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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

February 27, 2014

Government moves ahead on corrections food services privatization proposal despite concerns

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The government is moving ahead on its proposal to privatize corrections and young offender food services despite concerns about escalating costs, safety risks and a loss of public accountability, according to SGEU.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued February 25, 2014 to companies interested in taking over the full management and operations of the food services in the adult corrections and young offender centres in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The closing date is April 8, 2014.

“Experience with prison privatization in other jurisdictions shows that contracting out food services costs more, not less,” according to SGEU President Bob Bymoan.

“Independent audits in Ohio, Michigan and Kentucky have revealed a disturbing trend of over-charging and extra-billing for meals never served,” Bymoan points out. An independent cost-value analysis of a private corrections food service contract in Florida in 2007 showed that the state would save \$7 million annually by bringing the service back in-house.

“With no cost savings to be gained by privatizing food services in corrections, it is clear that this is an ideological decision,” says Bymoan. “We’re concerned that managing high-risk operations based on ideology is potentially dangerous. Our frontline corrections workers, for example, are raising concerns about safety in the institutions. Without a stable workforce of trained and experienced staff in corrections kitchens, everyone’s security is at risk,” he says.

The government has a responsibility to ensure that the provision of correctional services are safe, secure, cost-efficient, and offer rehabilitation programs to inmates. “When this responsibility is contracted out to a private company, how will anyone know if these obligations are being met?” asked Bymoan. “It is extremely difficult to get information from government about what its private contractors are doing and how much they are being paid,” he added. “In effect, we lose control over what is a very important public service.”

“We request government not to privatize corrections food services. We need to look at the experiences of others who have gone down this road, and learn from those mistakes.” The record offers many compelling reasons to keep all of corrections in public hands,” he adds.

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Sources:

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