

MEMBER UPDATE

JOB-KILLING ALBERTA BUDGET IS A SIGN OF THE FIGHT AHEAD

The UCP dropped its first provincial budget on Albertans Thursday.

The Finance Minister is calling it a surgical approach to cuts. But no matter how you slice it, we will be paying for billions in tax breaks the government is giving to big businesses. The budget made clear how we'll have to pay: With job losses and underfunded, understaffed public services.

JOB LOSSES

Budget documents confirm more than 16,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in the public sector will disappear over the next four years through layoffs and attrition. Many of these losses will be shouldered by AUPE members, along with other unions.

The budget was silent on many details, but we do know we're looking at major FTE job losses in 2019-20 to the tune of:

- 300 in Advanced Education and Post Secondary Institutions
- 223 in Community and Social Services
- 198 in Justice and Solicitor General
- 110 in Environment and Parks
- 270 with the Alberta Energy Regulator

(Source: Fiscal Plan, p.190)

LOWER WAGES

The budget also shows the UCP will lower what it spends on wages in the next four years. Whether these figures are the result of job losses or actual wage cuts, we can't say which for sure. Either way, the loss will be felt by hard-working Albertans.

Here are the figures for the UCP's reductions to wages over four years:

- Alberta Health Services: -1%
- Post-secondary institutions: -7.8%
- Alberta Public Service (Departments): -7.6%
- Other government agencies: -11.5%

(Source: Fiscal Plan, p.116)

AUPE members are on the front lines of the public service, which means you are also a first line of defence against cuts. Together, let's stay ahead of the damage and fight back.

Below is the budget at a glance - a quick breakdown of some of the ways it will affect you, your sector, your work and the Albertans you support. AUPE staff continue to analyze the numbers, including the potential impact on salaries, benefits and pensions. Stay tuned for more information.

WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?

The UCP campaigned on job creation, but they've revealed themselves to be job killers. Here's what we've uncovered so far:

BOARDS & AGENCIES

AUPE members are front-line staff in a number of municipalities and our work helps make them the vibrant and safe places they are.

One area where the budget is calling for big cuts is municipalities, where less stable funding will put construction projects, land management, libraries, flood mitigation and all the other services that keep a community afloat, at risk. This includes local police forces in rural parts of the province.

Page 109 of the budget shows next year's budget for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is "\$240 million, a 9 per cent reduction from \$263 million in 2018-19. [And] Operating expenses are expected to decrease to \$222 million, or by 15.5 per cent, in 2022-23."

Alberta Innovates and its subsidiary InnoTech Alberta are in the same situation. Together, they act as a driving force for medical

research, renewable energy solutions and more. But the crown corporation is expected to lose 30 per cent of its funding from 2018-19 over the next four years, which will mean a loss of about 14 per cent of the staff behind these game-changing innovations.

Who will get hit the hardest? Rural communities – especially the small towns and counties on the edges of the cities, where resources are fewer.

HEALTH CARE

Alberta's population is rising, at a rate of about 70,000 people a year. That's the size of a city like Medicine Hat being added annually. The costs of goods and services will continue to increase, with an inflation rate of two per cent in 2020.

The UCP's budget does nothing to increase funding to meet these increases nor the growing needs in health care, seniors care, and seniors housing (Fiscal Plan, p. 85, 96).

Even small increases won't keep up with the aging population's growing need for health care services, such as blood work, mental support, surgeries and preventative medicine.

The new Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centre, which was part of a 16-year roll-out plan, will not move ahead. Neither will an addition to the Edmonton's Misericordia Community Hospital, while plans to build Edmonton's first new hospital in years will be put on the back burner.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. Seniors homes and quality elder care will also take a hit, as funding for seniors housing will be cut over four years.

So much for the government's promise to protect quality health care.

Who will get hit the hardest? The chronically ill, seniors and all Albertans with serious health issues, as well as the most underserved and underpaid workers who care for them.

DIRECT GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Here's where it gets really ugly.

Over the next four years, about \$1.3 billion will be chopped out of the budgets for direct government services, post-secondary education and boards & agencies. Together, these sectors employ more than 70,000 AUPE members on whom Albertans count during tough economic times, which Kenney's budget is guaranteed to bring.

Those AUPE members can expect the number of full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) in their fields to drop by about three per cent. To give you a sense of what that will look like, 223 FTEs will be lost in Community and Social Services alone (Fiscal Plan, p.190).

The story for court clerks isn't much different. They'll see a \$100-million chop out of the Justice Solicitor General budget (Fiscal Plan, p.107), which isn't going to help growing caseloads.

Who will get hit the hardest? Low-income families and people who are out of work. As it stands, the AUPE social workers who support them are already run off their feet, drained to exhaustion and illness. Now the UCP is adding insult to injury by digging into Income Assistance – right when there's going to be a lot more unemployment.

It's clear, the government is targeting Albertans living at the margins and they're doing it by coming after all lines of support.

EDUCATION

Post-Secondary

Alberta's post-secondary institutions, where important research is produced and our next generation of workers trained, will drop \$636 million (from 2018-19 to 2022-23) (Fiscal Plan, p.82).

The budget suggests 300 FTE post-secondary positions will be axed in the coming year – and the layoffs have already started (Fiscal Plan, p.190). Already, 26 staff have lost their positions at the University of Calgary, in a move that will hurt the students they support.

K-12 Education

Another group of Albertans taking an upsetting hit from the budget will be kids.

Over the course of the next four years, education funding will remain the same, failing to keep up with inflation and population growth (Fiscal Plan, p.82). As it stands, students are already stuffed into classrooms like sardines. In 2018, class sizes in Calgary bloated to as many as 47 students, while support staff were stretched to their limit. There's also a drastic drop in funding for modular classroom funding program (Fiscal Plan, p.136).

Who will get hit the hardest? Students, whose tuitions and student loan payments will skyrocket with the cap removed, and front-line staff working to keep schools running smoothly.

WE CAN FIGHT BACK AND WIN

The UCP are paving the path to a recession. This government's economic agenda will impact jobs, household incomes and the services AUPE members work so hard to deliver. At a time when we need social programs and jobs the most, they're pulling both out from under us.

This government has made its intentions very clear. This is the start of their attacks and there's much more to come.

It is coming after us, our jobs and our ability to feed and shelter our families.

It is coming after our children in schools and colleges.

It is coming after our communities.

It is coming after the vulnerable, the sick, the marginalized and the weak.

The UCP think this is their Alberta for the taking, but they don't speak for the people who call Alberta home.

Join the fight and stand with your co-workers for an Alberta economy that works for everyone: aupe.org/fightback. If it's a fight they want from Alberta's working people, it's a fight they get.

Because when we fight back, we win.