



Keep laundry services in-house

We recently learned that Eastern Health plans to move the bulk of laundry services from St. Patrick's Mercy Home and Glenbrook Lodge. This move will result in a loss of quality control, as well as several good jobs.

This comes as a surprise, since Eastern Health has repeatedly said that they have had no problems with the current service and efficiency of the work being done by the in-house staff. They give our members high praise on the work they do.

Across the country, we have seen employers consolidate and contract-out laundry services from nursing homes and hospitals, where they claim that there will be no negative impact on the services provided. In our experience, as the largest union in Canada, this has not been true. Any loss of laundry services performed by in-house staff always has a negative impact.

Is it worth the human cost?

We have been informed that our nursing homes will lose approximately **eight full-time positions**. In-house laundry services have been part of these nursing homes for decades and it provides decent jobs to a traditionally female workforce.

Eliminating or reducing the salaries of eight staff from Eastern Health's budget ledger may look good on paper, but the impact of the job loss will be huge to their families and the communities in which they pay taxes and spending what's left of their hard-earned pay supporting local businesses.

Is it really worth the health and safety risk?

As far as cleaning services are concerned – it matters who does it.

The work done by our members who perform appropriate cleaning duties and work in infection control is crucial in efforts to control superbugs. These workers can put in extra loads as needed during an outbreak or wash items multiple times. They have also been able to find personal items in the laundry, such as hearing aids or teeth, that accidentally get mixed up with the bedding. All this may be lost with this reduction to our in-house laundry department. These facilities rely on our current laundry workers to deliver this quality service in order to provide top quality resident care.



Instead, residents at St. Pat's and Glenbrook will be dependent on laundry being trucked to another site and coming back in the same truck the soiled or infected laundry was delivered. Never mind the possible delays in delivery during winter months.

Localized cleaning performed by trained laundry workers is vital. In-house staff know the residents, when there is an outbreak of an infectious disease, and when a ward is shutdown. These workers know when and how to follow the additional steps required for laundry cleaning when there is an outbreak, making the nursing home healthier and safer for everyone.

Pandemic influenza; superbugs such as staphylococcus aureus), vancomycin-resistant enterococcus and methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus; cytotoxic drugs, needlestick injuries... those are just a few of the issues in-house staff will have knowledge of in real-time.

Workers in another facility will not be able to control or carry out the laundry practices needed as well as in-house staff can, when fighting infectious diseases and preventing further outbreaks.

Does Eastern Health have a new strategy in place to deal with moving and properly cleaning laundry from a nursing home experiencing an outbreak? The potential threat of a pandemic influenza outbreak demands that employers work with unions to ensure a comprehensive prevention strategy is in place, for the protection of residents and staff.

Many questions remain

Eastern Health has not addressed all our questions of transportation costs, pick-up and delivery schedules, impacts on workloads of remaining employees, health and safety impacts on remaining workers. The information they have provided is vague at best.

We are asking Eastern Health to provide us with a full value analysis, including safety assessment, before the make a final decision to remove these services from our nursing homes.

To continue to provide the healthiest and safest services for residents and staff, laundry must remain in-house at St. Patrick's Mercy Home and Glenbrook Lodge.