

Hands off

MY PLACE IN HEALTH CARE!

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM



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PRODUCTION: CSN COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT — PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHEL GIROUX — DESIGN: EMLISSIME.COM — 2016

IMPACT FOR TECHNICIANS AND PROFESSIONALS

Closing some labs will have a major impact for hundreds of workers, many of whom will eventually have to change to different shifts or hours of work, or even another workplace. Some are also worried that jobs will be abolished. The situation in regions is of even greater concern, given the size of some territories served by a single CISSS/CIUSSS.

These regroupings are also liable to lead to a loss of expertise in the system, since some technicians and professionals will probably prefer to change careers rather than their workplace, especially if the new one is a long way away. Would this be another opportunity for the Couillard government to privatize?

TAKE ACTION FOR OUR JOBS AND SERVICES TO THE POPULATION!

The CSN is intervening on several levels to defend the concerns of medical lab personnel. It is the only union organization to have a letter of agreement on the workforce in medical technologies. This is why we will quickly begin work with the employer party to have access to full information about this project.

We also want to report the issues involved in the Optilab project, for both lab workers and for the population that will bear the cost of this reform. We think it is crucial for technicians and professionals who know and master the organization of work in labs to be an integral part of discussions and be able to intervene to ensure its feasibility or, if not, put a stop to it in light of the negative consequences that are identified.

In the coming weeks, we will organize a round of meetings with lab personnel. We will also continue to speak out in public to make known the risks and issues involved in the Optilab project.

Hands off MY MEDICAL LAB!



Hands off

MY PLACE IN HEALTH CARE!

For several months now, the CSN has been working to denounce the proposed over-centralization of medical labs piloted by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS). The Optilab project would amalgamate a number of medical labs, and this would inevitably have harmful consequences for personnel and services to the population.

The report resulting from the work of the CSN's review committee on medical labs helps us understand the issues at stake in the Optilab project. As well, the two Rendez-vous on the future of the public health and social services system, co-organized by the CSN and bringing together more than 400 people directly involved in the majority of the components of the system, developed a vision that emphasized local services organized in accordance with evidence-based data. At the present time, nothing suggests that this is the case with the Optilab project piloted by Health Minister Barrette.

The CSN therefore intends to intervene with the employer party and the government to raise the legitimate concerns of technicians and professionals.

THE BARRETTE REFORM,

OR THE DISMANTLING OF OUR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM

The Optilab project piloted by the Liberal government is part of a proliferation of reforms aimed at dismantling the public health and social services system. With Bill 10, the government has created mega-structures that distance the organization of services from the population and the people who provide those services daily. By continuing to impose year after year of budget cuts, it increases the workloads of personnel: the impact can be seen in the growing number of employees who have to take time off work because of health problems or burnout.

The effect of all these attacks is to destabilize our public system. With the Optilab project, the government seems to want to speed up the merger of medical labs, creating a huge flow of handling and transportation of biomedical specimens, most of them closely related to the public's health.

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE OPTILAB PROJECT

In meetings with lab technicians and professionals in a number of institutions, the CSN identified many issues for both lab personnel and the quality of services to the population.

Health Minister Barrette wants to amalgamate many of the 98 labs that now do analyses all across Québec. The project affects thousands of workers, notably medical technologists, lab technicians and cytologists.

In looking at the Optilab project, the first point that seems very obvious is that the financial aspect has more importance than the quality of services to the population. The government hopes to save money by merging labs. But during a period of budget cuts, how will it succeed in putting into place the infrastructure required to absorb the volume of analyses? Will the potential savings come at the expense of the population? Will the change lead to a reduced quality of services and longer delays for analyses of specimens?

At the same time, amalgamating medical labs would add considerably to the volume of specimens transported between labs across the territory of Québec. This transportation is currently largely done by private carriers and it can be expected that the same would continue after the mergers.

More transportation of specimens also involves real hazards for the population, in addition to being a setback in environmental terms. The transportation of specimens also increases the risk of lost specimens or delays in analyses, causing stress and a deterioration in the health of the people waiting for results. The best way to provide patients with lab test results quickly would be to keep medical labs in many institutions, as is now the case.

It should be added that specimens have to be kept at stable temperatures in order to preserve their quality. So the time and distance of transportation is liable to affect the validity of the tests done. With respect to delays in analyses caused by handling, the MSSS's *Groupe sectoriel d'expertises sur la manipulation et le transport des spécimens biologiques* (sectoral expert group in the handling and transportation of biological specimens) recommends that "any specimen taken for a medical biology lab analysis be 'processed' within a maximum of two hours of when the specimen is collected". There is simply no way such maximums could be respected with the Optilab project.