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NEWS RELEASE

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Corrections food services privatization already proving to be a reckless move

Privatizing food services in Saskatchewan correctional centres is already proving to be a reckless move that puts private profits ahead of safety, according to SGEU.

A hunger strike by inmates at the Regina Correctional Centre highlights the risks of serving inedible, potentially unsafe food. The kitchens in correctional and young offender facilities were handed over to the foreign-owned multinational corporation Compass Group on November 7, 2015.

“We warned government that a private company would cut corners, provide inadequate meals, and put health and safety at risk,” says SGEU President Bob Bymo. “The privatized service hasn’t even been in place for two months, and there are already serious problems with potentially-hazardous food being served.”

“This is not only a food safety issue, there is also the very real concern that spoiled and inedible food will trigger violence and lead to high-risk situations, such as riots, which are both dangerous and costly,” says Bymo.

While the recent incident at the Regina Correctional Centre has brought the issue to public attention, similar concerns about safety have been raised at other correctional and young offender centres where Compass has taken over food services, according to Bymo. In addition to issues with poor quality, potentially spoiled food being served, there is a lack of attention to the needs of those with serious medical conditions, and even life-threatening food allergies.

The poor quality food is also costing more, adds Bymo. “When a food tray is sent back to the kitchen because the food is inedible, a second tray is provided, but who is picking up the cost for the additional meals? Is Compass taking that extra cost out of its profits, or is the Saskatchewan taxpayer being charged for the company’s incompetence?”

Compass Group PLC made \$1.7 billion in after-tax profits in 2014, and paid its CEO \$12 million. “It doesn’t make sense to turn over taxpayers’ hard-

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earned money to this company in exchange for low-quality service that is putting inmates and staff at risk,” says Bymoer.

“The correctional centres are already powder kegs waiting to blow because of overcrowding. Adding bad food to an already tense and dangerous situation is foolish. Who will be responsible when the inevitable happens – people get hurt and lives are endangered?” asks Bymoer.

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