



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## B.C. government moves to fast-track consolidation in the Lower Mainland

*Government plans to consolidate services across B.C. in the future*

The B.C. government and its participating health authorities (Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal including Providence Health Care, and Provincial Health Services) are fast-tracking the consolidation of services first announced last summer.

The Ministry of Health Services' latest effort to hurry consolidation along is a Request for Proposals (RFP) for private-sector consultants to oversee the project and ensure quick results. The RFP deadline was February 23.

Corporate, support service and so-called back office functions in the Lower Mainland are the primary targets. But, according to the RFP, "virtually every non-clinical service will be looked at as a potential consolidation opportunity", making a long list of HEU jobs vulnerable in the government's ongoing cost-cutting measures.

The RFP also suggests that current consolidation projects will impact as many as 7,395 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in a variety of areas with baseline budgets totalling \$1.17 billion. The majority of the positions are held by HEU members.

The request states that "savings can be realized from a variety of sources" including "standardizations of workflow, a reduction in the overall number of positions, reductions in space and facilities, consolidation of technology, shared licenses and the elimination of redundant processes."

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says, "Health authorities are being pushed to act quickly and find significant cost savings by the end of March. There is little attention being paid to the longer range impact of consolidation schemes on workers or on health care."

The RFP specifies the scope and speed of consolidation: "...the intent is for consolidation to be expanded to the Northern Health Authority, Interior Health Authority and the Vancouver Island Health Authority once the value is demonstrated in the Lower Mainland." And "project initiatives have to have a reasonable expectation of returning financial benefit by fiscal 2009-2010 year end."

The current fiscal year ends March 31.

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The RFP makes it clear that government will forego a thorough examination of the business cases for any of these consolidations. It reads, “Comprehensive business cases will not be required for each project initiative; the pace and magnitude of savings will drive flexibility in the business models.”

This RFP, issued on February 12, makes several parts of the facilities tentative collective agreement particularly important to thousands of HEU members.

“Last fall during the occupational conferences and our Wage Policy Conference, job security emerged as a key priority for members,” says Darcy. “The facilities tentative agreement contains real protections for those who are impacted by consolidation, or will be in the future.”

Under the proposed settlement, members affected by Lower Mainland consolidation and other future consolidations will have expanded protections: no interruption of pay or benefits if transferred to another health-sector employer; portability of service and related banks; portability of seniority with the right to maintain seniority with the original employer for up to five years; the right to go on the former employer’s casual list and accumulate seniority for time worked, and more.

The tentative agreement also provides for health authority-wide seniority in every health authority across the province.

And HEU members impacted by government’s largest, province-wide consolidation project – the Health Authority Shared Services Organization (SSO) – will remain in the facilities subsector and not be moved to the community subsector as planned. They will continue to be covered by the facilities collective agreement with its superior provisions.

“Keeping SSO members in the Facilities Bargaining Association was another priority identified by members last fall,” says Darcy. “Under the tentative agreement, SSO members will stay in the FBA. They will not be moved to a sector where their wages and benefits would have been reduced.”

The RFP also lists the Lower Mainland consolidation projects in progress, along with their approximate FTE counts and baseline budgets.

**Fraser Health Authority:**

- Facilities management, 660 FTEs and \$190 million
- Protection services, 20 FTEs and \$17M
- Pharmacy, 800 FTEs and \$150M

**Vancouver Coastal Health Authority:**

- Communication services, 75 FTEs and \$9M
- Diagnostic imaging, 1,400 FTEs and \$220M

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- Human resources, 400 FTEs and \$40M
- Housekeeping, food, laundry, business initiatives revenue, patient transport, 795 FTEs and \$200M

**Providence Health Care:**

- Biomedical engineering, 160 FTEs and \$150M
- Health information management, 695 FTEs and \$43M

**Provincial Health Services Authority:**

- Interpretation services, 30 FTEs and \$2.4M
- Pathology and laboratory medicine, 1,800 FTEs and \$200M
- IT/IMIS including IT switchboard, 560 FTEs and \$82M

Projected totals: 7,395 FTEs and \$1.17 billion.

*February 24, 2010*