

BARGAINING UPDATE

NOVEMBER 13, 2020

**ALBERTA HEALTH
SERVICES (AHS)**
GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES
LOCALS: 054, 056, 057, 058, 095
& Lamont Health Care Centre GSS

AHS'S PLAN TO PRIVATIZE LAUNDRY WILL HURT WORKERS AND PATIENTS

Alberta Health Services, under the direction of the UCP government, is proceeding with a disastrous plan to privatize and cut health care. This plan will hurt AHS GSS members the most.

One of the biggest pieces of this plan is the privatization of all remaining in-house laundry services. Jason Kenney and the UCP say privatization will save Alberta money, but that is not true. We all see what this is really about—bringing down workplace and patient-care standards.

This bargaining update highlights how AHS's plan would hurt you, your co-workers, and the health care services all Albertans depend on.

How privatization will impact you

In-house hospital laundry workers are part of the 11,000 workers the UCP wants to lay off. That's what will happen first: every laundry worker still working for AHS will be laid-off to make room for privatization.

The UCP likes to say laundry workers will be hired back by the new private laundry company. But for most members, especially in rural Alberta, there won't be new jobs.

What's most likely is that the private company will ship the laundry from your local communities to a big processing plant, like how currently privatized laundry is done. That means the company is ending your local jobs.

If you're lucky enough to get hired back, the best-case scenario would be the same job with lower wages, fewer benefits, and worse working conditions and hours.

Lessons from BC and Saskatchewan

British Columbia privatized hospital laundry services in 2016 and wages dropped from \$18 an hour to \$13 an hour. Saskatchewan privatized laundry services in 2013 and wages dropped from \$23 an hour to \$13 an hour. That's what we can expect in Alberta when AHS privatizes laundry services.

Saskatchewan's botched laundry privatization plan shows even more examples of why privatization is wrong:

- Saskatchewan closed five regional laundry facilities in favour of one central facility in Regina, creating huge unemployment in rural Saskatchewan;
- In Prince Albert SK, the closure of the laundry plant brought the unemployment rate up to 10.6%;
- The majority of cost-savings under the private program came from hiring fewer workers to do the same amount of work and by paying them much less;
- Laundry services were neglected for a long time, and only when it became too costly to repair and improve was it privatized;
- The government awarded a 10-year contract to K-Bro for them to fix costs over long term... but that contract can be renegotiated anytime if "unforeseen contingencies" arise.

Privatization hurts patients

When Albertans go to the hospital, the last thing they should be worried about is the cleanliness of their gowns and beddings.

(Continued on page 2)

The UCP says laundry workers aren't front line health care workers, but you are. And the work you do is integral to our health care system. Without you, laundry would pile up and up until hospitals wouldn't be able to function.

Privatized laundry also makes it more difficult for patients who lose items while at the hospital. Sometimes, patients lose things such as keys and dentures which get swept up with their laundry after they leave the hospital. When that laundry is done locally, workers can usually track down the patient to return their items. But when that laundry is shipped to a huge facility with tons and tons of laundry, returning those items becomes essentially impossible.

That's just one example of how in-house laundry is better for all Albertans.

Fighting for our jobs and public health care

AUPE members have a long history of fighting for public health care, not only to save our own jobs, but to protect all the Albertans who depend on us and the work we do.

It was the hospital laundry workers who went on strike against Premier Ralph Klein in the 1990s. Their actions

delayed privatization, won themselves severance pay, and inspired workers across Canada to stand up for public health care.

Read the AUPE webcomic about the laundry strike that forced Klein to blink.

We're all in this together. The next bargaining updates will look at how the following services will be cut thanks to the UCP government and AHS:

- Nutrition and food services
- Environmental services
- Lab services
- Supply chain and procurement
- Long term care

Please talk to your negotiating team members or AUPE resource staff if you have any questions. We are here to work together with you. If you haven't already, email organizers Kate Jacobson and Farid Iskandar to join the fight to stop privatization and save our jobs.

AHS GSS NEGOTIATING TEAM

Local 054

Julie Woodford juliew.chp006@gmail.com
Charity Hill (A) charity.johanson@gmail.com

Local 056

Deborah Nawroski local56.bargaining@gmail.com
Tammy Lanktree (A) local56.bargaining@gmail.com

Local 057

Darren Graham chairlocal057@aupe.ca
Wendy Kicia (A) wendykicia@hotmail.com

Local 058

Dave Ibach d1322j@gmail.com
Loree Preete (A) loreepreete@yahoo.ca

Local 095

Stacey Ross sross13@shaw.ca
Dusan Milutinovic (A) dusan.aupe@yahoo.com

Lamont Health Care Centre GSS

Lorrie Tarka lorrietarka@hotmail.com
Carol Palichuk carolpalichuk@hotmail.com

AUPE RESOURCE STAFF FOR AHS GSS

Chris Dickson Lead Negotiator
c.dickson@aupe.org

Jason Rattray Negotiator
j.rattray@aupe.org

Farid Iskandar Organizer
f.iskandar@aupe.org

Kate Jacobson Organizer
k.jacobson@aupe.org

Alexander Delorme Communications
a.delorme@aupe.org