

MEMBER UPDATE

Congratulations on saving Government of Alberta registries and 130 jobs!

Plan to privatize is off the table for now, but we must stay vigilant

Alberta government plans to privatize the Land Titles, Corporate and Personal registries in Service Alberta have been shelved – for now, at least.

As many of you will already have heard, the employer has informed staff that it has decided not to proceed with the plan to hand over these operations to a private, for-profit operator.

An email sent to AUPE president Guy Smith today (Wednesday, Oct. 6) says: “After considering many viewpoints and exercising due diligence, the Government of Alberta has determined that a 35-year concession agreement with the private sector is not the best approach for Alberta at this time.

“Service Alberta remains committed to modernizing its registry services for Albertans and delivering more efficient and cost effective digital government.

“Thank you for taking the time to consult with us on this matter, and for your insights into this matter.”

What does this mean?

It means that the hard work you have put into the campaign to save 130 jobs and these important public services has succeeded!

You should take a little time to congratulate yourselves on what you have accomplished. You did not sit back and accept bad news. You stood up, you fought back – and you won.

You got organized, you launched a campaign to write letters to MLAs and Service Alberta Minister Nate Glubish. You reached out to the wider community, including former conservative cabinet minister Doug Griffiths and industry groups whose members use the registries.

You made a powerful case for keeping these registries in the public system, where they provide quality services for Albertans at reasonable prices – while earning hundreds of millions in revenue for the government every year.

In the end, your arguments and your efforts could not be ignored.

Is this the end of the fight?

Having got this far, it wouldn't be wise to relax just yet.

Notice the words the employer used in the email ... “a 35-year concession agreement with the private sector is not the best approach for Alberta at this time.”

We know that the current UCP government is ideologically committed to privatizing all kinds of public services.

We must stay vigilant to see if it comes back with a new plan to privatize all or some of these registries again later, perhaps with a term different to the 35-year plan it had proposed this time around.

We must also put pressure on the government to invest in registries and modernize operations so that it cannot try to justify privatization, which is just a sham solution for a problem that would actually be fixed with better public funding.

Starving public services of resources as an excuse to, and prelude for, privatization is a common tactic used by right-wing governments around the world.

Time to celebrate!

Yes, it's time to celebrate now. This is a victory for Albertans and for workers. But keep your eyes peeled for future threats and be willing to fight again.

Because we are AUPE. When we fight, we win!