



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City dumps trash - public services privatized

NELSON – Despite repeated public promises to keep city services public, Nelson city council has voted to contract out commercial garbage pickup and reduce residential garbage pickup by 50 percent. The residential cuts will hit the community within days while commercial services are slated to be privatized by mid-November.

"This is a great disappointment for the public, local businesses and for the city workers who provide these services," says CUPE 339 President Bev LaPointe. "Not only was this decision made in haste and without reasonable public and labour consultation, but it was also made despite promises to keep these services public."

"We were told repeatedly during the lockout to give up our defence of Nelson's public services because city council had no intention of privatizing them," says LaPointe. "'Your jobs are protected', they told us. 'Don't worry about the services.' Well, this is why city workers were concerned about the services. It is troublesome to imagine what else the city may have had on their agenda had we not protected 55 services from sale to private contractors."

During the lockout, CUPE 339 made *Freedom of Information* requests to the city of Nelson to access any records relating to the possible contracting out of Nelson's garbage services. The city advised on August 10th, 2004 that they had "no records relating to contact with private corporations concerning the possible contracting out of Nelson's garbage services or reports to Nelson city council."

CUPE 339 only learned of the city's intentions two weeks ago and was denied ample time to produce research that would show comparable municipalities providing commercial garbage pickup in-house in a cost effective and potentially revenue generating way. The city workers were also not given an opportunity to meet with the waste management committee that made the recommendation to council or to make a presentation before council on this issue.

"Commercial garbage pickup is the one area of city services that can actually make money," says LaPointe. "There aren't too many new sources of revenue that city's have at their fingertips. Not only did businesses lose an essential service, we also lost an opportunity to provide the service in a cost effective way that benefited the whole community."

As for the 50 percent cut in residential garbage pickup, city workers warn that this leads to improper dumping, as it did during the lockout. "When garbage piles up around the house, people seek alternatives and garbage ends up in all sorts of places it shouldn't be. This poses a serious public health concern. It is astonishing that the public was not properly consulted before this dramatic decision was made."

CUPE 339 represents the city of Nelson's 74 city workers who provide quality public services to the community.

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