



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Yukon's Hospitals are Bleeding Out

Staffing Levels Reach Critical Lows.

Four members of the Whitehorse General Hospital's nursing staff resigned in one 12-hour period earlier last week, citing "deplorable working conditions". While damning, these resignations are merely symptoms of a system on the verge of collapse. Doctors, surgeons and Hospital staff represented both by YEU/PSAC and PIPSC have been raising the alarm for years, and the situation is now critical.

Chronic understaffing has exposed hospital workers to a constellation of challenges including exposure to higher COVID risks with fewer resources and an ever-increasing workload. Staffing vacancies have skyrocketed, with at least 42 vacant positions across all facilities and a minimum of 23 nursing positions un-filled.

The Hospital Corporation's unhealthy dependence on imported agency nurses means Yukon workers must bear an extreme burden of risk. They serve alongside high-risk healthcare workers who have just flown into the Territory, often from active COVID regions. Without any requirements to quarantine before entering our wards, these nurses pose a grave risk to the health of Yukoners and vulnerable front-line workers.

"Our members in Yukon's hospitals have seen their working conditions worsen year after year without relief. During this global pandemic, consequences of the chronic understaffing could be catastrophic. Yukoners should be able to rely on safe hospitals, and so should hospital workers on the front lines" says YEU/PSAC President Steve Geick.

Member responses to a recent union survey highlight the challenges workers face and illustrate the anxiety of many hospital staffers.

"Continually shifting work schedules due to ongoing, chronic understaffing is demoralizing for staff" submitted one YHC employee.

“When you go to work, you should expect a full complement of staff, not fear the unknown staffing levels for your shift. The stress of the potential of working “short” on a regular basis is extremely disturbing and is similar to vicarious trauma” says another.

“It’s very scary at WGH right now with the patient ratios and the lack of resources - it’s terrible. How can patients be cared for properly with fewer nurses, burnt out staff? Something has to be done.”

PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President for the North Jack Bourassa adds “Having to continually fight for what’s right and moral is very frustrating.”

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an organization in need of urgent care. Without immediate intervention and a serious commitment to improving patient to staff ratios, we fear for the safety of hospital employees and the vulnerable patients they serve.

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