

Ten months have passed since the OPTILAB reorganization process was officially launched. Aside from transfer protocols being concluded and some employers changing in the lab clusters that group together labs in more than one integrated centre, there were few developments on the ground.

In actuality, employers got past the April 1, 2017 deadline – some with great difficulty – and started to reorganize for the next stage. A low volume of lab test transfers was reported that didn't involve any transfer of medical technologists. However, with the exception of a few lab clusters, it was only recently that the heads of the lab clusters invited our local teams to discuss the upcoming phases.

With the first few months of 2018 underway, we're ready to report back to you with a full-fledged plan of action!

OUR MESSAGE TO THE MSSS TEAM

One thing is clear: without the input of medical technologists and their union, the OPTILAB reorganization can't go forward.

Brandishing a petition with nearly 20,000 signatures and support from a number of partners, we called for a moratorium to take the time to plan things properly. Our call fell on deaf ears.

We warned the ministry of health and social services (MSSS) that it would hit a brick wall if it continued to bulldoze ahead at breakneck speed, but its representatives decided to forge ahead. Today we see that our concerns and fears are now materializing, without any of the supposed benefits of the lab reorganization (particularly economic benefits).

Our demands are simple but crucial.

- Stop and give everyone a little breathing room;
- Consult medical technologists and their union;
- Stop withholding information and act transparently by transmitting the relevant information;
- Plan before taking action.

OUR OBJECTIVES FOR 2018

- Keep the maximum number of lab tests (and jobs) in the original labs (particularly the partner labs);
- Maintain acceptable and desirable working conditions in all the labs, i.e., interesting work in the partner labs and no overload in the hub labs;



- Offer the population secure, high-quality service;
- Improve channels of communication and obtain information in a timely manner so we can prepare our members and play our role as a union;
- Get the MSSS and those heading the lab clusters to consult medical technologists and their union and take into consideration our concerns in planning the OPTILAB roll-out.

FIRST MEETING OF OUR PROVINCIAL OPTILAB WORKING COMMITTEE

On December 20, the APTS provincial OPTILAB working committee met for the first time. As you know, the APTS created the committee following a request by the General Council in October 2017. This working committee is made up of representatives from OPTILAB extra-territorial partner labs and lab clusters (one rep from each partner lab and lab cluster), two members of the APTS Board of Directors, the Professional Groups co-ordinator, the Labour Relations co-ordinator and the political officer responsible for the OPTILAB file on the APTS provincial executive committee.

Participants had a chance to express their expectations about the working committee's work and discuss what they were experiencing on the ground. Their message was crystal clear: we have to work together and continue to take concerted action at various levels, not only to get the MSSS to actively listen, but also to expose the aberrations, denounce the failures and raise public awareness of the impact of the OPTILAB roll-out. The discussions helped participants gather a lot of information and draw up a list of themes for the working committee to tackle at the next meetings.



VIDEO CLIPS

Just as medical technologists were entering the official launch phase of the OPTILAB reorganization, our union was welcoming in a host of new members. It was essential that these new members be briefed on the OPTILAB issue, and that our other members be brought up to date. Video clips on OPTILAB and the situation on the ground will soon be ready for local APTS executives and members.

LABOUR RELATIONS FRONT

Ever since the OPTILAB reorganization was first announced, our labour relations department has been co-ordinating the actions to be taken to ensure that the rights of employees affected by OPTILAB are respected. Our initial orientations now have to be adjusted to version 2. Each lab cluster will be going through different experiences and will reorganize itself at its own pace. We'll have to analyse each specific case, taking into account the given scenario and the national and local provisions that apply.

A committee of labour relations counsellors focusing on OPTILAB has been set up, with its first meeting scheduled on February 13, 2018. Following this meeting, we'll have an overview of the situation in terms of labour relations. The labour relations department will co-ordinate this committee's orientations and actions, and offer occasional support to the local teams as needed, depending on the situation facing the lab clusters and the way things develop.

WORKFORCE PLANNING MEETING

We attended a meeting on workforce planning for lab personnel in September 2017. Unfortunately, aside from the MSSS team announcing that a version 2.0 of the OPTILAB reorganization process would be adopted, the meeting was disappointing in many ways. The fact that we received no response to our numerous questions about the progression of the roll-out was particularly disappointing. We were blithely told that the workforce planning meeting was not the right forum to discuss that.

REITERATING OUR REQUEST TO THE DEPUTY MINISTER

Despite Deputy Minister Bureau's fine speech at the OPTMQ convention in June about the importance of discussing things together, he failed to respond to the request we made last June to meet with him, or to our follow-up request in December. Now that we have a version 2.0 of OPTILAB, we intend to reiterate our request to the MSSS to obtain an appropriate "forum."

A DETAILED PLAN COMING SOON

We're preparing a detailed plan of the concrete situation on the ground since April 1, to guide our upcoming actions.

ON-GOING ACTIONS

In 2018, the lab reorganization is far from over. We're entering the implementation phase of the roll-out. Given the lack of transparency shown by the MSSS, it's all the more important that we note every little change that arises in the labs. That's why we're continuing to monitor the situation province-wide. Other actions are being prepared for 2018. Follow our publications to stay posted. We're going to keep up the pressure right to the end!