

BARGAINING UPDATE

JANUARY 15, 2021

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

PRIVATIZING HEALTHCARE SECURITY SERVICES PUTS WORKERS AND PATIENTS IN DANGER

BARGAINING UPDATE FOR AHS GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES AUPE MEMBERS

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1. What's this privatization scheme?

The UCP government made it clear they want to privatize more and more of Alberta's health care, and AUPE members are getting ready to fight back. To prepare ourselves for that fight, we're learning about how Premier Kenney's privatization scheme will hurt our us and co-workers.

One group of workers that Kenney is targeting is protective services workers in AHS General Support Services. These are the workers across Alberta who handle security at our hospitals and other health care centres. Protective services workers help keep all health care workers and patients safe. They de-escalate dangerous situations and ensure our facilities are secure.

The AHS Implementation Plan—which shows how AHS will make the huge cuts the UCP is forcing on us—provides very few details

about their plan for protective services. One recommendation, called "protective services optimization," only says: "confidential... advice to Minister/Cabinet." So, we know cuts are coming, but they're keeping the details secret.

For the UCP and AHS, "optimization" really means slashing the budget, which usually means cutting jobs, benefits, and working conditions. Whatever the changes they're planning, the plan says AHS is going to "save" \$3.5 million per year by 2022 – 2023.

That's \$3.5 million per year that should be spent on recruiting more staff, reducing workload, and making work better and easier for hard-working support staff.

We need to protect ourselves from privatization. We need to be ready to fight back if AHS does decide to pursue the report's recommendations.

2. What outsourcing would mean for our jobs

The last time that the Government of Alberta tried privatizing protective services was in 2010. The Progressive Conservatives promised that privatization would actually increase the amount

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of jobs in protective services, especially in rural communities. But then, when the reform was enacted, they outsourced 125 positions to a private contractor and centralized dispatch services for the entire province to a single office in Edmonton, eliminating local jobs across Alberta.

We should prepare ourselves for a similar move. Many of our jobs in protective services are likely to be abolished and replaced with contractors. Those of us who are lucky enough to be rehired by the contractor, in this scenario, will likely see significant cuts to our wages and benefits.

Workers at private security companies are underpaid, and the companies tend to have high turnover of workers. This means that outsourcing security goes against some of the most important principals of effective health care.

3. The damage of taking protective services out of the health care team

If there's one thing health care workers and policy experts know about this, it's that protective services need to be a full members of the patient care team.

In a 2015 study at the Toronto East General Hospital, researchers found that the most effective way to prevent workplace violence in health care institutions was full integration of protective services with the health care process.

They found that security guards who were trained in-house and treated as team members were more likely to call incidents in before they became critical, which reduced workplace violence by nearly 60 per cent. A study at hospitals across the United States found similar results.

Everywhere, researchers found that effective protective services involved in-house training programs, partnership with unions, and workplace violence prevention committees.

Privatization moves us in the wrong direction, away from all those benefits. Outsourced security means that the goal is profit, not protection.

When the government of Alberta partially privatized protective services in 2010, it awarded the contract to Paladin Security—a company with a near-monopoly on this type of security service.

Even though AHS initially requested to keep control of the hiring, training, and direction of protective services workers. Paladin refused. Instead, the company insisted on using its own training program and use its own shift supervisors and managers—who would not report to AHS team leads. The company insisted on scheduling its own staff and using its own incident-reporting software.

For all these reasons, AHS does not have clear lines of communication to Paladin, the way it would with an in-house security company. Paladin's "roving" guards, especially in rural areas, are often too far away to be able to effectively respond to problems as they come up.

All of this means that security services become less connected with patient care, not more, so if we want effective patient care in safe workplaces, we must connect—not disconnect—security, and the best way to do that is make it public.

4. How to fight back

The UCP's attacks on health care are coming at us from all angles. Premier Kenney and Health Minister Shandro are working day-in and day-out to dismantle Alberta's public health care so it can be sold for profit.

AHS GSS members won't let them. We're preparing for the fights ahead, and we're organizing with our co-workers to fight the privatization plan. We must all get involved to defend our jobs and the public services Albertans rely on.

Send an email to Kate Jacobson and Farid Iskandar, your AUPE organizers, to join the fight. And reach out to your Local's negotiating representatives to see how you can get involved and spread the word of these incoming cuts at your workplace.

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