



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Health care workers transfer from private companies back to the public sector

*Reversing 20 years of contracting out, privatized housekeepers and food services workers on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland are reunited with the public health care team.*

[Burnaby, B.C.] – The Hospital Employees' Union is welcoming today's transfer of 448 privatized housekeepers and food services workers back under the employ of the Vancouver Island Health Authority and Providence Health Care (PHC).

When 221 housekeepers at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital are transferred from Acciona back to the health authority today, Island Health will have repatriated all of the housekeeping and dietary positions that were contracted out to private companies in the early 2000s.

And another 227 food services workers at Holy Family Hospital, Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, St. Paul's Hospital, St. Vincent's Hospital – Langara and Youville Residence – are transferring from Sodexo Canada to PHC today.

“The privatization policies of the previous B.C. Liberal government devastated the lives of thousands of workers in a sector that was overwhelmingly female and highly racialized,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard.

“It fragmented health care delivery, undermined wages and working conditions, and made our hospitals less safe for workers, residents and patients.

“Today's repatriation of these health care workers back into the public sector is the result of nearly 20 years of campaigning by our members for a better health care system,” says Brisard.

“These members were pushed to the margins of the health care workforce, despite the vital role they play in infection control and patient care in our health care facilities.”

HEU has been working with health authorities to ensure a smooth transition for workers since the NDP provincial government's August 2021 announcement about its plans to end 21 commercial contracts across the province.

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

In 2018, under the BC NDP government, that anti-labour legislation was repealed, setting the stage for the repatriation of these privatized services.

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

“Privatized workers have been fighting hard for this change,” says Annie Marie Beauchamp, a housekeeper at Royal Jubilee Hospital and HEU shop steward, whose job is transferring back in-house today.

“For workers, the stability, job security and training opportunities that come with being back in the public sector makes it easier for us to stay in health care.”

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

Workers formerly employed by Acciona at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, and transferring in-house today, are the only group at a P3 site whose repatriation has 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 services 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 support services 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.

