



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Widespread opposition to privatization of hospital services in Okanagan – poll

A poll released today shows that there is little support in the Okanagan for the proposed privatization of maintenance and housekeeping services at local hospitals as part of building expansion plans.

In a Viewpoints Research/Hospital Employees' Union survey of 400 residents of Kelowna and Vernon, nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) said they would trust public employees to provide cleaning and maintenance services in local hospitals, but just one out of five (22 per cent) would trust a private corporation to do so.

A request for qualifications issued by the Interior Health Authority and the provincial government for the financing, construction and operation of a hospital expansion project opens the door to the privatization of services at the existing Kelowna General and Vernon Jubilee hospitals.

Such a move would result in the loss of more than 300 jobs in those communities.

The deadline for RFQ responses was Monday. The IHA and Partnerships BC – the government agency charged with promoting the privatization of public infrastructure – will look at those responses before issuing a request for proposals this summer.

An overwhelming majority (80 per cent) said that the IHA should reject Victoria's direction to privatize cleaning and maintenance services if it felt that doing so would put patient care and safety at risk.

A clear majority (62 per cent) opposed the privatization of these services.

Nearly nine out of 10 (87 per cent) concluded that patient safety and quality of care should be the top priorities when making decisions regarding the \$200 million capital project.

But just eight per cent say lower construction costs and more rapid completion are priorities in making a decision about the project, despite these reasons being advanced by promoters of public-private partnership schemes.

“Okanagan residents who use these hospitals are looking to the IHA to make the right decision, even if it runs counter to Victoria's pro-privatization policies,” says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. “And this poll indicates that they are not prepared to sacrifice publicly-provided cleaning and maintenance services in their hospitals.”

The Viewpoints Research poll was conducted between May 25 and May 27 and is considered accurate to within five percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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Contact: Margi Blamey, HEU communications officer, at 604-456-7094 (direct)  
or 604-785-5324 (cell)

