FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **April 29, 2022**

More privatized health care workers are brought back into the public sector

Reversing 18 years of privatization, contracted out housekeepers and food service workers are reunited with health care teams in Provincial Health Services Authority and Vancouver Island Health Authority

[Burnaby, B.C.] – The Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) is celebrating the return of 301 privatized workers back under Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) and Provincial Health Services Agency (PHSA) after nearly 20 years of working for private contractors.

B.C. Children's and Women's Hospital and B.C. Cancer – Vancouver Centre are transferring 247 housekeeping and food service workers back in-house today. These are the first sites in PHSA to repatriate privatized workers following the government's announcement in August 2021 about its plans to end 21 commercial contracts in B.C. health are facilities.

An additional 54 housekeepers at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital are also being brought back in-house today under VIHA, joining more than 600 workers on Vancouver Island who have already been transferred back to the health authority.

"Today's repatriation of health care workers to public sector employment is the result of nearly 20 years of campaigning by our members, who have long known that privatization erodes our public health care system," says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard. "Returning these services to the public sector will provide stability and security for these workers, and better care for patients."

The contracting-out policies enacted by Bills 29 and 94 under the BC Liberals disproportionately impacted racialized health care workers, as well as women, who represent more than four out of five workers in this sector. Workers were stripped of their collective agreement and hired back by private contractors at nearly half their wages and with fewer benefits.

Housekeepers and dietary workers coming back under the health authorities will be covered by the province-wide Facilities collective agreement, which will result in immediate improvements in their wages and benefits, and provide access to a pension plan.

…more

"For many of us, coming back into the health authority opens so many more opportunities in our lives," says Rose Ravina, housekeeper at B.C. Cancer – Vancouver Centre and local union shop steward. "Having a pension plan also gives us some peace of mind about our future, because it was difficult to save for our retirement under the private contractor."

Even as hundreds of workers are transferred back to the health authorities, HEU is continuing to advocate for its members in private-public partnership facilities whose return in-house has not been confirmed.

"We need to reverse the privatization that fragmented our public health system," says Meena Brisard. "That means that all health care workers should be reunited in the public system, regardless of a facility's funding model."

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.