



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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New “shared services” organization could open door to further privatization of health services

A plan by B.C.'s health authorities and the Ministry of Health to centralize a number of health services through a new shared services organization could be a prelude to further privatization and contracting out.

The government is targeting a number of areas for “consolidation” including payroll, purchasing, IT services and other services. Approximately 1350 HEU members work in these areas.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says that health authority representatives admitted on Wednesday at *Bill 29* talks that discussions among health authority executives and ministry of health officials leading to today's announcement have been going on for eight months.

They also said that future plans for the new organization may include medical transcription in addition to the areas targeted in today's announcement. About 350 HEU members work in medical transcription.

But despite repeated requests during *Bill 29* discussions for information about future contracting out plans, government and health employers had failed to mention their plans for a new Shared Services Organization or their intention to centralize selected health services.

“It's as if they have learned nothing from their loss at the Supreme Court,” says Darcy. “They have a clear obligation to consult with us on matters that affect members' Charter rights and they have failed to do so. Instead they have hatched their plans in private.

“They also appear determined to continue their reckless experimentation with privatization. That doesn't just put members' jobs at risk. Their plans could result in confidential patient and employee information being transferred to the control of private corporations.”

Darcy says that HEU's *Bill 29* team is determined to ensure that job security is enhanced in the future, and that members affected by *Bill 29* in the past receive compensation as a result of the ongoing discussions with government.

“Today's announcement underscores the need to obtain the best possible protections for members' jobs as part of this process, no matter how long it takes and despite the government's phony deadlines.”

HEU and its union partners in the Facilities Bargaining Association have now met with health employer and government representatives on 16 days since October 4. Three more days are scheduled for next week.

Talks between government and health employers and the other bargaining associations in health care have also begun over the last few weeks.

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