



News Release

THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 17, 2005

HEU strike against Sodexho escalates

Non-essential retail food outlets close in major VCHA hospitals

Retail food outlets staffed by members of the Hospital Employees' Union employed by Sodexho will be closed in major hospitals across the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority as job action in the five-week-old strike escalates.

Up until now, retail food sales have been struck on a rotating basis throughout the health authority.

However, beginning today public access to cafeterias and kiosks will shut down and remain closed for the duration of the labour dispute at Vancouver Hospital, St. Paul's, UBC, Lions Gate, GF Strong Rehab Centre, Powell River General, St. Mary's Hospital in Sechelt, Richmond Hospital including Minoru, Squamish General, St. Vincent's (Langara), Holy Family and Mount St. Joseph's.

"The workers who staff retail food outlets are paid poverty-level wages by a corporation that recorded global revenues of \$17 billion last year," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Sodexho pays 90 per cent of these employees \$10.15 an hour and is refusing to return to the bargaining table with a fair wage offer - one that would reduce the high staff turnover and stabilize the workforce."

Sodexho will pocket more than \$400 million from BC taxpayers through lucrative contracts signed with health authorities for food, cleaning and support services in hospitals and care facilities.

"It's time for Sodexho to invest in its employees in British Columbia and to respect the critical role they play in health care," says Darcy.

Retail food outlets are not an essential service under the LRB orders and their closure will not impact patient and resident care.

The strike against Sodexho began on September 15 with 1,100 workers taking job action at 29 sites in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, on the Sunshine Coast and on Vancouver Island. On October 14, another 350 housekeepers at seven more Fraser Health Authority facilities including the region's largest hospitals joined the strike.

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