



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Interior communities speak out against privatization of hospital laundry services

Nearly 12,000 British Columbians have signed a petition calling on the provincial government to cancel plans by the Interior Health Authority to privatize hospital laundry services in 11 communities throughout the region.

As many as 175 decent, family-supporting jobs could be lost if IHA contracts the service out to one or more of the private companies it has invited to bid on the work.

The scheme has also come under fire from local governments with city councils in Nelson and Kamloops adopting motions urging IHA to reconsider the move. In addition, the Vernon mayor has spoken out publicly against privatization.

All three communities have regional laundries that could be impacted by the plan.

HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside is hoping that mounting public pressure will convince the province and IHA to make the relatively modest investments required to upgrade and replace equipment – about \$10 million over the next decade.

“The health authority has been clear that their laundry workers are doing an excellent job,” says Whiteside.

“It’s disappointing that the provincial government and IHA would jeopardize efficient hospital support services and the livelihood of 175 workers over a relatively modest investment in equipment repair and replacement.

“And the possibility that the jobs could be trucked out of the region altogether adds insult to injury.”

Last fall, the IHA announced that it would explore the privatization of hospital laundry at five major hospitals in Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops, Penticton and Nelson, along with services in six smaller communities.

IHA invited a short list of vendors to bid on the work in February and is expected to make a decision later this summer.

HEU laundry workers and their supporters have circulated a petition that’s attracted more than 11,750 signatures. The petition will be tabled in the B.C. legislature in the coming days.

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