



# OUR WORK MATTERS!

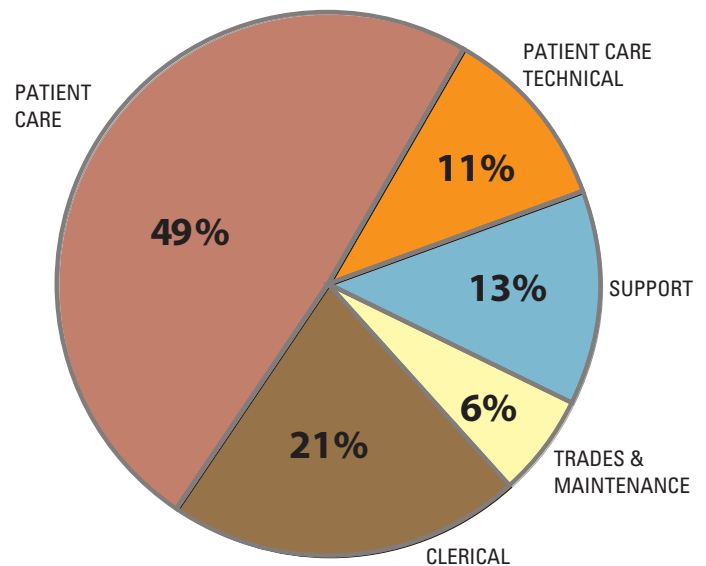
OCCUPATIONAL & WAGE POLICY CONFERENCES 2009

## HEU's critical roles on the health care team

**B**ritish Columbians meet Hospital Employees' Union members whenever they receive publicly delivered health care services. Our 43,000 members work in almost every aspect of the health care system – acute care hospitals, residential care facilities, community group homes, outpatient clinics and medical labs – providing both direct and non-direct nursing services.

- ▶ If you are a senior accessing long-term care, assisted living or home support services... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you receive renal dialysis at an outpatient satellite... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you've had a broken bone set by a cast... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you've given birth in a B.C. maternity unit... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you have blood work drawn and processed at a medical lab satellite... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you have booked diagnostic tests like ultrasounds, CT scans or MRIs... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you attend adult day programs for people with mental challenges or substance addictions... **you have met HEU members.**
- ▶ If you or a loved one have been admitted to a B.C. acute care hospital... **you have met HEU members.**

Representing members in facilities, community health and community social services, HEU has a long history of advocating for better working and caring conditions, defending public health care, and speaking out against privatization.



HEU represents about 35,000 facilities subsector members, and an additional 8,000 in community health, community social services, First Nations health agencies, the Big 3 (Sodexo, Aramark and Compass), and some small independents.

Our facilities members work in more than 270 job classifications in five occupational categories: patient care, patient care technical, clerical, support, and trades and maintenance.

## THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION: OUR ROOTS

Formed in 1944 when an all-women's union and an all-men's union at Vancouver General Hospital joined forces, HEU is B.C.'s oldest and largest health care union.

Those 300 VGH trailblazers organized as an "industrial union" to represent workers in all occupational categories at their facility – including orderlies, cleaners, storemen, painters, ward assistants; kitchen, maintenance, laundry, household, tuberculosis unit and powerhouse workers.

These members worked for very low wages in terrible conditions, like most hospital employees throughout the province at that time. Hours were long, breaks were few, and there was no formal sick leave or protections against unfair firing. It was these sweatshop conditions that motivated health care workers to create a union that could stand up for equality, fairness, respect and social justice.

Nursing team members also formed an important part of the union from its earliest days. Through HEU, they were able to win a shorter work-week with improved wages and benefits.

When public pressure forced government to fund an expanded public health care system after World War II, the union's membership quickly grasped that they had a critical role to play as health care advocates.

## ORGANIZING AND BARGAINING GAINS

In 1968, HEU members bargained their first province-wide master agreement, which standardized wages and working conditions in all unionized, acute care hospitals.

Over the next three decades, organizing initiatives brought community health and community social services workers into HEU. And the union successfully won a number of human rights complaints to end gender-based wage discrimination.

Then, in 1992, HEU secured pay equity language in the master agreement, resulting in pay equity targets and annual adjustments worth millions of dollars.

In 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada found sections of the BC Liberals' *Bill 29* to be unconstitutional, and the union negotiated a \$75-million compensation package for members impacted by the 2002, contract-breaking law.

More recently, HEU successfully negotiated contracts for our "Big 3" members, working for private companies Sodexo, Aramark and Compass. And the union launched an award-winning, province-wide *Living Wage Campaign*, advocating for family-supporting wages and improved working conditions for all British Columbians.



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