



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Tentative agreement reached with Sodexo, but HEU seeks strike mandate to back contract talks with Compass Group and Aramark

[Burnaby, B.C.] The Hospital Employees' Union has negotiated a critical agreement with one of three multinational contractors that together employ more than 4,400 support staff at dozens of hospitals and care facilities in the Lower Mainland, and on Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

A tentative agreement with Paris-based Sodexo includes significant improvements to benefits, along with wage adjustments, for more than 1,400 cleaning and dietary staff located mostly in the Lower Mainland and on the Sunshine Coast.

But nearly a year of negotiations with US-based Aramark and UK-based Compass Group (including its subsidiary Marquise) have yet to produce any significant agreement on key issues including wages, prompting the union to call for a strong strike mandate.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says the compensation package negotiated with Sodexo will significantly improve prescription drug, vision care and dental benefits for members and provide a modest wage boost.

"I'm expecting Sodexo's competitors – Aramark and Compass Group – to also recognize that improvements to the compensation package will help retain skilled and experienced cleaning and dietary staff and result in higher quality services for B.C. patients," says Pearson.

"These corporations have profited from a wave of health care privatization a decade ago that saw thousands of workers unjustly laid off while wages and benefits were slashed.

"We are asking these international corporations to reinvest some of their profits in the front-line staff that play a critical role in making our hospitals safe for patients."

The strike votes begin this week and will conclude in early October. Strike votes for Sodexo employees have been cancelled as a result of the tentative agreement.

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The Aramark negotiations cover contracted cleaning services at a number of Lower Mainland and Sunshine Coast health care facilities while Compass Group negotiations include cleaning and dietary staff at Children's and Women's Hospital, the BC Cancer Centre and several hospitals and extended care facilities on Vancouver Island.

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