



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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First collective agreement awarded for hospital cleaning and dietary staff on Vancouver Island

After nearly a year of bargaining, more than 700 HEU members on Vancouver Island have a first collective agreement with their British employer, Compass Group.

The contract – awarded by a Labour Relations Board-appointed arbitrator Tuesday – covers cleaners and dietary staff at several Vancouver Island Health Authority facilities.

Hospital Employees' Union secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says that while wages are still lower than before government-mandated privatization, the contract includes modest gains for workers and their families and will bring more stability to the workplace.

“This first contract is a measure of recognition and respect for critical roles these workers play in providing a safe and healthy environment for patients,” says Darcy.

Under the three-year collective agreement, most workers will see wages rise by 24 per cent by the expiry of the agreement in September 2008. This includes an immediate wage hike of 14 per cent that is retroactive to last September.

And it establishes wage parity by September 2008 with more than 3,000 other workers employed by Compass Group, Aramark and Sodexo at hospitals on the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast and in the Fraser Valley.

HEU was certified to represent the workers in December 2005 after a lengthy organizing drive. Bargaining began in April 2006 and in October 2006, the workers gave their bargaining committee a 96 per cent strike mandate.

The union subsequently applied for mediation/arbitration under the *Labour Code* and the LRB appointed Stan Lanyon as the arbitrator in December 2006.

Since 2003, more than 3,700 staff employed by foreign multinationals under contract to four separate health authorities have joined HEU. And with yesterday's award, all these workers are now covered by first collective agreements.

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