

ON-GOING COMMUNICATION IS URGENT

With April 1 right around the corner – the date on which all lab personnel from a lab cluster will have to come under the same employer, whether it be the hub lab or the lab cluster itself – the APTS is keeping up the pressure by exposing the premature and ill-planned nature of this administrative operation. The sense of urgency created by this deadline is fuelling our urge to communicate more directly with our medical technologists. We are proposing two new means of communication: this



new *APTS vs OPTILAB* newsletter, to keep you posted of our actions and the latest developments in the OPTILAB file, and the *Blogue de la technologiste médicale*. The blog will be written by Nicole Déry, a medical technologist in good standing, who is better known in her role as 3rd APTS Vice President, responsible for the OPTILAB file on the executive committee. You are all invited to comment on the blog messages she sends to the head honcho of OPTILAB, Minister Gaétan Barrette himself.

HEARINGS BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL ADMINISTRATIF DU TRAVAIL

Since December, hearings have been underway before the TAT administrative tribunal to address the APTS complaint filed on behalf of the majority of medical technologists, contesting the way the OPTILAB project is being implemented. The complaint is directed at the MSSS, the institutions and Minister Barrette himself. In it, the APTS invokes Section 12 of the *Labour Code*, which clearly stipulates that an employer must not hinder a union's work. The APTS, the main representative of the employees concerned, was nonetheless sidelined from the process and prevented from playing its role with employees when the OPTILAB project was officially launched on September 28, 2016. By deliberately excluding us, the institutions and the health minister hindered our work with our members, despite the provisions of our collective agreement that oblige employers to consult us. The upcoming hearings will take place on February 27, February 28, and March 3. The APTS firmly intends to see this complaint right through to the end.

THE SITUATION IN OUTAOUAIS



During the week of February 6 when we were holding lunch-hour conferences with medical technologists from the Outaouais region, a *report on TVA* informed residents in the region of their elected officials' support for our call for a moratorium to halt the implementation of the OPTILAB project. The regional county municipality for the Gatineau Valley had passed a resolution to that effect in November 2016, followed by 15 mayors who also opposed the idea of having the vast majority of lab tests transferred to Gatineau. These elected representatives are concerned about loss of local services and jobs in the region, and are calling on the health minister to back off. The APTS team for the Outaouais region is currently in contact with the mayors from the regional county municipality of Des Collines to invite them to follow suit.

WORKFORCE PLANNING REQUIRED IN THE LABS

Some integrated health and social services centres (CISSS) have disclosed their workforce planning projections, in preparation of the new organization of the labs. That was the case in December for the integrated centre in Chaudière-Appalaches, which will lose 28 medical technologist jobs, and more recently in the Montérégie, where jobs in biochemistry, hematology and microbiology will also be in jeopardy, although the exact number of positions that will be abolished is not yet clear.

The APTS is waiting for confirmation of a meeting that is slated to take place in February, in which MSSS officials responsible for OPTILAB have to present their vision of provincial workforce planning for the entire set of laboratories across the province.

It's very clear to the APTS that the OPTILAB approach has been implemented in an improvised way, without any logical step-by-step procedure. The MSSS is already determining the number of employees who will stay in the labs, even though the list of lab tests that have to be transferred has not even been completed!

ON THE LABOUR RELATIONS FRONT

At the end of January 2017, employers sent the reorganization notices stipulated in the collective agreement to the employees concerned and their union. The APTS transmitted grievances to the employers, contesting the notices' compliance with the collective agreement, claiming that they failed to respect the terms of the collective agreement concerning the employer's alleged changes.

In recent weeks, the APTS has made it a priority to settle grievances over non-posted job vacancies. A number of employers have already started to post these vacant positions or are on the verge of doing so. The APTS is making sure that all the positions that have to be posted will be posted by April 1. Our objective is to ensure that these positions go to the employees who would have been awarded them had the positions been posted as required.

Despite the contentious context, discussions are underway with employers from the various lab clusters to conclude a memorandum of understanding for the transfer of employees on April 1, 2017. In the meantime, your union counsellors will inform you of the terms and conditions of the transfer to be agreed upon.

New grievances or legal procedures will be filed, depending on how the situation unfolds. Follow the developments in the next issues of the newsletter.

AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

In the National Assembly, *Parti Québécois* MNA Diane Lamarre used the APTS data to summon Minister Barrette to explain his obstinacy in rolling out the OPTILAB project, despite the detrimental effects anticipated and the lack of cost savings in the short term. She called for him to disclose his projections. In his response, the health minister evoked long-term benefits... and pointed the finger at the federal government for underfunding the Québec health-care system. Here is an [excerpt of the exchange](#).



IN THE MEDIA

Throughout the province, APTS representatives are speaking out in the media to inform the public of the risks to which they're being exposed by Québec's lab reorganization. Demonstrations organized in the various regions have attracted considerable media attention. Social media are reporting this media coverage on an almost daily basis. You can browse the section *Dans les médias de la Salle de presse* on the APTS website, for details on the articles and reports that have been disseminated in the past few months. For instance, the TVA report on February 6 discusses the uncertainty surrounding any eventual cost savings and the lengthy delay before any such savings might be reported. It discloses an MSSS document obtained by the APTS, which acknowledges that the costs associated with the impact of the reform on personnel might cancel out any possible savings. You can also hear the Radio-Canada interview with the APTS spokesperson for the Côte-Nord, on the 4 o'clock [news bulletin](#) (regional news in brief) for Eastern Québec.



SHARE THE MESSAGE

Contribute to our campaign on social media by downloading our OPTILAB visibility materials – an image for your Facebook profile picture and a cover photo for Facebook – and by posting the OPTILAB slide show that has already been viewed by almost 20,000 web users via our APTS Facebook page. You can add this message: Barrette is attacking our labs. Fight back! [LABOS.APTSQ.ORG](#).

In solidarity with medical technologists for whom April 1 is a much dreaded deadline, why not share this newsletter as well? Keep an eye out for upcoming issues announced in the [fil@pts](#) and on our OPTILAB web page, [LABOS.APTSQ.ORG](#).