



Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Contracting out process unethical and demoralizing

Government's decision to inform hundreds of custodial employees that their jobs would be contracted out if a private company proposes to do their work more cheaply is unethical and misleading, according to SGEU.

Yesterday, 251 custodial workers in government buildings across the province were told in meetings that if there's a cost savings to contracting out the services they provide, government will proceed to terminate their jobs and privatize the work they do.

"I can't imagine how dejected and anxious these workers must feel," says Bymoén. "Imagine, for a moment, that your employer tells you and your co-workers it's going to ask for proposals from contractors to do your job for less money than what it costs to pay you. That's downright demoralizing. These workers are at the bottom of the pay scale, and they're being told they're not even worth that."

Global News and CBC are reporting that a government spokesperson says there is no impact to employees at this time.

"That is completely false," says Bymoén. "Several jobs have already been terminated in Weyburn. Second, if government thinks workers weren't impacted by yesterday's notice that their jobs are going to be contracted out, then this government is extremely out of touch with the realities of life for working people. This move has had, and continues to have, a very real emotional impact on these workers, who are trying to make a living for themselves and their families."

Government also told media that if there are no savings shown throughout the request for proposals process, there will be no changes to cleaning services. This is simply an effort to mislead workers and the public, according to Bymoén.

"We don't believe for a moment that this isn't a done deal," says Bymoén.

"Government is using the province's poor financial state – which this government created – as an excuse to get rid of some unionized workers. They know full well that once these services are put out to tender, companies – probably from out of province – will respond, and the services will be contracted out."

In January 2014, the Sask. Party government issued a Request for Proposals, inviting private companies to bid to take over the government-run kitchens in correctional centres. Kitchen workers were left in limbo for a year and half, before finally being told in August 2015 that a contract had been awarded and that their jobs would be gone by early November. Deputy Minister of Corrections and Policing Dale McFee admitted at the time that privatizing food services wasn't about saving money.

"This wasn't done for the economic reason," he told CTV. "This was done for the core business opportunity..."

"The whole process is completely unethical and heartless," says Bymoen. "Suddenly, 251 people in this province – the lowest-paid government employees – are wondering how they're going to pay their bills and support their families. It's a cruel thing to do to anyone, and my heart goes out to them."

Bymoen is convinced that cuts like these are symbolic gestures rather than real measures to get the economy back on track.

"Cutting the jobs of the lowest-paid public workers is just a distraction from the real issues in our province—blatant mismanagement, gifting of millions of dollars to Wall's friends and associates, paying high-priced consultants to tell us how to save money. We can't afford this government's economic ineptitude any longer."

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