



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

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**MAY 28, 2013**

## HEU members rally for a fair deal, better health care

[**Vancouver, B.C.**] Health care workers employed in housekeeping and food services by five multinational corporations rallied today at Vancouver General Hospital for a fair contract and better health care.

HEU's secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says these workers, many who have been without a contract for over eight months, continue to struggle under low wages and unacceptable working conditions.

"Since privatized hospital cleaning and dietary services were introduced a decade ago, hundreds of millions of dollars have gone into the coffers of these multinational corporations who have profited from low wages and reduced service levels for patients," says Pearson.

HEU represents over 4,400 members who work as housekeepers and food services workers for Acciona, Aramark, Compass, Marquise and Sodexo. Most have not seen a wage increase for almost 20 months and compensation is falling behind their counterparts in unionized hotels.

"Retaining an experienced, well-trained workforce is critical to maintaining patient health and safety," says Pearson. "But low wages and difficult working conditions contribute to high turnover of staff and less experience on the floor."

According to a 2012 survey of nearly 1,000 HEU members in this sector, seven out of ten say they have had to speak to a manager about workload concerns. Over one-third were injured on the job in the last two years.

"For the thousands of members who work for these five companies, we have an important job to do keeping B.C.'s hospitals clean and providing patients with their daily meals," says HEU member and Aramark housekeeper Teresita Dechavez. "But we are not able to do our jobs effectively, as we struggle with high workloads, lack of supplies and poor equipment."

Bargaining resumes between HEU and most of the companies in May and June.

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