



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# BARGAINING BULLETIN

PLEASE POST

## Strike votes set for HEU members employed by Sodexo and Aramark

*Members at information meetings send clear message; employers must address serious issues with wages and working conditions*

A strike vote schedule has been set for HEU members working for Sodexo and Aramark in housekeeping and dietary services around the Lower Mainland, on Southern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

Over the last two weeks, members learned about the Sodexo “settlement offer” in a series of information meetings. Members working for Aramark also attended the meetings, although they were still waiting for their employer’s monetary offer. Aramark-employed members told the bargaining committee that a similar offer from Aramark would be just as unacceptable.

On March 18, the bargaining committee received Aramark’s monetary proposal, which was not significantly different from Sodexo’s offer. Both employers have said that they are not prepared to discuss any monetary improvements beyond their current offers.

At the information meetings, members were particularly concerned about the employers’ demands for a five-year contract, minimal wage increases, and no improvements to benefits, vacation or sick days. Members were also very concerned that, for workers in retail foods, there were wage rollbacks for newly hired staff and no wage increases.

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### **Strike vote dates and locations will be posted in work sites over the next few days.**

It is important for members to know that these votes are a very critical time to deliver a strong message to the employer that their wage proposals are unfair and unacceptable.

HEU continues to hold the position that the best outcome for both parties can be achieved with the employer at the bargaining table. The union says that improvements to wages and working conditions will address many of the employers’ serious challenges related to recruitment and retention, high staff turnover, and injury rates.

Unfortunately, Sodexo and Aramark’s refusal to discuss counter offers has given the union no choice but to pursue strike vote meetings in the coming weeks. It is also the union’s position that this impasse reinforces the need for government and health authorities to take responsibility for their contractors’ performance in health care facilities.

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## Summary of Aramark’s offer on monetary issues:

On March 18, Aramark presented its monetary offer. This included the demand for a 66-month contract that would expire on March 31, 2014. While the employer did not call this a final offer, they told the committee that there is no room for any monetary improvements. Aramark did not present any improvements to benefits, sick time, pension or vacation.

The following increases would be applied to all members employed by Aramark. The wages listed in this table reflect the impact on \$13.05.

	Percentage	Wage
Oct. 1, 2008 – Mar. 31, 2009	1.5%	\$13.25
Apr. 1, 2009 – Mar. 31, 2010	1.5%	\$13.44
Apr. 1, 2010 – Mar. 31, 2011	2.5%	\$13.78
Apr. 1, 2011 – Mar. 31, 2012	2.0%	\$14.06
Apr. 1, 2012 – Mar. 31, 2013	2.0%	\$14.34
Apr. 1, 2013 – Mar. 31, 2014	2.0%	\$14.62

### Agreement has been reached with Aramark on most non-monetary items, including:

- improvements to harassment language;
- revised union/management meetings, and grievance procedures that better reflect members’ experiences in the workplace;
- better provisions regarding personal protective equipment, and
- improvements to casual call-in procedures.



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### ***Look for schedules of strike vote locations and dates on union bulletin boards early next week.***

Members who have questions about bargaining with Sodexo and Aramark can call HEU bargainers Susan Fisher at 604-456-7030, or Noel Gulbransen at 604-456-7031. For long-distance calls, they can also be reached at 1-800-663-5813.

## Questions and Answers about strike votes:

### **Q: Why should members support a strike vote?**

It’s the union’s goal to reach a settlement without resorting to strike action. Unfortunately, Sodexo and Aramark have presented offers with the position that there’s no room for negotiation on their monetary proposals. A strong strike vote puts pressure on the employer to take bargaining seriously and get back to the table. It can also signal to government, health authorities, other health care workers, and the public that bargaining has reached a critical point.

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**Q: If we vote in favour of a strike, when does job action begin?**

A strike vote provides a three-month time frame for the union to take various forms of job action. This can include striking if needed, but does not necessarily mean that a strike will happen. Before any job action can occur, essential services staffing levels must be established, and 72 hours' notice must be given to the employer.

**Q: What does it mean to establish essential services staffing levels?**

When there's a strike in health care, the union is legally required to maintain a level of service that does not jeopardize the health and safety of patients or the public. A strike cannot begin until the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB) approves those staffing levels, and is assured that the union has a plan in place to provide essential services. The union is currently in discussions at the LRB about the essential services plan.

**Q: Where can I find information about strike pay?**

A strike pay Question and Answer document will be provided at the strike vote meetings.

**Q: What will be expected of me in case of a strike?**

Members will be expected to participate in picket duty, as well as other activities that will build solidarity among the labour movement and community, and put pressure on the employer and government to achieve a negotiated settlement.

**Q: Will other health care workers be allowed to cross the picket line?**

Unfortunately, health authorities are not considered to be the "true" employer, even though they hire the contractors who employ workers in their facilities. That means there will be separate "gates" set up for other hospital staff. But, HEU members working in the facilities subsector, plus all other hospital staff, can engage in solidarity actions. Activities such as wearing Living Wage stickers, sending letters, supporting the picket line outside work hours and more, are all ways to send a message to Sodexo, Aramark and government.

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