



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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More than 800 health care workers in Vancouver Coastal transfer from private companies back to the public sector

[Burnaby, B.C.] – Today, the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) is celebrating the transfer of 864 privatized housekeepers and food services workers back into the public sector, under the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA).

Housekeepers and food service workers from six sites in Vancouver (including Vancouver General Hospital, Banfield Pavilion, UBC Hospital and Purdy Pavilion, GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre, and Dogwood Lodge); five sites in Richmond (including Richmond General Hospital, Minoru Residence, and Richmond Lions Manor); and 13 Coastal sites (including Lions Gate Hospital, Sechelt Hospital and Totem Lodge, Squamish General Hospital & Hilltop House, qathet General Hospital, Evergreen Extended Care Unit and Willingdon Creek Village) are returning to Vancouver Coastal Health Authority today.

These are the last group of workers to be brought back in-house as part of an announcement made by Health Minister Adrian Dix in August 2021 to cancel 21 commercial contracts across four health authorities and Providence Health, and return the workers to public sector employment.

In 2018, the NDP government repealed BC Liberal-era legislation that cleared the way for the mass privatization of hospital support services starting in 2002.

“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.”

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

Housekeepers and dietary workers coming back under the health authorities will be covered by the latest province-wide Facilities collective agreement, which was ratified by HEU members on October 13. These workers will see immediate improvements to their wages and benefits.

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“Having better wages and benefits will greatly help workers like me to support our families and help us better plan for our future,” says Jenny Frigillana, who has been a housekeeper at UBC Hospital for 19 years, and an HEU local executive member, and whose job is transferring back in-house today.

The provincial government has also recently committed to bringing back hundreds of workers at public-private partnership (P3) sites in Fraser Health in 2023. This group of privatized workers was not initially included in the government’s repatriation announcement in August 2021.

“We’re heartened by the government’s continued commitment to reverse the failed privatization policies of the past by making sure that no worker is left behind.” says Brisard. “And we will continue to push to reunite the health care team by ending the privatization of health care services and jobs.”

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, as well as Providence Health.