



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## HEU member tells news media about the impacts of privatization and low wages

HEU member and food service worker Erna Calingasan shared her story of *Bill 29* privatization, low wages and long hours at a First Call press conference to release the latest data on the province's child poverty rates.

First Call, B.C.'s child and youth advocacy organization, released its annual report on Monday, detailing the Statistics Canada figures which give B.C. the highest child poverty rating in the country for the fourth year in a row.

The report also showed the vast majority of children who live in poverty have parents in the workforce, with more than half living in homes with at least one parent employed full-time.

The findings are a clear sign, says First Call, that any effort to tackle the province's shameful record of child poverty must also address the growing prevalence of low wages.

Calingasan knows first-hand what a difference a living wage can make. Before her job as a food service worker was contracted out under *Bill 29*, she had just achieved some financial stability and security at the facilities subsector pay rate.

But with her wages slashed and her seniority eliminated, Calingasan had to use all her savings and supplement her work for Sodexho with a second job in retail, along with occasional housecleaning. It's been a stressful and emotional time for the single mother and her son.

"I do believe that I and my son and a lot of people out there who are in my situation deserve the dignity of living wages," she told reporters as she fought back tears.

"I do believe that I should not have to work long hours every day and still end up being poor."

First Call, along with anti-poverty advocates Campaign 2000, have asked provincial and federal governments to commit to cutting child poverty in half by 2017.

To support decent working conditions and living wages for HEU members employed by Sodexho, Aramark and Compass, check out the living wage campaign now.

For more information about First Call and the 2007 Child Poverty Report Card, watch the Global TV news report (<http://www.canada.com/globaltv/bc/index.html>) or visit First Call's website at <http://www.firstcallbc.org/>.

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