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The following is an excerpt from *Surrey Now* • May 9, 2008
Headline: People deserve to have jobs that lift them out of poverty
byline: Judy Darcy

Letter to the Editor,

Re: "Despite hype, census points to fundamental problem," May 6 Now editorial.

... Today, contracted-out hospital support workers find themselves struggling to afford a decent quality of life. That's not good for families, communities or the province's economy.

That's why the Hospital Employees' Union has engaged in a living wage campaign. This important anti-poverty tool calls on health authorities to be accountable for ensuring the corporations who employ support service workers in hospitals provide fair, family-supporting wages and safe working conditions.

All workers in B.C. deserve to have work that lifts them out of poverty, and doesn't keep them there.

And this includes the people who are on the frontlines of infection control and patient care in our health-care facilities...

The following is an excerpt from *Metro Valley Newspaper Group* May 15, 2008
Headline: Hospital cleaners an essential part of health care
byline: Judy Darcy

Letter to the Editor,

Re: "Infections from superbug on the increase"

Hospital cleaners are an essential part of protecting patients and the public from the increas-

ing rate of hospital superbugs, reported in last week's paper.

In a recent newspaper article, the regional medical director for Vancouver Coastal Acute Infections Control named "clean hospitals" as one of the key solutions to this growing problem in the Lower Mainland.

Unfortunately, the cleaners who are now employed by multinational corporations in Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island hospitals are consistently denied the time, training and supplies to meet appropriate standards. They are on the front lines of infection control, but struggle every day with overwhelming workloads, low wages, insufficient supplies, and high rates of staff turnover...

The following is an excerpt from *Oak Bay News* April 23, 2008
Headline: Hospital cleaners an essential part of health care
byline: Judy Darcy

Letter to the Editor,

Re: Former housekeeper alarmed by hospitals' current standards, *Oak Bay News*, April 11.

The regular complaints about hospital cleaning standards described in this article are just as troubling to hospital support staff as they are to patients and members of the public.

Hospital Employees' Union members who work for multina-

tional companies like Compass Group, Sodexo and Aramark know their work is essential to infection control and patient health.

They struggle every day to meet basic standards, despite overwhelming workloads, low wages, insufficient training and supplies, and high rates of staff turnover.

In fact, several cleaners at Nanaimo Regional General Hospi-

tal recently sounded the alarm after a Compass supervisor instructed them to spot mop their areas as a solution to their workload issues.

Hospital cleaners have also questioned the integrity of the Westech audits.

This system uses visual inspections only and does not include any microbiological

testing of hospital surfaces.

It is for these reasons that HEU has launched a Living Wage Campaign calling on the health authorities and government to step in and ensure living wages and safe working conditions...

They are on the front lines of infection control, but struggle every day with overwhelming workloads, low wages, insufficient supplies, and high rates of staff turnover.



Because work should lift you out of poverty, not keep you there.

updates
NEWS FROM THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

a Living Wage Campaign
Because work should lift you out of poverty, not keep you there.

Campaign gains new allies, breaks new ground and receives public support

PUBLIC POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR LIVING WAGES

In a poll conducted this spring, over 90 per cent of British Columbians said they believed health authorities should be required to make sure contractors pay family-supporting wages.

The poll also found that:

- Four out of five British Columbians think hospital contractors who don't pay decent wages should not receive tax dollars.
- 87 per cent believe that no full-time worker in a B.C. hospital should need to take a second job just to make ends meet.
- 78 per cent support a policy that would require any corporation with contracts to provide public services in B.C. to pay living wages to their employees.

LIVING WAGES BECOME A COMMUNITY ISSUE

While HEU's living wage campaign activists have been busy, First Call, B.C.'s Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, has also raised awareness in the community about the importance of a fair living wage for families.

First Call recently hosted a roundtable, where more than 40 organizations, unions and faith groups heard Deborah Littman describe the London Living Wage Campaign and discussed possibilities for a broad-based living wage movement in the Lower Mainland.

Since then, (more and more diverse groups) are including living wage issues in their discussions of the Olympics, homelessness, anti-poverty work and other community challenges.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVISTS SEEK ENDORSEMENTS FROM MUNICIPAL POLITICIANS

With a solid foundation of support in the community, the campaign has started to seek endorsements from city councils and school boards. The presentations have included an overview of the issues from campaign staff, followed by a presentation from one or two members describing their personal experiences.

Presentations to the Burnaby City Council and School Board, as well as the Nanaimo School Board have been well received. Nanaimo and Burnaby School Trustees voted immediately to endorse the campaign. Burnaby City Councilors have referred the endorsement request to a committee.

Presentations are planned for July and September in communities such as Nanaimo, Richmond, Surrey, North Vancouver, Delta, Squamish and Sechelt.

