



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Victoria-area hospitals bring nearly 180 privatized food service workers back in-house

In reversal of 18 years of contracting out, food service workers at Royal Jubilee and Victoria General reunited with health care team

[Burnaby, B.C.] – The Hospital Employees' Union is welcoming today's transfer of nearly 180 privatized food service workers back to the Vancouver Island Health Authority at Royal Jubilee and Victoria General hospitals.

It is the second group of workers in the Capital Region brought back into the public sector as health authority employees since the provincial government's August 2021 announcement about its plans to end 21 commercial contracts across the province.

“For nearly two decades, these food service workers have been pushed to the margins of the health care workforce, with low wages and substandard benefits,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard.

“Today these workers will be reunited with the rest of the health care team and acknowledged for their vital role on the health care team. It's long overdue justice for these workers and it will result in better coordination of services and better care.”

Housekeeping and food services in many hospitals care homes were contracted out to multinational corporations when the former BC Liberal government enacted the *Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act* (Bill 29) in 2002.

Under the BC NDP government, the legislature repealed that legislation in 2018 setting the stage for the repatriation of these privatized services.

“The privatization policies of the previous government devastated the lives of thousands of workers in a sector that was overwhelmingly female and highly racialized,” says Brisard. “It fragmented health care delivery, undermined wages and working conditions, and made our hospitals less safe workers and patients.”

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HEU has been working to ensure a seamless transition that will see more than 4,000 workers brought back under the direct employment by health authorities as commercial contracts with corporate contractors are terminated.

The health care workers coming back under health authorities will be covered by the province-wide Facilities collective agreement and see improved wages and benefits as a result.

Even with the planned repatriation of thousands of workers in the coming year, there are hundreds more who work at hospitals built under public-private partnership (P3) schemes whose return back under the health authorities has not been confirmed.

“Every single health care worker is critical to quality health care delivery and should be part of a reunited team, regardless of the facility’s funding model,” says Brisard. “Our union will continue to push until all privatized housekeepers and food service workers have been repatriated.”

HEU is B.C.’s largest health union representing more than 50,000 workers in various health occupations and settings, including more than 4,000 contracted hospital support workers currently and previously employed by multinational corporations under contract to Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Island Health, Fraser Health and the Provincial Health Services authorities.