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Privatization of health care a threat to quality of life for patients and workers

A new report by the Parkland Institute reveals how decades of declining public investment in health care entrench political attitudes that prioritize cutting costs and privatizing services at the expense of working conditions and quality of care.

Privatization Pressures in Alberta Health Care: Laboratory Services, Home Care, and Telehealth Under Austerity by Alison McIntosh explores pressure to expand private participation in three areas of Alberta's public health-care system. Laboratory services, home care and telehealth are parts of the health-care system where quality of care and work could suffer due to proposed government policies.

"Albertans deserve a resilient and comprehensive public health-care system that focuses on equitable, accessible, universal health care and fair working conditions for health-care workers," says Alison McIntosh. This report comes at a time when Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP) is continuing with plans to increase private delivery of health-care services.

"An aging population, aging lab infrastructure and new digital technologies pose challenges for the health-care system, and contracting these areas of health care out to the private sector leaves Albertans behind," says McIntosh.

McIntosh pays particular attention to how privatization in laboratory services, home care and telehealth impact cost, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. She demonstrates how increasing privatization is a threat to equitable, accessible care and can easily lead to eroded pay and working conditions—a situation that's not new to Albertans.

The report delivers 20 recommendations to strengthen Alberta's universal health-care system, including publicly insured home care with expanded assessment, eligibility and delivery; increased data collection; solid government policies and processes; and an investment in care for people with mental illness.

"The legislation the UCP government has passed to this point in its mandate leaves no room for doubt that it intends to follow through on its plans for increasing private participation in health care in Alberta," says McIntosh. "Investing in improving the public health-care system needs to be a high priority so Albertans can all have access to high quality care and good jobs."

Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. *Privatization Pressures in Alberta Health Care: Laboratory Services, Home Care, and Telehealth Under Austerity* is available for download on [Parkland Institute's website](#).

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