



Labour board orders run-off vote between HEU and USW to be counted

HEU is welcoming a decision of the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB), issued on December 14, which orders ballots cast in a mail-in run-off vote between HEU and the United Steelworkers (USW) to be counted.

Votes were cast in October and early November by Compass employees working in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and were then sealed, pending a decision by the LRB as to whether or not HEU's application to represent the workers was valid.

"We are extremely pleased with this decision," says HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside. "The Board determined our application is indeed valid, and that the existing collective agreement between Compass Group and USW does not stand in the way of our application."

Most of Compass' current cleaning staff worked for the previous commercial contractor Aramark, and were HEU members, prior to Compass group taking over all Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care cleaning operations in August and September.

Aramark workers first joined HEU in 2004, after health authorities used the provisions of *Bill 29*, passed by the BC Liberals in 2002, to privatize hospital support services and fire thousands of HEU members.

"For more than a decade, these HEU members worked hard to build a common bargaining front across all private contractors – Compass, Aramark, Sodexo and Acciona – which resulted in significant improvements in their wages, benefits and other collective agreement provisions," says Whiteside.

At issue was Compass Group's attempt to apply a collective agreement it has with USW that historically applied to less than 30 workers employed in some non-acute health authority offices.

In her decision, LRB vice-chair Leah Terai concluded that, "the collective agreement between Compass and the USW does not act as a bar to the HEU's application."

A date has not yet been set for the vote count, but it will occur as soon as possible.

December 15, 2015