



**Canadian Union of Public Employees**

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**Bargaining Units:**

*Bridgepoint Hospital*  
- Nurses & Paramedical Units  
- Service Units

*City of Toronto*  
- Full-Time  
- Long-Term Care Homes & Services Part-Time  
- Recreation Workers Part-Time  
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community Housing Corporation*  
*Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation*

**SERVING OUR MEMBERS SINCE 1942**

April 17, 2023

Paul Johnson  
City Manager, City of Toronto  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Johnson,

**Re: GG 3.16 – Report Back on Facilities Management Services**

As the President of CUPE Local 79, representing more than 20,000 full and part-time City employees, I am writing to object to the City of Toronto's Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM) Division's irresponsible cuts to cleaning services in a majority of City of Toronto buildings and facilities, including City Hall, Metro Hall, other civic centres, Toronto Police Services, Emergency Medical Services, and other critical service buildings.

On March 1, 2023, I received a letter from CREM informing Local 79 of plans to unilaterally cut services for the public and reduce hours for cleaning staff. These latest cuts to CREM cleaning services (approximately \$5 million) were buried in the 2023 Budget. The justification was to reduce a \$34.9 million shortfall in the City's budget through outdated recommendations for cleaning reductions in the 2016 Auditor General's Report.

Cuts to CREM cleaning staff and standards recklessly attacks the jobs and wellbeing of some of the lowest-paid City employees. Cuts to the custodial cleaning budget during a global pandemic is incompatible with the City's obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Cleanliness is the most basic element of a safe workplace. Routine cleaning is essential to stop the spread of communicable diseases, germs, and bacteria.

On April 13, 2023, we were sent an report back on Facilities Management Services (GG 3.16) which claims that a reduction of cleaning staff hours does not amount to reduced cleanliness or service standards in Toronto's municipal facilities. This claim is unsubstantiated and our members can attest to the fact that it is untrue.

Even if general hours of operation are slightly reduced, we continue to observe a lower standard of cleanliness and safety for our workers and the public since cuts to cleaning have been implemented since November 2022. The cuts already place additional stress and pressure on workers as they struggle to maintain cleanliness in high frequency multi-use buildings. For years, cleaning staff for CREM have put forth monumental effort to keep public spaces clean despite consistent cuts to hours and capacity. The Report provided to Council gives no clear evidence or justification for its assertions, and we believe that the industry standards being used by CREM to support their "efficiency streamlining agenda" are incorrect, inappropriate, unsafe and go against Ontario Provincial Guidelines and Toronto Public Health Standards.

*We ask that the City Manager and Deputy City Manager direct CREM to freeze changes to custodial service levels and public access hours and return cleaning services to full staff complement for all City facilities.*

## **The Threat to Public Health and Worker Safety**

The ongoing cuts to cleaning standards are being justified by the Division by citing an outdated and unsupported [2016 Auditor General Report – Audit of Cleaning Services](#) that recommended “streamlining” standards of cleanliness that fall well below the current Provincial Infections Disease Advisory Committee’s (PIDAC) Best Practice for Environmental Cleaning for Infection Prevention and Control, upon which other City of Toronto Divisions, such as Shelters, Support & Housing Administration, base their staffing and practices.

According to these standards, the frequency of cleaning spaces and surfaces for civic and municipal facilities is already below safe standards. The expectation following the 2016 Auditor General’s Report is that one cleaner will cover 4700 square feet per hour, which, if you were to ask any cleaner, is completely unreasonable. The cleaning guidelines for shelters, for example, are reviewed and approved by Toronto Public Health. To our knowledge, no such review has been conducted for CREM’s current or proposed plans to “streamline” or cut hours from CREM cleaning. Our union deserves to understand and assess why conditions for our members and the public are worsening, particularly when we have examples of cleaning practices supported by a public provincial committee and Toronto Public Health that demonstrate that safety standards are already not being met across CREM buildings.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that CREM facilities should be cleaned as often as spaces where people live. We are saying that all City of Toronto’s public spaces should be cleaned according to the same metrics and standards as other Divisions. Why would a person using a civic centre not be entitled to provincial health standards? Why has CREM opted to use a third party “efficiency” corporation to measure and justify cuts that rely on one size fits all model for corporate office spaces?

As we all know, City of Toronto Facilities are multi-use, high frequency and open to the public for a multitude of purposes including graduations, warming and cooling centres, police training, ceremonial events and respite for unhoused residents. To use corporate offices as a comparable metric is unsafe.

CREM’s service reductions also do not factor in the City’s shifting use of its buildings and facilities in addition to its mandatory Return-To-Work Policy. The City is adopting ModernTO, a plan to amalgamate City workspaces and create shared workstations, which will create an environment with more staff in close quarters and using the same stations/equipment. All of this will require *more* cleaning.

We demand that the Division show evidence that their plan to “streamline” meets *public* health standards and accounts for all the varied and frequent usages of our *public* buildings. They are so much more than just offices.

