



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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JANUARY 27, 2009

HEU ads urge Victoria to take responsibility for performance of hospital contractors

The Hospital Employees' Union launched an ad campaign this week that underscores the need for the provincial government to take more direct responsibility for the performance of its hospital food service and cleaning contractors.

In 2003 and 2004, four of B.C.'s health authorities signed contracts valued at over \$500 million with multinational corporations to clean hospitals and feed patients.

But the union says these corporations aren't providing workers with the training and supplies they require to keep hospitals safe. There is also high staff turnover and workforce instability as a result of the low wages paid by the corporations.

HEU is currently trying to address these issues in ongoing collective bargaining on behalf of 3500 workers employed by Compass Group, Sodexo and Aramark.

Earlier this month, the union released copies of WCB orders issued to Compass Group for contraventions of provincial health and safety regulations at two Vancouver Island hospitals.

Investigators cited Compass for its failure to provide adequate health and safety training; to train workers in the safe use of toxic cleaning agents and in the appropriate method for dealing with hazardous spills; to keep records of health and safety incident investigations, and to have a plan for workers who are exposed to materials contaminated with blood.

"The provincial government may have contracted out these critical health services, but they can't contract out their responsibility to ensure safe and clean hospitals for patients, visitors and health care workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Provincial politicians must also take real steps to ensure that their corporate contractors pay living wages, investing in B.C. families and a stable workforce," adds Darcy.

With today's economic uncertainty, it's more important than ever that government makes sure the money it spends on big contracts goes back to workers and into our local economies and communities."

The current collective agreements with Compass Group, Sodexo and Aramark expired September 30, 2008 and include health care facilities throughout the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and southern Vancouver Island.

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The TV and print ads can be viewed at www.bclivingwage.org

Contact: Olive Dempsey, HEU communications officer, 604-816-3917 (cell)

