



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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More than 200 health care workers, community supporters rally for living wages and clean, safe hospitals

On Friday, hospital cleaners and dietary workers marked this weekend's International Women's Day with a rally to draw attention to the impact of low wages and inadequate working conditions on families, communities and on the quality of health care in B.C.

Currently, negotiations have stalled between the Hospital Employees' Union and Compass Group – the UK company contracted to provide cleaning and food services in the Provincial Health Services and Vancouver Island Health Authorities.

“We cannot have economic equality for women without living wages, and we cannot have healthy children and families without living wages,” HEU's secretary-business manager, Judy Darcy, told the crowd.

“We're here to tell Compass to come back to the table. And we're here to tell PHSA and the provincial government to take responsibility for the performance of the corporate contractors who operate in your facilities.”

Adrienne Montani, Provincial Coordinator for First Call: B.C.'s Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, called for living wages as a key solution to addressing B.C.'s child poverty rate – the highest in all of Canada.

“These numbers are a disgrace and a call for action,” said Montani, who also pointed out that research into social determinants of health comes from the same health authorities who hire contractors like Compass.

Workers also spoke out about the frustrations and stress of huge workloads and low pay.

“They don't respect us and when we go home we feel so tired,” said one housekeeper, “we don't get enough pay and we don't get enough respect.”

Father Clarence Li, who brought greetings from Anglicans across the Lower Mainland echoed this sentiment.

“I visit hospitals in the course of my work as a priest and I am alarmed at the deterioration of morale among workers because they can't support their families,” said Li.

The Hospital Employees' Union is negotiating renewed collective agreements for 3,500 health care workers employed by Compass Group, Aramark and Sodexo. Top among the bargaining issues are working conditions – time, training and supplies – that allow housekeepers and dietary workers to keep hospital cleaning and food services to a standard that ensure safe facilities and quality patient care.

Visit www.bclivingwage.org to support the call for living wages and clean, safe hospitals.

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