

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

BARGAINING UPDATE

NOVEMBER 20, 2020

**ALBERTA HEALTH
SERVICES (AHS)**
GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES
LOCALS: 054, 056, 057, 058, 095
& Lamont Health Care Centre GSS

LABORATORY SERVICES ARE ON THE UCP'S CHOPPING BLOCK

The UCP government has ordered Alberta Health Services to privatize as many support services as they can. Their plan is devastating for our health care system, AHS GSS AUPE members, and all Albertans.

One of their scheme's main focuses is privatizing Laboratory Services, which includes AUPE members working as Lab Assistants, Lab Team Leads, and also our colleagues who are members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta.

This bargaining update highlights how AHS's plan would hurt you, your co-workers, and the health care services all Albertans depend on.

How privatization will hurt you

About 130 laboratories across Alberta perform over 80 million tests every year. The staff who work at these labs are part of the 11,000 Albertans the UCP wants AHS to send to the unemployment line.

AHS's scheme is to lay off as many workers as they can to make room for private companies to take over and start making profit off our health care. However, there is a lot of uncertainty about how AHS will make their plan happen. AHS's Implementation Plan doesn't even show how much AHS thinks lab privatization would cost or "save."

It also isn't clear what kind of jobs would be offered by the new private companies, or if they would add up to the same number of jobs there are right now. But one thing we

all know is that private health care companies care more about making profits than they do providing quality care.

If laid off lab workers were to be lucky enough to get hired back, the best they could hope for would be the same job with lower wages, fewer benefits, and worse working conditions and hours.

Privatization would cause health care chaos

We know privatizing lab services would create chaos because we've already been through this with Premier Ralph Klein in the 90s!

Klein's privatization of lab services was a disaster. In fact, most of what he privatized was brought back into the public sector to clean up the dysfunction.

No private company even had the capacity to take the contract for lab services in Calgary, leading to an operational partnership with the Calgary Regional Health Authority, which the private company backed out of anyway.

Laboratory pathologists fled Alberta to work elsewhere, reminiscent of how doctors are leaving Alberta now because of the UCP's attack on health care.

Alarming, lab test error rates went up because of Klein's privatization. The health and wellbeing of Albertans is not

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something to gamble with, especially when it's just to help greedy companies and CEOs make more money.

Privatizing labs also removes transparency about operations, but Albertans deserve full transparency about their health care. In fact, the privatized companies haven't released any of their own documents about what exactly went wrong with Klein's privatization scheme.

We do know the private labs couldn't keep up with changes and improvements to medical technology, decreasing the efficiency, timeliness, and quality of results. That's what happens when you care more about making profits than spending funding on high quality equipment.

The Alberta government hasn't made the right investments either: the majority of our public sector lab equipment is now past its useful life. The PC, NDP, and UCP governments' failures to modernize our equipment is one reason some think privatized lab services are better.

Fight Back for our jobs and public health care

We must come together to stop the government's attack on public services and our livelihoods! AUPE members have a long history of fighting for public health care, not only to save our own jobs, but to protect all the Albertans who depend on us and the work we do.

AUPE members have already shown we will be willing to organize and use the power of solidarity to strike back against this government.

If you haven't already, email your organizers Kate Jacobson and Farid Iskandar to join the fight to stop privatization and save our jobs.

This series of bargaining updates will continue next week with a look at privatization and long term care. Please talk to your negotiating team representatives or AUPE resource staff if you have any questions.

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