



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Hospital Employees' Union condemns Interior Health decision to privatize hospital laundry services

Today's decision by the Interior Health Authority (IHA) to contract out hospital laundry services is deeply disappointing news for more than 100 workers who will lose their jobs in five communities, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

"Over the past year, there's been a groundswell of public concern about the economic impact privatizing hospital laundry will have on Interior communities," says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

"Privatizing a public, in-house hospital service that IHA admits is running efficiently doesn't make sense. Not for the patients and surgical teams who rely on timely, sterile linens. Not for the people who do this vital work. And not for the communities that will be impacted by job loss."

Although laundry services in the principle sites – Kelowna, Kamloops, Nelson, Penticton and Vernon – will be privatized, services in six smaller communities will remain in-house. They are Golden, Ashcroft, Princeton, 100 Mile House, Lillooet and Williams Lake.

In November, Simon Fraser University economist Marvin Shaffer concluded that IHA failed to establish a valid business case for privatizing hospital laundry services, following his review of IHA internal documents obtained through the Freedom of Information process.

"It's astounding to us that the IHA has demonstrated such disregard for the quality of service our members work so hard to provide, and the economic well-being of the communities in which they work," says Whiteside.

Whiteside thanks all those who spoke out against the plan to privatize hospital laundry services, including nearly 13,000 British Columbians who signed the petition – tabled in the legislature last year – and several city and district councils who passed motions to protect jobs and services.

HEU will advocate for the rights of members facing lay off through the labour relations process to support them through this difficult time.

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