



# News Release

**THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JANUARY 26, 2006**

## **Talks begin for new contract covering 38,000 hospital and long-term care workers**

*Pay boost a priority for union members whose  
wages were cut by 15 per cent in 2004*

Wages and job security will be key issues for health care unions as collective bargaining gets underway today for a new contract covering 38,000 hospital and long-term care workers.

While most public sector workers experienced wage freezes in the last bargaining cycle, health care workers covered by today's talks had their hourly pay rates slashed by 15 per cent as a result of wage cuts and a longer work week imposed through back-to-work legislation nearly two years ago.

Hospital Employees' Union secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says union members are focused on recovering lost ground and improving job security through a negotiated contract – the first since 2001.

“The days of imposed contracts are over in BC,” says Darcy, who is the spokesperson for the multi-union bargaining association that represents health care workers in the negotiations.

“Our unions want to move beyond the confrontation that has characterized labour relations in this sector in the past, and I urge health employers to do the same.

“We're determined to reach a fair deal that provides stability and certainty for our members, and find solutions that improve the quality of care we deliver to British Columbians,” adds Darcy.

The hospital and long-term care contract is the largest public sector contract due to expire March 31.

Health care workers covered by the contract work in more than 270 different classifications in areas such as: nursing (licensed practical nurses and care aides); trades and maintenance; diagnostic testing; logistics and supplies; cleaning and dietary; laundry; patient and medical records; human resources; information systems; and many others.

There are ten unions represented in the union bargaining association. The HEU is the largest with 35,000 members followed by the BC Government and Service Employees' Union with 1300 members and the International Union of Operating Engineers with 950.

Other unions in the association are: Construction and Specialized Workers' Union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Steelworkers, BC Nurses' Union, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry.

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*A detailed backgrounder is attached to the electronic version of this release at [www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org)*

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