

# POINTS WEST LIVING PROBE



*Putting people before profits by shining a light on the business of seniors care, advocating for quality care for residents and standing up for fair contracts for front-line workers.*

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## Corporate centralization impacts staff and residents

Following a sale valued at approximately \$100 million, Ontario-based Points West Limited Partnership moved to centralize services in Edmonton for its Alberta facilities. The move has led to concerns from both residents and staff.

“Our members have reported increased errors with their pay after the company began processing its payroll in Edmonton,” said AUPE Negotiator John Wevers. “These workers are already struggling to make ends meet and these errors make their financial balancing act even more challenging.”

The majority of Points West Living employees represented by AUPE are employed on a part-time or casual basis at an average wage of approximately \$21/hour. Only a minority of employees are employed full-time.

Points West Living residents and their family members have also been impacted by the corporate centralization. Some family members and staff have raised concerns about the turnaround time for medications, especially in cases where errors need to be corrected. The change has also impacted local economies where pharmacies in the area had been supplying medication.

Increased rental rates for residents were also part of the business plan for the amalgamated company. Sale documents



Points West Living staff and supporters rallied on May 12 outside the company’s corporate office in Edmonton calling for a fair contract that respects staff and protects quality care for residents.

revealed the company planned to increase its revenues coming from rental rates and other resident fees beginning this year. Increases took effect at Century Park in Vegreville on July 1.

Yet despite the move toward centralization, Points West Living has consistently refused to harmonize wages and working conditions for staff at its facilities. AUPE represents staff at four facilities in Vegreville, Cold Lake and Stettler, some of whom have been in

negotiations for new collective agreements with the company for over a year.

“Negotiations have been delayed by the company’s insistence on bargaining each contract separately and their refusal to standardize working conditions,” said Wevers. “It’s a double standard when they centralize their operations but continue to pursue a divide-and-conquer approach to their employees.”

## “Eden Model” at odds with low-wage, casualized staffing

Points West Living professes to follow the Eden Model of Care, an approach to seniors care that emphasizes residents’ individuality and choice. However, cuts to staffing, increased workloads for existing employees and high staff turnover at their facilities contradict the goals of the Eden Model.

According to the company’s website, the Eden philosophy focuses on “wellness rather than illness” in creating communities “where medical treatment is the servant of genuine human caring, rather than its master.” At the core of this philosophy is an

emphasis on choice: “Residents decide when they rest, when they rise, and when their suites are cleaned.”

However, Points West Living does not maintain the staffing levels necessary to provide such flexibility while still ensuring that residents’ health and personal care needs are met. Long-term employees have seen their workloads increase, and hours for support staff such as recreational therapists have been cut back.

High staff turnover and casual or part-time employment means that caregivers

are unable to form long-term relationships with residents and their family members. Without these relationships, staff are not able to recognize each resident’s individuality and respect their unique preferences.

Staff retention is a particular concern at Points West Living Cold Lake. Nearly half of the employees have been there for less than a year. Wages below industry standards, high cost of living, and oil and gas layoffs affecting other family and community members have contributed to high staff turnover.

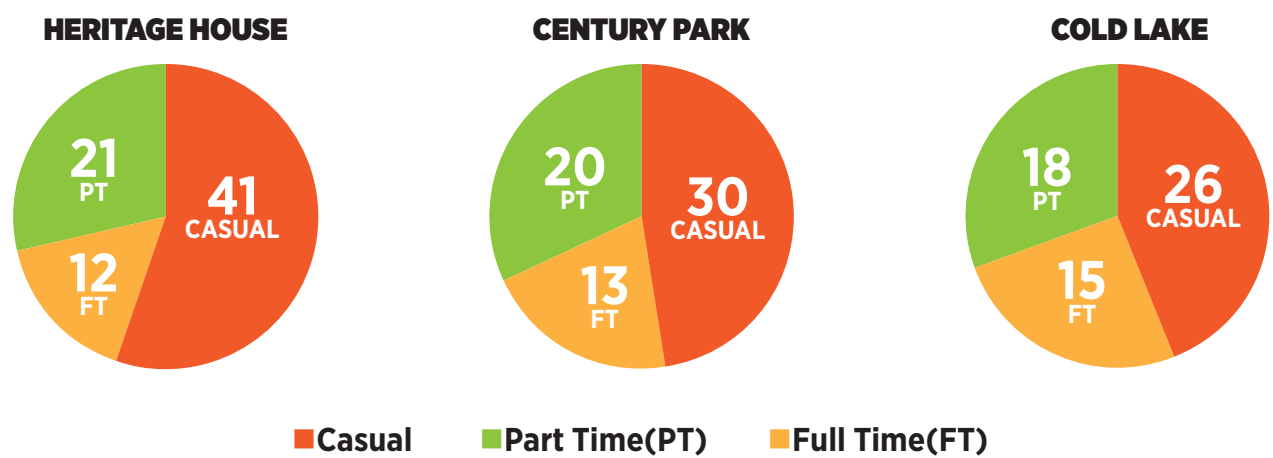
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Yet despite these problems, the company is considering further staff cuts which would lead to further increased workloads and even less one-on-one time with residents. In April, Points West Living announced that they intended to lay off more Licensed Practical Nurses at the same time as hiring a new “Wellness Supervisor.”

