



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

## HEU tells IHA board to scrap hospital P3 scheme in Okanagan, retain skilled support services staff

More than 50 health care workers and concerned citizens rallied outside Vernon Jubilee Hospital this morning before marching to a meeting of the Interior Health board, where a packed room heard about the perils associated with public-private partnership (P3) hospitals and contracted-out support services.

The event was sparked by the IHA's recently-announced hospital expansion project that will use a P3 to build two new towers – one at Vernon Jubilee Hospital and one at Kelowna General Hospital – and its offer to the private sector to take over hospital housekeeping and plant services at the two hospitals.

HEU research director Marcy Cohen presented compelling evidence from Canada and the U.K. demonstrating that contracted-out support services puts the health and safety of patients, workers and the visiting public at risk.

And she provided information about P3 hospital projects showing how they resulted in much higher costs than if they had been publicly financed, keeping the tax-payer on the hook for decades.

HEU member Amanda Burgess, a housekeeper and relief supervisor, described the unique challenges that come with working in a hospital environment and why experience, flexibility and team work are needed “to solve all the things that come up each day.”

“Our duties change on a regular basis and we always make the changes work,” she said. “When you start adding to the job duties of the private company, will they make it work? I doubt it. Extra duties will be added to the bill or just flat out refused.”

Cohen also explained the vital importance of trades and maintenance services to ensure the proper functioning of all hospital systems.

Trades people monitor and maintain back up power generators, for example, which always have to be ready to go in the event of a power failure, she said. It's an area where there's no room for error.

*...more*



Head electrician Randy Dowhaniuk asked the board to “reconsider privatizing plant services at Vernon Jubilee and Kelowna General,” saying “it would be a great loss to the Interior Health Authority” to lose experienced, skilled dedicated staff.

HEU president Fred Muzin and BC Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair both addressed the gathering prior to the meeting.

Muzin condemned the BC Liberal government for its unrelenting attack on workers and called upon the IHA to open up the process to the public.

Sinclair pointed out the complete lack of foresight in even considering laying off skilled workers in the midst of an escalating labour shortage.

May 23, 2007