



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Hospitals must stop treating housekeepers and dietary workers as disposable says HEU

Vancouver, B.C. - Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside today called on B.C.'s health authorities to improve job security and wages for health care support workers, at a lunchtime rally at St. Paul's Hospital in downtown Vancouver.

"Hospital cleaners and dietary workers are not disposable. They are an essential part of the health care team," says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside.

"But when B.C.'s health authorities contracted out these critical support services to multi-national corporations in 2003, they abandoned their responsibility for the workers and the patients who rely on clean hospitals and nourishing meals."

Whiteside says health authorities are cutting costs on the backs of the lowest paid employees in health care by contracting out housekeeping and dietary services to corporations that underbid on workers' wages.

"And when health authorities change cleaning and food service contractors, these health care workers are out of a job – upsetting their lives and disrupting the stability of the staff team," she says. "Workers are fired and forced to reapply for their jobs, with no guarantee of employment. And if they are hired back, they start at the bottom."

Whiteside says more than 4,000 dietary workers and cleaning staff are demanding fair wages and basic job security from their corporate employers.

"It's time for B.C.'s health authorities to ensure our hospitals are staffed by a stable, experienced workforce with fair wages and job security," she says. "It's time to respect the work, and the workers."

HEU is currently bargaining new collective agreements with Compass-Marquise, Sodexo, Aramark and Acciona on behalf of the 4,000 contracted support service workers who provide housekeeping and dietary services in Lower Mainland and Island health care facilities.

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