



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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IHA further delays decision on privatizing hospital laundry services

Yesterday's announcement by Interior Health Authority (IHA) chief executive officer Chris Mazurkewich that a decision on contracting out hospital laundry services has been further delayed until March is welcome news, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

"We're pleased that under new leadership, the IHA is taking a serious look at the plans for hospital laundries," says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. "So far, we have not seen any valid justification for the health authority to forge ahead with contracting out this efficient, publicly delivered service."

Since announcing last year that it would seek bids from the private sector to take over all or part of its laundry operations at five major hospitals in Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops, Penticton and Nelson, along with services in six smaller communities, IHA has delayed its decision several times.

"This in-house laundry operation has set the bar high in terms of productivity, efficiency and quality standards, according to the IHA itself," says Whiteside. "We need the IHA to be a champion of protecting family-supporting jobs and a clearly well-run service in their region. That would be a win-win situation for everybody."

Recently, Simon Fraser University economist Marvin Shaffer reviewed two IHA documents, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, to analyze the health authority's rationale for outsourcing its laundry services, and found no valid business case for privatization.

Over the past several months, councils in Nelson, Kamloops, Williams Lake, Summerland, Vernon, and 100 Mile House have passed motions opposing the privatization scheme, and more than 12,800 concerned citizens signed a petition speaking out against the loss of this public service and 175 family-supporting jobs in their communities.

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