



United for fairness: HEU members at Inglewood secure first collective agreement

After a 20-month effort to secure a fair deal for health care workers, HEU members working at Inglewood Care Centre voted 95 per cent in favour of a first collective agreement.

This new agreement is with Simpe-Q Care – the latest contractor hired by Inglewood’s owners Unicare to operate the 235-bed facility. In the past 12 years, Unicare has subcontracted staffing at Inglewood to at least five different companies since it first contracted out the work of HEU members in 2003.

“Unicare and Simpe-Q Care now have an opportunity to renew the relationship with Inglewood staff,” said HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. “With this collective agreement it’s time to both improve the quality of care for residents and the working experience of health care workers at Inglewood.”

HEU negotiated the agreement with Simpe-Q Care following the decision by CareCorp – Inglewood’s previous subcontractor – to abandon its contract with Unicare effective May 31.

CareCorp has operated at Inglewood since 2011. However, when HEU reorganized workers in the fall of 2013, the contractor was unwilling to negotiate a first collective agreement with the 230-plus staff at the facility.

The new agreement with Simpe-Q will see improvements to both wages and benefits for all staff. For example, the starting wage for a care aide was \$15.83 per hour and is now \$17.25 per hour, a nine per cent increase over the CareCorp wage.

Significantly, HEU also negotiated with Simpe-Q to hire the overwhelming majority of the current workforce into equivalent positions to what they had with CareCorp. This was a key union demand to maintain both the continuity of care and employment.

“This achievement was made possible by the unity of the members,” said Whiteside.

“Moreover, the members were able to enlist the support of the North Shore community, the advocacy of the Metro Vancouver Alliance and the assistance of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to make this first collective agreement a reality.”

“HEU and our members hope this latest change in management at Inglewood brings an end to the revolving door of contractors,” said Whiteside. “Safeguarding the continuity of care that residents both deserve and need is something we intend to keep raising at Inglewood – and at long-term care facilities around the province.”

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