



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Hospital support service workers deliver 96 per cent strike mandate to back demands for fair deal

BURNABY – B.C. hospital housekeeping and dietary workers have delivered an overwhelming strike mandate to back their bid to secure fair and respectful collective agreements with their four multinational employers - Compass-Marquise, Sodexo, Aramark and Acciona.

More than 4000 members of the Hospital Employees' Union work in contracted support services, primarily as cleaners and dietary workers in Metro Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, on the Sunshine Coast and southern Vancouver Island.

Ninety-six per cent voted in favour of strike action after two weeks of balloting wrapped up Friday.

The key issues at the bargaining tables are basic employment security (providing job security for staff when health authorities change contractors) and fair wages.

HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside is hopeful such a strong strike mandate will encourage employers to reach negotiated settlements.

“We believe that a fair and reasonable agreement is within reach if employers get serious about addressing low wages and a total lack of job security that creates uncertainty for workers when health authorities change contractors.”

With essential services negotiations close to conclusion, HEU and its members will soon be in a position to take job action, if there is no progress made at the bargaining table.

Multinationals Aramark, Acciona, Sodexo, Compass and Compass' subsidiary Marquise employ more than 4,000 dietary and housekeeping workers in health care throughout B.C. Contracts for most of these workers expired in September of last year.

The talk cover 75 hospitals and extended care facilities, in four different health authorities, and 11 different collective agreements. The strike votes included all bargaining tables except for one. HEU is negotiating a first contract with Compass covering 900 cleaning staff in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority where a strike vote has not yet been scheduled.

The four corporations benefited from a wave of health care privatization that saw over 8,000 hospital support workers fired by B.C.'s health authorities. Their work was contracted out and their wages, benefits and pensions slashed more than a decade ago.

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