



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU presses health employers on plans to consolidate health services in Lower Mainland

Lack of targets and timelines indicate that province's budget ultimatum – rather than sound planning – are behind “rush job” on consolidation

The Hospital Employees' Union says that an announcement by Lower Mainland health authorities to consolidate dozens of critical health support services is a “rush job” driven by provincial budget politics that will be a costly failure for patients and the public.

And the union is urging health employers to adopt a longer term planning perspective that includes consulting with the front-line staff who actually deliver the services in question.

This morning, the Provincial Health Services, Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health authorities informed staff and their unions that they are looking at 25 different service areas in which to consolidate services in an effort to cut costs.

These areas include a wide range of services essential to quality patient care, including medical records, transcription, equipment sterilization, payroll, lab and pharmacy, diagnostic imaging, patient portering, information technology, and other areas.

But health employers were not able to provide any timelines, cost-cutting targets or potential job loss numbers.

HEU's secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says that in a health care system already cut to the bone and operating on massive amounts of overtime, further cuts to front-line services and staff would be a costly mistake.

“The health authorities' plans are unrealistic and could put patient care at risk,” says Darcy. “Each of the service areas in question are essential to quality patient care and they are already stretched to capacity.

“Consolidation of any of these services requires careful planning. But what I see here is a rush job to meet the province's short-term budget pressures that is doomed to fail patients and cost taxpayers more in the long run.”

Darcy points out that an ongoing plan to consolidate supply chain services between health authorities has still not been fully implemented even after years of planning.

“For government and their health authorities to suggest that they can come up with a realistic plan to consolidate these services within the current budget year is insincere and reckless,” says Darcy.

The health authorities' memo to staff is available at <www.heu.org>.

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