



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Hospital cleaning won't be privatized as part of Okanagan hospital P3s

Hospital cleaning will continue to be delivered by Interior Health employees at Vernon Jubilee and Kelowna General even though the construction, finance and maintenance of facility expansion projects will be tendered to a short list of private-sector firms.

More than 250 family-supporting jobs at the two hospitals will be saved as a result.

Earlier this year, procurement documents for the project included the option for the privatization of hospital housekeeping and plant maintenance in both the new and existing hospital facilities as part of a public-private partnership (P3).

But in a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued yesterday by Interior Health and the province, hospital housekeeping was excluded from the scope of the project. In fact, the current complement of housekeeping staff will be expanded to clean the new buildings as well.

"In this era of superbugs, hospital housekeeping is critical to the health and safety of patients and workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"The decision to keep the current skilled, experienced cleaning staff working at these hospitals is a prudent move by the health authority that will benefit Okanagan patients now and over the long run."

Darcy says that the project proposal includes an option to privatize the work of about 50 trades and maintenance workers.

"Obviously we're disappointed that they did not exclude these highly skilled and experienced workers from the RFP, but we hope to change their minds during the procurement process."

In May, an HEU delegation including front-line health care workers met with the IH Board of Directors to make the case for keeping the services "in-house" citing falling standards, high staff turnover and the loss of experienced workers at hospitals that had privatized the services.

A poll released by the Hospital Employees' Union in June showed that two-thirds of residents in Kelowna and Vernon opposed the privatization of this work.

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