## **Stop Attacking Frontline Workers to Cut Costs**

The City’s attack on its cleaners is not new. In November and December 2022, the City used the aforementioned 2016 Auditor General’s Report to justify cutting all the part-time staff from Metro Hall and City Hall. On March 15, 2023, cleaning service teams were cut in half across the biggest critical and emergency services buildings. At the same time, part-time staff were told they must accept ten hours less work per week. On April 5, 2023, Local 79 was informed that more cuts would be made to police station cleaning services. In the past weeks more and more members are being issued notices that their hours will be reduced. There is only so much extra stress and work the City can expect cleaning staff to bear. The job is already physically taxing. Our members are owed better treatment from their employer.

For decades, Local 79 has tracked CREM's decisions to privatize cleaning services. CREM currently hands contracts to corporate vendors that pay poverty-level wages and demand flexibility and availability to the detriment of workers' ability to secure livable incomes and plan their lives. This abuse of employees' rights happens while they pocket millions of taxpayer dollars of profit for their shareholders. Toronto's public money should be invested into City of Toronto's employees and services, particularly while the Division acts to cut the hours and attack the wellbeing of their own employees.

Local 79 has long argued that the City could save money by converting part-time positions to full-time; it costs the City less to employ one full-time cleaner than two part-time cleaners. Local 79 counts upwards of 53 full-time cleaning positions that remain unfilled. CREM stands alone amongst every other division as having far more part-time staff than full-time staff. This is detrimental to workers' lives and it is not cost effective for the City. The reason we suspect that CREM refuses to post full-time jobs and promote workers into full-time positions is because it is easier to terminate part-time unionized staff if the employer chooses to contract out more unionized work to private companies.

Currently, 99 out of 221 City of Toronto CREM buildings are being cleaned by private corporations. By our tracking, since 2011, the City has contracted out 45% of unionized cleaning jobs under CREM. Under the cover of early COVID-19 staffing shortages, the City moved to contract out cleaning services for four more Toronto Police Services facilities. Private staffing corporations are notorious for fleecing profit to their shareholders by offering extremely low wages, no benefits and poor working conditions for their staff. In 2010, one of the City's contracted cleaning vendors was caught breaking the City's Fair Wage Policy by underpaying workers, including undocumented workers, in City Facilities<sup>1</sup>, further exposing the unscrupulous nature of these private vendors who will put profit before human rights and labour rights. The City must not seek cost savings on the backs of exploited workers. Local 79 has protested this for many years and will continue to fight for workers' rights everywhere.

Now, City of Toronto workers are being told that they must accept reduced wages and hours. There is no ongoing justification for funnelling tax dollars towards private contracts instead of reinvesting in City services and staff.

### **Threat to Emergency Services**

The most dangerous outcome of the proposed cuts to the cleaning of CREM facilities is the impact it will necessarily have on access to emergency services. Emergency and medical buildings including Police, Fire and Paramedic buildings will need to lower their capacity due to insufficient sanitation. Reduced capacity in those buildings leads directly to service reduction. Toronto residents have already lost and will continue to lose critical public service, including emergency services. The impacts to response times for the public are real and will be felt across this city.

Toronto is a growing city and residents need to have someone pick up their calls when they reach out for service. Our frontline workers, both emergency personnel and those who support them, need to be treated with dignity in the workplace while they manage the most stressful municipal sector jobs.

### **Raising the Alarm at City Council**

Local 79 has been attempting to engage with CREM for several years on this matter. To date, matters have only gotten worse. We have no choice but to approach this matter politically and publicly at this juncture.

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<sup>1</sup> "Union Station cleaners underpaid." (2010/06/17) *Toronto Star*.  
[https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/06/17/union\\_station\\_cleaners\\_underpaid.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/06/17/union_station_cleaners_underpaid.html)

On March 3, 2023, the General Government Committee passed a motion to ask City Council to freeze CREM's service reduction plan (which City Council did on March 31, 2023, pending a review). Yet even while Councillors were calling for a pause of these cuts to cleaning, part-time staff were told beginning in early March that they must accept two-hour cuts to their shifts per day.

On April 5, 2023, Local 79 was informed that more cuts would be made to buildings housing Toronto Police Service, including Toronto Police headquarters. In the past weeks more and more members are being issued notices that their hours will be reduced. These are front-line workers, who laboured throughout a pandemic to fight the spread of infection. Our members are owed better treatment from their employer.

Despite these calls for review, why is CREM moving ahead with its service reduction plan? While the Division continues to justify these cuts with outdated rationales, the results are the same for our members and the public: unsafe work and unsafe environment for the public. City Council's decision was to stop reducing work hours for CREM cleaners and we ask that you immediately act to instruct the Division to immediately freeze and reverse all cuts to cleaning.

As a matter of urgency, CUPE Local 79 calls for an immediate freeze and reversal of these damaging cuts to cleaning services and staffing levels. We ask that the City fill the full-time cleaner lines and disclose the relevant key performance indicators for cleaners to Local 79.

Respectfully,



Casey Barnett  
President, CUPE Local 79

cc: Members of General Government Committee:

*Alejandra Bravo  
Lily Cheng  
Stephen Holyday  
Josh Matlow  
James Pasternak  
Gord Perks  
Paula Fletcher*

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