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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Privatization of corrections food services putting workers' safety at risk

The private provider of food services in Saskatchewan correctional centres is threatening the safety of frontline corrections workers, according to SGEU.

Inmates at the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre have initiated another hunger strike in protest of the inedible and potentially unsafe food they are being served. This is the third hunger strike among Regina inmates in less than three weeks, following the handover of youth facilities and adult correctional centre food services to the foreign-owned multinational corporation Compass Group. APTN has reported that inmates were served uncooked meat.

I am very concerned for the safety of our members on the frontlines of corrections, says SGEU President Bob Bymo. It is the members who are in contact with the inmates in the jails, and who have to deal with the issues arising from poor quality and low quantity of food, while a company from the UK profits.

If government continues to allow Compass to cut corners, animosity among inmates may grow, says Bymo. Who will bear the brunt of this animosity? Frontline corrections workers, who could potentially find themselves in a dangerous situation.

Compass Group PLC made \$1.7 billion in after-tax profits in 2014, and paid its CEO \$12 million. Why should hard working Saskatchewan people be forced to pay this private company in the U.K., when the return is inedible food that is putting inmates and staff at risk? asks Bymo.

Government claims they are going to save money with privatized food services, but if they just wanted to cut back on the cost of food, by serving powdered milk and replacing costlier items with bread, they could have achieved these savings using existing staff, said Bymo. When our members provided food services, they at least provided food that was safe and edible.

The government should terminate its contract with Compass and reinstate the publicly-run food services that experienced and dependable government workers provided, he added.

The Saskatchewan government can terminate its contract with Compass on one year's notice. If Compass continues to deliver unacceptable performance, only 90 days' notice is needed.

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