited with health care teams

[Burnaby, B.C.] – The Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) is celebrating the return of privatized workers who are being brought back in-house at three health care facilities in the Fraser Health Authority during April.

Today, 160 health care workers at Royal Columbian Hospital are being transferred from their private contractor back to the Fraser Health Authority.

The Royal Columbian Hospital workers join another 160 workers at Burnaby Hospital and Eagle Ridge Hospital in Fraser Health who came back-in house in early April, as part of the government's commitment to reverse health care privatization policies of the previous government under Bill 47.

“When housekeepers and dietary workers were contracted to private corporations nearly 20 years ago, they were separated from the rest of the health care team and pushed to the margins of our health care system, earning low wages and substandard benefits,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard.

“Today's repatriation of health care workers to public sector employment is the result of nearly 20 years of campaigning by our members. It will provide stability and security for these workers, and better care.”

The contracting-out policy disproportionately impacted racialized health care workers, as well as women, who represent more than four out of five workers in this sector.

Since August 2021, when the provincial government announced its plans to end 21 commercial contracts for housekeeping and food services in health care facilities across the province, health authorities have begun bringing workers back in-house, using a labour adjustment process negotiated with the union.

Vancouver Island Health Authority transferred the first set of workers back in November 2021.

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Housekeepers and dietary workers coming back under the health authorities will be covered by the province-wide Facilities collective agreement, and will see improvements to their wages and benefits.

“With better wages, many workers in this sector will be more economically secure,” says Gwenda Alexander, housekeeper at Burnaby Hospital and local union chair whose job recently transferred in-house. “They may be able to reduce hours or even let go of a second or third job they’ve taken to make ends meet.”

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.