



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

Living wage campaign has major presence at summer events across province

Despite the dismal summer weather, HEU's Living Wage Campaign activists have been out in full force throughout the province – attending multicultural events, marching in pride parades and rallies, tabling at conferences and conventions, and leafleting at farmers' markets – spreading the message about the devastating impact poverty-level wages have on working families in their communities.

Along with our coalition partners, the Living Wage Campaign – which HEU pioneered as a grassroots bargaining initiative in 2007 – continues to build momentum as an anti-poverty movement with growing support from progressive businesses, particularly in the Lower Mainland.



So far, about 20 organizations have recognized the value of paying decent, family-supporting wages to their workers, and have been certified as living wage employers. They include HEU, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, B.C. Teachers' Federation, United Way of the Lower Mainland, and most recently, Vancity credit union.

The Living Wage Campaign is also making a stronger presence in the political arena with many NDP MLAs now endorsing it. New Westminster and Esquimalt have both passed living wage bylaws. And it's gaining ground across the country as Hamilton, Waterloo, Calgary and Ottawa have started living wage projects in their cities.

This past spring, Abbotsford released its living wage calculation at \$16.42 an hour, adding to the list of other municipalities who have issued their targeted living wage hourly wage rates: Lower Mainland (\$18.81), Williams Lake (\$15.77), Victoria (\$18.03) and Cranbrook (\$14.16).

And the Canadian Labour Congress passed a living wage motion at their convention in Vancouver this past May, to support campaigns and advocate for living wages for all workers.

... more



In recent weeks, HEU members participated in Philippine Independence Day celebrations; presented at the Rhizome Café's "No One is Illegal" forum on May Day; attended the Vancouver & District Labour Council conference on fair taxes; tabled at the Canadian Labour Congress' convention, and have continued to spread the living wage message to local school boards and MLAs.

And this week, Avelina Vasquez, an Aramark housekeeping aide at St. Paul's Hospital, was interviewed for radio show Tinig Ng Masa and did a TV interview for Vancouver Balita (the Filipino news), talking about HEU's Living Wage Campaign.

Independent bargaining pilot project

The union's living wage members are also taking a more active leadership role in the independent bargaining process, and have been invited to speak about the campaign at various negotiating tables.

As part of that pilot project, HEU is conducting a living wage member survey. Check our website for details, under the Living Wage Campaign section.

Another bargaining initiative is the union's living wage postcard campaign. In June, Compass workers from Evergreen Baptist presented a huge poster, with messages about what a living wage means to them, to their employer at the union's Provincial Office during a break from the bargaining table. Members from the local had each filled out a postcard describing the hardships they experience from earning low wages.

Solidarity across sectors and borders

The Living Wage Campaign working group and its supporters also joined the union's Pink Triangle Standing Committee as part of the MultiUnion Pride contingent at Vancouver's Pride Parade on July 31. They were marching for community solidarity with LGBT groups and decent wages for all B.C. workers.



On September 21, campaign activists are scheduled to do a living wage presentation at the Victoria District Labour Council.

Also, be sure to mark October 7 – World Day for Decent Work – on your calendar. Organized by the International Trade Union Confederation, it's an occasion for trade unionists around the world to join together in our collaborative fight for better wages and working conditions.

August 18, 2011