



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE



MEDIA ADVISORY

July 13, 2008

Workers take living wage campaign to streets of downtown Vancouver

Hospital cleaners and food service workers, employed by multinational corporations – Sodexo, Aramark and Compass – will take their campaign for living wages to the streets of downtown Vancouver this Sunday.

Wearing T-shirts that say “work should lift you out of poverty, not keep you there,” workers will hand out leaflets and petitions calling on health authorities to ensure all contractors in their facilities pay living wages and provide safe working conditions.

“Hospital workers are starting their day exhausted from working two jobs or taking overtime shifts just to make ends meet,” explains HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. “That’s not good for workers, their families or for patient care and it’s time for health authorities to be accountable for the dire situation they’ve created.”

Organizers believe that increased public awareness about issues such as insufficient cleaning supplies, lack of training, huge workloads, high rates of staff turnover and the impact of low wages will add to the growing pressure on health authorities to make living wages and safe working conditions a requirement of any commercial contracts they sign.

“These workers are an essential part of the health care team, on the front lines of infection control and patient care, and it’s in the interests of health authorities, patients and entire communities that they have safe working conditions and earn a fair family-supporting wage,” says Darcy.

A spring survey conducted by Viewpoints Research found that more than 90 per cent of British Columbians believe B.C.’s health authorities should require corporate cleaning and food service contractors to pay family-supporting wages to their workers.

Event information: Between 30 and 40 workers will meet at the Vancouver Art Gallery to distribute leaflets, stickers and petitions.

When: 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Sunday, July 13, 2008

Where: Robson St., between Howe St. and Hornby St.

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Contact: Olive Dempsey, Communications Officer, 604-816-3917 (cell)
Two backgrounders are available, linked to the online advisory at www.heu.org

