



# News Release

THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Decent wages key issue as Sodexho strike expands to more BC hospitals

*72-hour strike notice served on French corporation's cleaning operations at seven Fraser Health sites including Surrey Memorial, Burnaby General, Royal Columbian and Chilliwack hospitals*

The Hospital Employees' Union today issued 72-hour strike notice on Sodexho covering cleaning operations at seven Fraser Health Authority facilities including the region's largest hospitals.

As a result, about 350 cleaning staff will join another 1,150 Sodexho health care support workers who've been engaged in rotating job action at 29 other sites since September 15.

The main issue in the dispute is wages. Sodexho pays 90 per cent of its workers at the seven sites \$10.46 an hour to clean operating rooms, special care nurseries and patient rooms.

The company's global revenues exceeded \$17 billion last year while its Paris-based CEO pocketed \$1.4 million in salary and benefits.

BC taxpayers will pay out more than \$400 million to Sodexho for service contracts signed by BC's health authorities. But despite the lucrative contracts, Sodexho's last offer would raise wages to little more than \$11 an hour over four years.

Sodexho has also failed to meet benchmark cleaning standards in more than half the hospitals it cleans in the FHA according to an audit ordered by BC's health authorities earlier this year.

"Sodexho has put the interests of its foreign shareholders ahead of BC patients, taxpayers and workers," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"Now the Fraser Health Authority has the dubious distinction of paying the lowest wages for hospital cleaning staff in the country -with staff turnover rates of up to 50 per cent annually."

Today's strike notice covers workers at Chilliwack, Royal Columbian, Burnaby General and Surrey Memorial hospitals. It also includes Heritage Home (Chilliwack), Fellburn Care Centre (Burnaby) and

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Queen's Park Hospital (New Westminster).

An interim order issued by the Labour Relations Board earlier today sets essential services levels and ensures patient and resident safety during job action. The union can begin strike action Friday.