



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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IHA pursues plans for Royal Inland Hospital security services privatization

Contracting out ignores concerns about hidden costs, reduced services and compromised patient care, says HEU

On Friday, the Hospital Employees' Union learned the Interior Health Authority will pursue its plans to contract out Royal Inland Hospital's publicly delivered security services.

"We presented a strong case that demonstrated the risks and costs of privatization," says HEU secretary-business manager, Judy Darcy. "And Interior Health has chosen to ignore that evidence, to the detriment of patients, the health care team and the community."

According to the Hospital Employees' Union, the health authority's claims of \$187,000 annual savings are reduced or eliminated when the full costs of the private security contract are calculated.

Since the IHA first announced their plans in September, RIH staff, including doctors, have written letters and spoken publicly about their support for Royal Inland's 28 security officers and the experience and special training they bring to the health care team. These statements have expressed concern about reduced safety for patients and staff with the high turnover and lack of experience common in contracted-out services.

As one letter points out, RIH has unique security requirements. It is the only hospital in the health authority with an Adult Psychiatric Ward sharing the same floor with patients as young as six years old.

In the health authority's displacement notice – sent to the affected workers through internal email – they indicate that the layoffs are effective as of January, 2010 and the private contractor will be in place by July of next year.

"These workers have given the hospital and the community decades of service," says Darcy. "We are very concerned about the message this sends when the health authority chooses to announce layoffs through email, instead of a face-to-face meetings."

HEU representatives will now be meeting with the health authority to discuss the terms of the layoffs, including possible retraining opportunities. These discussions will take place under the terms of the Bill 29 Settlement Agreement, which was negotiated following the Supreme Court decision to strike down the provincial government's 2002 contract-breaking legislation.

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