

MEMBER UPDATE

Another Government of Alberta privatization plan revealed

Why get rid of a proven money maker when the province needs revenue?

The Government of Alberta (GoA) is looking to privatize the operations of the Land Titles, Corporate and Personal Property registries.

About 130 AUPE members are employed in these registries. They do good work and the Albertans and Alberta businesses who use their services appreciate them. They earn a profit for the government (about \$124 million in 2020) while charging much lower fees than for-profit operators in other provinces.

Why does the government want to give away efficient services that make money, especially when they know workers, citizens and local businesses are opposed?

Because this isn't about what's good for Alberta, for local businesses or for Alberta citizens. This is about what's good for the friends of the UCP.

AUPE received a letter from the GoA this week, after it had already issued a request for expressions of interest from corporations interested in taking over the registries.

The GoA's letter was confusing and contradictory, but the bottom line is that this government wants to sell as much of the public service and your jobs to the private sector as it can.

As AUPE said in a media release, it is madness to get rid of a proven money maker when the province is desperately in need of revenue.

Why is the government selling out Albertans?

The decision to look for an alternative way to deliver services (that's code for selling to a corporation) comes after a company called Information Services Corporation (ISC) from Regina aggressively lobbied the government.

ISC hired a lobby company called Wellington Advocacy to represent it. The president and founder of Wellington Advocacy is Nick Koolsbergen, former chief of staff to Premier Jason Kenney and the man who ran the UCP's 2019 election campaign.

This is about UCP being good to its friends – you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

This is not the only attack on public services and public-sector workers – and it won't be the last.

The government is looking to outsource maintenance works at four facilities, the Spy Hill complex of corrections facilities in Calgary; the Edmonton laws courts and the Federal Building at the Legislature; as well as the Michener Centre South in Red Deer. This could affect up to 38 AUPE jobs.

The government is also cutting and outsourcing maintenance jobs at the Royal Museum of Alberta.

In recent months, the government has announced it will cut and outsource 11,000 front-line health-care jobs and plans to sell off the continuing-care operations of CapitalCare and Carewest.

The truth is that this government doesn't like public-sector workers or unions. It wants to hand over as much as it can to its corporate friends and see your wages and benefits slashed. It doesn't care that this will lead to cuts in services on which Albertans rely.

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We've been here before

In 2013, the then Progressive Conservative government proposed putting out a Request For Proposals (RFP) to privatize the Land Titles office.

AUPE members were outraged, of course, but they were not alone in opposing the idea.

The Alberta Land Surveyors' Association, the Real Estate Council of Alberta, the Alberta Real Estate Association, the Alberta Mortgage Brokers Association and the Law Society of Alberta were all against it.

They were worried about preserving the efficient, security and integrity of the work done at the registry. And they were worried that fees would go up.

Even the opposition Wildrose party and NDP were both against privatization.

The government dropped the plan.

But now it's back – and it includes the Corporate and Personal Property registries. The fear over higher fees and lower quality of service remain.

Alberta fees are currently lower than in jurisdictions with private operations such as Manitoba, as you can see from the

Alberta fee schedule and the Manitoba fee schedule in the documents at the end of this update. What is free or costs \$10 here can often cost more than \$100 there.

What's next?

We fought against privatization successfully in 2013 and we will fight against it once more.

We will reach out to the same groups that were opposed last time and ask them to step up again.

We will let the government and Albertans know that it is a betrayal and that this is bad for Albertans.

But we need AUPE members to join the fight.

This is not just about the 130 members at the registries, or the 38 members in maintenance or the 28 member at the Royal Alberta Museum. This government has a target on the backs of all government workers and on all workers in the public sector.

If you are not in their sights now, your turn will come.

So, please contact AUPE organizers Trevor Zimmerman at t.zimmerman@aupe.org or Madelaine Sommers at m.sommers@aupe.org to see how you can get involved.

Stay tuned to the AUPE website at www.aupe.org and your emails for updates.