

October 26, 2017

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Health
Government of Saskatchewan
Room 204, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
REGINA SK S4S 0B3

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit
Minister of Rural and Remote Health
Government of Saskatchewan
Room 208, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
REGINA SK S4S 0B3

Glen Hart, MLA
Last Mountain - Touchwood
402 Stanley St.
P.O. BOX 309
CUPAR SK S0G 0Y0

VIAL EMAIL: he.minister@gov.sk.ca

VIA EMAIL: minister.rrhe@gov.sk.ca

VIA FAX: 306.723.4654

VIA EMAIL: ghart.mla@sasktel.net

Dear Mr. Reiter, Mr. Ottenbreit, and Mr. Hart:

RE: REVERSE THE CUT TO LAB SERVICES IN ITUNA, SK

On behalf of CUPE members working, living, and caring for the people of Ituna, along with many concerned residents in Ituna, I write to express profound disappointment with the decision of the Sunrise Health Region to push forward with a reduction to lab services at the Ituna Health Centre that have taken effect on October 1, 2017, and I urge you to reverse this cut immediately.

Lab services are essential to accessing health care, and any reduction in these services in rural Saskatchewan disproportionately impacts residents and causes further barriers to accessing health care. Effective October 1, 2017, the health region enacted a reduction to lab services at the Ituna Health Centre in Ituna, Saskatchewan, from five days a week to only three days a week. This reduction not only creates significant barriers to Ituna area residents in accessing health care, but it also makes it more difficult to maintain a qualified laboratory technologist in the community at what are now significantly reduced operational hours, and the reduction in hours may even cause the community of Ituna to lose their town doctor should lab services including blood work, X-rays, ECG tests, and pacemaker checks not be regularly available Monday through Friday.

The unjustified reduction in lab services in the town of Ituna negatively impacts every resident living in Ituna and surrounding area, especially those residents in long-term care, in community living homes, and residents who require access to local lab services to prevent unnecessary travel when coordinating their out-of-town cancer treatments.

CUPE members and concerned residents, including the Mayor and members of the Town Council, have joined together in their shared concern and dismay over this unnecessary and harmful cut to lab services, and over 360 signatures have been gathered on a petition calling for the cut to be reversed immediately.

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The provincial government's 2017-18 provincial budget, which makes devastating cuts to public services while prioritizing misguided tax cuts, has placed unnecessary pressure on rural health care services, and this cut is the latest in a string of hurtful cuts that do little to save money but cause great harm to communities and the quality of life of their residents.

Unfortunately, these concerns that I understand have been shared with the local MLA, Mr. Glen Hart, have been ignored and have failed to inspire any action to reverse this harmful cut to lab services. Nevertheless, it is not too late to put politics and excuses of who is responsible for the decision aside, hear the many voices expressing concern over this cut, and urgently act to restore lab services in Ituna, SK.

If you recall, the Saskatchewan Party platform in the last general election promised to "Keep Saskatchewan Strong" and, according to the platform, "hire more frontline workers" and "continue progress on improved patient care." Instead, the residents of Ituna, Saskatchewan, are witnessing a promise being broken and frontline laboratory staff and hours being reduced. The cut may also lead to the total loss of the laboratory services and even the town doctor.

CUPE members, together with many concerned residents of Ituna and surrounding area, urge you to maintain and restore lab services in the town of Ituna including blood work, X-ray, ECG tests and pacemaker tests to five days per week, Monday through Friday, at the Ituna Health Centre to serve the needs of the community of Ituna and surrounding area and, in so doing, reverse any reduction to lab services in Ituna, Saskatchewan.

I have enclosed a copy of the petition.

We await your response to our appeal for urgent action.

Yours sincerely,



TOM GRAHAM
President

Enclosure

/nm cope 342

cc: Danielle Chartier, Critic for Health, NDP Opposition;
Doug Scully, Mayor of Ituna; Ituna Town Council;
CUPE Local 4980; CUPE Local 4552

Petition to Save Our Lab Services in Ituna, Saskatchewan

Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan:

We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following:

That lab services are essential to accessing health care, and any reduction in lab services in rural Saskatchewan disproportionately impacts residents and causes further barriers to accessing health services;

That effective October 1, 2017, the health region plans to reduce lab services at the Ituna Health Centre in Ituna, Saskatchewan, from five days per week to only two days a week;

That this reduction not only creates significant barriers to Ituna area residents in accessing health services, but it also makes it more likely that it will be difficult to maintain a qualified laboratory technologist in the community at significantly reduced operational hours and may even cause the community of Ituna to lose their town doctor should lab services including blood work, X-rays, ECG tests, and pacemaker checks not be regularly available Monday through Friday;

That the reduction in lab services in Ituna negatively impacts every resident living in Ituna and surrounding area, especially those residents in long-term care, in community living homes, and residents who require access to local lab services to prevent unnecessary travel when coordinating their out-of-town cancer treatments;

That the provincial government's 2017-18 provincial budget, which makes devastating cuts to public services while prioritizing misguided tax cuts to corporations and the wealthy, has placed unnecessary pressure on rural health care services;

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan: **to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to maintain and restore lab services in the town of Ituna including blood work, X-ray, ECG tests and pacemaker tests to five days per week, Monday through Friday, at the Ituna Health Centre to serve the needs of the community of Ituna and surrounding area and, in so doing, reverse any reduction to Lab Services in Ituna, Saskatchewan.**

First and Last Name	Address and Postal Code	Signature