BC NURSES' UNION SHOWS SUPPORT FOR LIVING WAGES AND SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

Members and staff have made presentations to several regional meetings of the BC Nurses' Union. This has led to a formal campaign endorsement from the BCNU, as well as interest from individual nurses who have offered to work with hospital support workers in this fight for fair, family-supporting wages and safe working conditions.



updates

Regional Action Teams are on the move and growing

Each regional action team has taken different approaches to organizing in their communities. Activities have included visits to politicians such as Surrey-Green Timbers MLA Sue Hammell and Delta School Board Trustee Theresa Townsley, as well as presentations to women's centres, temples, Gurudwaras and churches.

The responses have been very positive, with letters of support following many of the presentations.

New teams are getting off the ground in Burnaby, Richmond, Sechelt, Squamish and Powell River, and joining with existing teams in Vancouver, Nanaimo and Surrey.

Outreach builds support from facilities subsector locals

As part of the campaign goal to engage and build connections with facilities subsector members, campaign activists have made presentations to facilities locals around the Lower Mainland, including Vancouver General, Royal Columbian, Burnaby General, PHSA, Surrey Hospital, Lions Gate, St. Paul's Hospital, UBC, Richmond Hospital and Mission Hospital.

Campaign continues to connect with allies in the labour movement

Campaign activists continue to bring the living wage message out to other unions and conventions. Recently, the campaign has received an endorsement from the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association, has tabled at the Canadian Labour Congress Convention in Toronto, and made presentations to the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union Executive, CUPE's Committee Against Racism and Discrimination, as well as the Nanaimo and Victoria District Labour Councils.

Living Wage Campaign takes centre stage at Big 3 Bargaining Conference

This spring, more than 100 HEU members employed by the 'Big 3' – Sodexo Aramark and Compass – gathered together for the first time to develop common bargaining demands and strategies.

The conference included a community panel of speakers, as well as speeches from MLAs Jenny Kwan and Raj Chouhan, who expressed support for members' efforts to hold health authorities accountable for ensuring all workers in their facilities have living wages and safe working conditions.



Living wages maintains a profile in the news

Recent news stories and letters to the editor continue to raise the profile of low-waged hospital support workers and of the connection between living wages and strong communities. Here is a sample of some recent news coverage.

The following is an excerpt from:

Burnaby Now

May 28, 2008

Headline: Workers plead case at council

byline: Christopher Sun

Lack of cleaning supplies and the deterioration of wages and working conditions are major problems for health-care support workers, Burnaby city council was told Monday.

The Hospital Employees' Union came to council seeking support for their living wage campaign, a demand for the provincial government to increase wages and improve working conditions for health-care support workers – people who are on the frontline in maintaining clean

hospitals and health-care facilities.

“The working condition is not fine,” Mann said, who has worked at Lions Gate Hospital for four years.

“There is never enough supply to do the job properly.”

Lack of cleaning supplies mean infection control and cleanliness is deteriorating in all hospitals, Whiteside explained.

Union representative Jennifer Whiteside and local residents Juvelita Dacpano and Paula Mann spoke to council, with Dacpano and Mann telling their stories.

“The working condition is not fine,” Mann said, who has worked at Lions Gate Hospital for four years. “There is never enough supply to do the job properly.”

Lack of cleaning supplies mean infection control and cleanliness is deteriorating in all hospitals, Whiteside explained.

“We hear from lots of members that there is not enough gloves, masks, (cleaning products),” Whiteside said. “It’s happening in all hospitals, including

Burnaby General and Royal Columbian.”

Dacpano spoke about her difficulties in trying to live on low wages in one of the most expensive cities in Canada. She has worked at UBC Hospital for almost five years.

“We try to do a quality service to people we see every day,” she explained. “We have made friends with the residents. I love what I do, but I don’t make enough money to support myself and four children.

... Council was unanimously sympathetic to the delegation and has referred the matter to the social issues committee, which could draft up a letter in support...

The following is an excerpt from

The Vancouver Sun

May 12, 2008

Headline: Living Wage policies are needed to help immigrant workers achieve more equitable pay

byline: Judy Darcy

Letter to the Editor,

Re: New immigrant frustrated in low-paying job, May 1

Living wage policies are an important tool to address the shocking gap between the wages of new-immigrant and Canadian-born workers, described in The Sun.

Many of the 3,500 hospital cleaners and food service workers employed today by multinational corporations in our public facilities are recent immigrants. And many work two or three jobs to make ends meet and provide for their families.

... Despite these conditions, Sodexo, Aramark and Compass received more than \$643 million in public contracts with health authorities in the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island...

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a Living Wage Campaign 