“Simply talking about wellness on glossy brochures and websites falls short of a genuine commitment to quality care for Alberta seniors,” said AUPE Vice-President Mike Dempsey. “Quality care can only occur when staff are treated respectfully and compensated fairly. Only then will you see long-term relationships develop that respect the unique needs and personalities of each resident.”

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF POINTS WEST LIVING STAFF



Cuts to staff hours and positions have left employees struggling to meet residents’ needs due to increased workloads. Only a small number of staff are employed on a full-time basis, and staff turnover is a consistent problem, particularly at the Cold Lake facility.

## For-profit seniors care funded by taxpayer dollars

Points West Living is Alberta’s largest privately owned operator of supporting living residences. The company also receives millions of dollars of taxpayer funding each year to build and operate their facilities. Yet it may surprise many Albertans to learn that this profitable company does not need to publicly report how it uses taxpayer funds it receives.

Although Points West Living is already the largest for-profit player in seniors care in Alberta, the company has plans to expand aggressively. Point West Living purchased Connecting Care, which operated seven properties under the Points West Living name, for \$100 million in 2015. Steve Suske, who spearheaded the sale, plans to expand the company’s value to \$500 million over the next three to five years.

Between 2008 and 2013, Alberta Health Services (AHS) gave the company more than

\$32 million to build six facilities. Ongoing operating funding from AHS to operators like Points West Living averaged between \$25,000 and \$65,500 per bed in 2014/15. Additional AHS funding is also available to cover expenses such as medical equipment and facility upgrades.

However, it is not possible for Points West Living residents, staff or other concerned Albertans to learn how seniors care operators like Points West Living are using taxpayer funds. For example, although AHS provides funding intended to cover wages for frontline workers, it does not prevent companies from diverting a part of those funds to other purposes.

The dollar figures for Points West Living corporate profit and taxpayer funding are all the more staggering when compared to compensation for frontline workers.

The average wage for Points West Living employees represented by AUPE is approximately \$21/hour, and most staff members are employed on a casual or part-time basis.

### Did you know?

- After a sale in 2015 valued at approximately \$100 million, all Points West Living sites are owned by the same Ontario-based company.
- In the year before the sale, Points West Living profits increased 46 per cent, rising from \$864,593 to \$1,262,636.
- Points West Living’s CEO Doug Mills, Vice-President of Operations George Rath and Vice-President of Human Resources and Administration Paul Melanson each own an 8.3 per cent share in Points West Inc. profits in addition to their regular salaries and additional compensation. In 2015, these bonuses were set at \$175,000 for Rath and Melanson and \$250,000 for Mills.



TELL POINTS WEST LIVING TO  
**PUT PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS!**  
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### SEND A MESSAGE

Join us as we call on Points West Living to negotiate a fair contract and put people before profits. Visit [www.pwlprobe.com](http://www.pwlprobe.com) to send a message to the company’s directors and executives and MLAs of the ridings where Points West Living operates.

**You can also send a letter to:**  
Points West Limited Partnership  
2375 Carrington Place  
Oakville, Ontario L6J 5P5  
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This newsletter is created by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees to share information with Points West Living employees, residents and their families throughout the bargaining process.  
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