



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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First contract achieved for cleaning and dietary workers at three Vancouver hospitals

About 250 dietary and cleaning staff employed by the British corporation Compass Group at three Vancouver health care facilities have been awarded a first collective agreement by a Labour Relations Board-appointed mediator-arbitrator.

The contract terms, issued by mediator-arbitrator Don Munroe yesterday, include wage increases of up to 27 per cent, along with a number of other provisions.

The collective agreement with the Hospital Employees' Union will bring wages for most workers in line with those negotiated last year with Compass' competitors Aramark and Sodexo. The contract expires in September, 2008.

The HEU members work at B.C. Children's and Women's Hospital, Sunnyhill Health Centre for Children and the B.C. Cancer Agency.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says that while wages are still lower than those paid before government-mandated privatization, the agreement provides a modest financial boost for workers and their families.

"Wages paid to hospital workers by these corporations remain out-of-sync with the cost-of-living in Vancouver," says Darcy. "But this agreement should benefit patients – by reducing staff turnover – and it will provide a measure of respect and recognition for the critical role these workers play in keeping patients healthy and safe."

The union was certified as the bargaining agent for the workers in August, 2005. The workers gave their bargaining committee a 99 per cent strike mandate last July and a mediator was subsequently appointed by the LRB.

HEU has now reached first contracts covering 2,400 cleaning and dietary staff employed by the three corporations in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. About 750 HEU members working for Compass on Vancouver Island are still without a contract.

The LRB is expected to appoint a mediator-arbitrator for those talks in the new year.

Aramark, Sodexo and Compass received long-term contracts from some B.C. health authorities after the B.C. Liberal government legislated away collective agreement protections against contracting out in 2002.

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