



Five good reasons to stop privatization of corrections food services!

The Saskatchewan government wants to privatize food services in adult corrections and young offender facilities.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) has been issued to invite companies to bid on providing food services in the Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert Provincial Correctional Centres, Pine Grove Correctional Centre, Paul Dojack and Kilburn Hall Youth Centres, and the Prince Albert Youth Residence.

Here are five good reasons NOT to privatize corrections food services:

1. Costs will escalate.
2. Safety of staff, inmates and the public will be put at risk.
3. Local businesses will lose contracts and money will leave Saskatchewan
4. Inmate training and rehabilitation will be undermined.
5. Privatizing food services opens the door to the dangers of full-scale privatization of corrections.

1. Costs will escalate

Privatizing food services will cost Saskatchewan people more. Private companies are in business to make a profit, while the sole focus of a public enterprise is to provide a necessary service. The government does not seem to be concerned about potential cost implications for taxpayers.

- The government admits that it is not privatizing corrections kitchens to save taxpayer money. “This wasn’t done for the economic reason. This was done for the core business opportunity,” Dale McFee, deputy minister of corrections and policing, told CTV News.ⁱ

Over-charging and extra billing: the private track record

- Costs can skyrocket when private contractors are running the show. In Ohio, Aramark Correctional Services was paid for providing 4.5 million meals – but it only served 2.8 million. The company was overpaid \$2.1 million from 1998 to 2001, according to a special auditor’s report.ⁱⁱ
- In Florida, the private contractor cut corners to save money and fed fewer inmates than it was being paid to provide meals to, according to a 2007 independent cost-value analysis. The report concluded that the state would save \$7 million every year by returning food services to an in-house operation.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Aramark padded its profits in Kentucky by using inmate-grown produce which it obtained at virtually no cost. It consistently overbilled for daily meals by as much as \$100,000 annually, according to a 2010 audit.^{iv}

- Private contractor Canteen Correctional Services billed for hundreds of meals that were never served to inmates – for a total overcharge of \$2.5 million - in Wayne County, Michigan. The cost overrun is allegedly due to a discrepancy between the number of inmates in the facility at any given time, and the number of meals ordered and paid for. An investigation is ongoing.^v

Who benefits, and who pays?

- Eric J. Foss, the CEO of Aramark Corp., one of the largest for-profit corrections food service companies, was paid more than \$8 million in executive compensation in 2012. No wonder employee wages are low and meal portions are small. Money for executives and shareholders has to come from somewhere.^{vi}

2. Safety at risk

Public corrections ensure that safety is a top priority. Private food service companies, on the other hand, are more likely to take short cuts that compromise safety and security.

- Kitchen staff in publicly-run facilities are experienced members of the corrections team. They are trained and committed to keeping staff, inmates and the public safe.
- Corrections food service staff work alongside and supervise a dozen or more inmates in a high-risk setting that requires special knowledge and skills.
- Less experienced staff, who may not receive the training provided to public food services workers, are more likely to put themselves and others at risk. Private companies are less likely to invest in ongoing training. Lower wages and benefits paid by private companies lead to higher staff turnover, causing more instability in the workplace. In a high-risk environment, this can have serious consequences. And, if a private company cuts corners to save money, the results can be disastrous, as experience shows.

Staff and inmates injured, buildings destroyed over problems with private food service

- Tensions over substandard food, unsanitary kitchens, and chronic food shortages led to a riot at the Northpoint Training Centre in Kentucky in 2010. Staff and inmates pointed to the poor quality of the Aramark food service as a major contributing factor to the conflict, in which six buildings, including the kitchen, were burned down and eight guards and eight inmates were injured. State lawmakers voted to cancel a \$12 million annual contract with Aramark as a result.^{vii}

Near-riot at breakfast

- On-site visits by the state auditor to a private corrections food service run by Aramark in Ohio revealed "inexcusable" sanitation conditions, a lack of training and "a near riot" at breakfast over Aramark's strict adherence to skimpy portions.^{viii}

Long waits and hunger result in violence

- In Indiana, an inmate death followed tensions that grew after men waited hours for dinner, and then received inadequate portions. Some meals were withheld as punishment. Aramark's response was that the inmates were not used to the heart-healthy fare.^{ix}

3. Local businesses will lose contracts

Local economies will be hurt when Saskatchewan businesses lose longstanding contracts with the correctional centres.

- Dozens of Saskatchewan-based businesses supply food and other goods and services to provincial correctional centres. From eggs and meat to dairy products and linen supplies, local firms rely on doing business with corrections. And local families and communities rely on the spin-off jobs that result from these relationships.
- Government says it wants to standardize food service delivery in corrections across the province. This means that the successful bidder will likely be a large, multinational corporation that will buy supplies from its own outside sources. The Ministry has confirmed that it is open to companies from outside Saskatchewan. Jobs and profits will leave the province.

