



THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Vancouver Island health care workers deliver 96 per cent strike mandate

Compass Group employees working in Vancouver Island Health Authority facilities have backed their bargaining team's effort to reach a first contract with a 96 per cent strike mandate.

The Hospital Employees' Union says it will now apply to the Labour Relations Board for assistance in reaching a first contract with the British corporation under Section 55 of the B.C. Labour Code.

The union bargaining team representing more than 700 cleaning and food service workers has been at the bargaining table since last April. The parties last met on October 2.

No progress has been made on the key issue of wages. Most Compass employees earn about \$10.56 an hour.

Those low wages are creating real problems for workers and patients, says HEU's secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Staff turnover is a huge issue in the workplace and is contributing to short-staffing and more on-the-job injuries," says Darcy. "It's making it more difficult for our members to provide proper levels of service for patients and extended care residents."

Darcy says that Compass – which reported operating profits of more than \$500 million in the first six months of this year – is putting the interests of its shareholders ahead of local patients and workers.

"Businesses – large and small – are being forced to deal with the realities of overheated local job markets," says Darcy. "So has Compass' competition in the Lower Mainland."

"It's time for this corporation to stop holding local patients and workers hostage – and provide the kind of wages that will bring long-term stability to the workplace and improve care for patients."

Last year, HEU reached first contracts with Compass' competitors Aramark and Sodexo that will bring workers wages to more than \$13 an hour by 2007. Those corporations have cleaning and food service contracts with the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health authorities.

The union is also negotiating a first contract for 200 Compass workers who work in the Provincial Health Services Authority facilities like the BC Cancer Agency and Children's and Women's Hospital.

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