



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Hospital housekeepers, dietary workers deliver 15,000-strong living wage petition to Premier

*Petition calls for government accountability for hospital contractors' performance, living wages, and clean, safe hospitals*

At a campaign stop in Burnaby today, hospital housekeepers presented Gordon Campbell with 15,000 signatures calling on government and its health authorities to take responsibility for the wages and working conditions provided by their contractors.

Workers in this sector currently earn \$13.05 an hour, with no pension plan, between six and 10 sick days per year, and few benefits.

"It's unacceptable that the health care workers responsible for keeping our hospitals clean and safe are forced to take on two jobs or to come to work sick when they can't afford a day off," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

Hospital housekeepers and dietary workers are currently negotiating new collective agreements with Sodexo, Aramark and Compass. HEU is calling on government and health authorities to require these contractors to provide housekeeping and dietary staff with the wages and working conditions needed for clean and safe hospitals.

"Sodexo, Aramark and Compass are profitable global corporations who received hundreds of millions in government contracts," says Darcy, "In tough economic times, it's more important than ever that government ensure these public dollars are used to support healthy families and strong local economies."

In the U.K., low wages have been linked to the high rates of turnover, short-staffing, inconsistent training, and increases in costly and deadly health care-associated infections.

Over the past year, surveys of contractor-employed support services workers in five hospitals found that 30 to 50 per cent hold more than one job, while others face the stress of choosing between food and heat, or struggling to afford basics for their kids like school field trips.

A study released earlier this year calculated a living wage rate for Metro Vancouver at \$16.74 an hour, based on data from Statistics Canada, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Dieticians of B.C.

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After paying for the basics like housing, utilities, and child care costs, the average hospital support service worker is left with about \$10 a day for food, transportation and all other necessities such as clothing, recreation, emergencies and education or retirement savings.

B.C. is on record as the province with the highest rate of child poverty in the country, with more than 50 per cent of those children living in families where at least one parent works full-time.

In their first term, the Liberals oversaw the mass firing and contracting out of more than 8,000 housekeepers and dietary workers in hospitals around the Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island.

**The \$10 a day figure is based on the following calculation.**

**\$1,651** – Monthly take-home pay of a hospital housekeeper or dietary worker employed by Sodexo, Aramark or Compass.

\$816 – housing (one-bedroom apartment)  
\$30 – telephone  
\$50 – heat/hydro  
\$400 – unlicensed/casual childcare  
\$50 – Health and/or household insurance

This leaves **\$305 a month** or **\$10 a day** for food, transportation, clothing, footwear, household goods, recreation, as well as savings for emergencies, retirement and education for one adult and one child under six.

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

Videos of workers' testimonials about the impact of low-wages on their workplace, their families and their communities can be viewed at <[www.heu.org/videos3/](http://www.heu.org/videos3/)>.