4. Inmate job-training and rehabilitation undermined

Outsourcing food services to a profit-driven corporation will jeopardize the job training inmates currently receive through their work in the kitchens.

- Corrections and young offender kitchen staff are typically journeyman cooks who apprentice inmates working to acquire job-ready skills. The cooks help inmates attain the SIAST Short Order Cooking Certificate, which includes safe food handling and the workplace hazardous materials information systems (WHMIS) program.
- Food services staff help give troubled youth and offenders a fresh start. They are teachers, counsellors, advocates and mentors. They help give inmates the skills and confidence they need to build a better future for themselves and their families. Employees working for a for-profit company are not likely to have the time or skills to play an important role in inmate rehabilitation.

5. Opening the door to the dangers of full-scale privatization of corrections

Contracting out food services opens the door to full-scale privatization of our corrections system. Private prison experiments in the U.S. and Canada have had dangerous and disastrous consequences.

What other corrections services will be sold off?

- Feeding inmates, according to the Saskatchewan government, is not a core function of the Ministry of Corrections, and is a target for privatization.

Government also says that any other service within corrections that is not deemed a core function should be considered for privatization.^x What other corrections services are they planning to sell off, and most importantly, what are the consequences?

Why private corrections companies want to get a foothold in Canada

- After decades of private prison expansion in the U.S., a public outcry against cost overruns, corruption, security lapses, and inhumane treatment of inmates is forcing corrections corporations to look for new markets. They are turning their attention to Canada.

Private companies lobby in Canada for contracts

- “Faced with lawsuits and bad publicity in their home country, U.S. private prison corporations are lobbying to enter Canada,” according to the Huffington Post, August 2013.^{xi}

GEO Group, one of the largest U.S. private prison corporations, lobbied Corrections Service of Canada officials to consider contracting out services such as cleaning and food preparation. GEO Group also lobbied federal Public Safety Minister Vic Toews in 2012.^{xii}

Private company faces lawsuit: ‘inhuman acts’

- GEO is facing a class-action lawsuit alleging that one of its youth facilities in Louisiana was rife with sexual abuse, and that youth were denied health care and education services. A federal judge described the Geo Group prison as a “cesspool of unconstitutional and inhuman acts,” according to the Huffington Post.^{xiii}

Failed attempts - private prisons in Canada

- There has been only one private prison experiment in Canada. Ontario shut down the private Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene in 2006 a few years after it opened. A formal review comparing the private facility with a similar public institution found that the public prison had better security, health care services and lower rates of inmates re-offending than the private centre.

"We found that in basically every single area, the outcomes were better in the publicly run facilities," Ontario Community Safety Minister Monte Kwinter told the CBC.^{xiv}

Private young offender facility in New Brunswick closed after public backlash

- Geo Group lost its contract to operate the Miramichi Youth Detention Facility in New Brunswick in the 1990s in the wake of public opposition to the idea of incarceration of youth for profit.^{xv} Given experiences in the U.S., these concerns were not unfounded.

The injustice of a for-profit criminal justice system

In order to keep revenues and profits up, private prison companies too often look for ways to put people behind bars – and keep them there.

Kids-for-cash

- In 2013, a Pennsylvania judge Mark Ciavarella, Jr. was sentenced to 28 years in prison for conspiring with private prisons to send young offenders to corrections centres in exchange for millions in kickbacks. Thousands of youth, some as young as ten, first-time offenders who were often accused of minor crimes, were wrongly sentenced in order to keep private facilities running at capacity. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is reviewing Ciavarella's decisions, and has overturned some 4,000 convictions.^{xvi}

Companies promise to keep prisons full

- With pressure to scale-back the burgeoning cost of incarceration, U.S. states are trying to limit the number of inmates in custody and are even closing some facilities. In turn, private corrections companies are stepping up their marketing strategies – in ways that put private profit ahead of human justice.

Corrections Corporation of America, for example, sent a letter to 48 U.S. state governments offering to buy up their prisons – in exchange for keeping them at least 90 per cent full.^{xvii}

Prison profits guaranteed

- Most private prison contracts in the U.S. have an occupancy clause – which guarantees the company a minimum number of inmates. Arizona has three contracts that contain 100 percent occupancy guarantee clauses, while many other states guarantee that private prisons will have occupancy rates above 90 per cent. Private companies have sued state governments for millions of dollars for not keeping inmate beds full.^{xviii}

Cutting corners puts public safety at risk

Profit-driven companies are pressured to cut corners to save money. When the bottom line is the major concern, safety is likely to be compromised, as it was in this U.S. case.

Security posts vacant; gangs enlisted to run prisons

- Public safety was at risk, according to a judge who ruled in a case against Corrections Corporation of America's management of the Idaho Correctional Centre. The suit brought to light evidence that staff falsified records, hiding the fact that mandatory security posts were vacant for at least 4,800 hours. The centre's reputation was so bad that it was known as 'gladiator school'. Another lawsuit alleges that the company enlisted gangs as an inexpensive way to control the inmate population.^{xix}

No cost savings with private corrections

The U.S. resorted to private prisons in an attempt to cut costs, but the savings were never found.

- Privatizing corrections was supposed to result in a 20 per cent cost saving. But, the average cost reduction was only 1 per cent, and most of that was achieved

through lower labour costs, according to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.^{xx}

Bloated profits for private prison companies

- Private corrections companies make huge profits – at taxpayers’ expense. Two of the largest companies - Corrections Corporation of America and the GEO Group - had annual revenues of nearly \$3 billion in 2010.^{xxi}

Keep corrections in public hands

There are so many good reasons to stop the privatization of Saskatchewan’s corrections food services. Let’s learn from the experiences of others who have gone down this road. Let’s keep food services – and all corrections services – in public hands.

For more information, contact SGEU communications at: comm@sgeu.org

ⁱ *Province looks to privatize food services at correctional facilities.* CTV News Saskatoon. Jan. 14, 2014. <http://saskatoon.ctvnews.ca/province-looks-to-privatize-food-services-at-correctional-facilities-1.1639540>

ⁱⁱ *Aramark contract and the Colleges Programs, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Special Audit, state of Ohio.* <http://www.plunderbund.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/AramarkAudit2001.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cost-value analysis: Aramark Food Service Contract, Office of Inspector General, Bureau of Internal Audit, Florida Department of Corrections.* 2007. <http://www.freep.com/assets/freep/pdf/C420495357.PDF>

^{iv} *Examination of the Kentucky Department of Corrections’ Food Services Contract with Aramark Correctional Services, Auditor of Public Accounts,* 2010. <http://www.freep.com/assets/freep/pdf/C420495457.PDF>

^v *Wayne County could save \$2.5 million by fixing problems with jail food contract.* Heather Catalo, Detroit ABC News, Dec. 18, 2013. <http://www.wxyz.com/news/local-news/investigations/wayne-county-could-save-25-million-by-fixing-problems-with-jail-food-contract>

^{vi} *Salary.com.* <http://www1.salary.com/Eric-J-Foss-Salary-Bonus-Stock-Options-for-ARAMARK-CORP.html>

^{vii} *House panel votes to end prison food contract after reviewing report on riot.* Bluegrass Politics, January 27, 2010. <http://bluegrasspolitics.bloginky.com/2010/01/27/report-prison-food-played-a-role-in-august-riot/>

^{viii} *Audit on Aramark prison food service,* Cleveland Press, July 14, 2013. <http://www.clevelandstar.com/index.php/sid/215823032/scat/e7c66556bdf7d61f>

^{ix} *Aramark: Prison food service with a bad aftertaste.* Prison Legal News. <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/%28X%281%29S%28dfmvhlisuz2svx45ox2vyu55%29%29/displayArticle.aspx?articleid=11002&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

^x *Province considers privatizing food service at jails.* News Talk 620 CKOM, Jan. 14, 2014. <http://www.newstalk650.com/node/222795>

^{xi} *Prison privatization: Canada mulls contracting services to companies lobbying for correctional work.* Daniel Tencer. The Huffington Post Canada. July 13, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/07/13/prison-privatization-canada_n_1670755.html

^{xii} *Ibid.* http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/07/13/prison-privatization-canada_n_1670755.html

^{xiii} *Ibid.* http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/07/13/prison-privatization-canada_n_1670755.html

^{xiv} *Ontario to take back control of private super-jail.* CBC News. Nov. 10, 2006.
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ontario-to-take-back-control-of-private-super-jail-1.586052>

^{xv} Tencer. Huffington Post. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/07/13/prison-privatization-canada_n_1670755.html

^{xvi} *US judge receives 28-year jail term for his role in kids-for-cash kickbacks.* The Independent. Apr. 30, 2013.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-judge-receives-28year-jail-term-for-his-role-in--kidsforcash-kickbacks-8598147.html>

^{xvii} CCA correspondence. <http://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/ccalletter.pdf>

^{xviii} *Prison privatization: Time to end the excesses.* The Daily Kos. Sep. 22, 2013.
<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/09/22/1239896/-Prison-privatization-time-to-end-the-nbsp-excesses>

^{xix} *Ibid.*

^{xx} *Emerging issues on privatized prisons.* James Austine, Gary Coventry. National Council on Crime and Delinquency. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/181249.pdf>

^{xxi} *The number of people in private prisons has grown by 1,664 % in the last 19 years.* Lisa Wade. PolicyMic, Jan. 25, 2013. <http://www.policymic.com/articles/24142/the-number-of-people-in-private-prisons-has-grown-by-1-664-in-the-last-19-years>