

A law on ratios
is still necessary!
P. 3

Addressing systemic
racism
P. 4

The Ombudsperson and
disclosure of wrongdoing
P. 5



ENACTION

Vol. 34 | No. 1 | MARCH 2021

REGROUPEMENT DES FIQ | fiqsante.qc.ca | fiqp.org

RFIQ Provincial Council on March 15, 17 and 18
FIQ Federal Council on March 15
FIQP Federal Council on March 17



Sophie Guilbault, spokesperson for provincial negotiations

ONE YEAR LATER... STILL WITHOUT A COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

It has been several weeks since a tentative agreement on working conditions was adopted by the FIQ and FIQP delegates. However, a year and a half after the union demands were filed and a year after the end of the collective agreement, the provincial negotiations are still not finished.

DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM

Because of the pandemic, the referendum on the tentative agreement will be held online once the negotiations are finished. The vote platform will ensure the security and confidentiality of the data.

Only members in good standing with the unions affiliated to the FIQ and FIQP will be entitled to vote in the referendum. Haven't signed your membership card yet? You can do so electronically, by contacting your union team.

The very specific context of the pandemic explains this delay, of course, but also the fact that the FIQ, because of its position as a leader in health, is the only organization to date to have reached a sectoral agreement with the government on working conditions.

Meeting in a virtual provincial council the FIQ and FIQP delegates took stock of the situation. One thing is clear: this is the first time that there has been such a long delay between the tentative agreement on working conditions and the start of negotiations on intersectoral matters (salary, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities).

This is unprecedented and the Federations and affiliated unions must adapt their strategy, communications and mobilization to this reality. It's time to get things moving!

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Putting an end to wage discrimination, maintaining the purchasing power of members, ensuring that no one falls into uncertainty on retirement, that parents can balance work and family, and that Quebecers and First Nations members living in remote regions can count on sufficient staff in order to receive the same services as others is ESSENTIAL. A collective agreement

that sets in motion the healthcare professionals' solutions cannot be satisfactory without significant gains on these issues. Therefore, the next few weeks will be decisive.

To assert its positions on these crucial issues, the FIQ can count on a major asset: the strength in numbers of the APTS-FIQ Alliance. Uniting the professionals and technicians of the health and social services network, the Alliance represents 131,000 members, of which 85% are women. The Alliance will be seen and heard in the public arena and institutions! ■



1. Sébastien Bouchard, IUCPQ 2. Maude Pelletier, Union Consultant 3. On screen: Émilie Ricard, CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec 4. On screen: Ann Déry, MUHC

POSTE-PUBLICATION

Convention 40007983

(adresse de retour)
FIQ Québec | 1260, rue du Blizzard
Québec (Qc) G2K 0J1

WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

En Action, Vol. 34, No. 1, March 2021 | Published by the Communication Service | Distribution: 76,000 copies | Graphic layout: Josée Roy | Photography: Geneviève Giguère, in collaboration with Alexandre Claude (p. 2) | Printing: Solisco | Reprint of any article or excerpt must indicate "reprint from the FIQ en Action" | 100% recycled paper | If you wish to receive only the electronic version of FIQ publications, send a request to info@fiqsante.qc.ca | ISSN 1913-1755 (Print) | ISSN 1913-1763 (Online) | fiqsante.qc.ca | info@fiqsante.qc.ca



LET'S STAY MOBILIZED!

Mary Béland

This March marked the first year anniversary of the global pandemic. Faced with the unknown, the entire Quebec population took stock of healthcare professionals' incredible mobilization, humanity and courage. They were the safety net that allowed society to keep going.

Nobody could have predicted that we'd have to fight to implement the principle of precaution or to withdraw pregnant or immunosuppressed healthcare professionals from their work environments. It goes against the most basic respect for human life.

In the last year, the government could have chosen to support us. Instead, it chose to make compromises at the expense of healthcare professionals. Its sexist medical profession, which violates our rights, leaves a very bitter taste in the mouth. Whether it be Ministerial Order 007, inadequate financing for infection prevention and control for staff, the systematic refusal to provide required protective equipment, and the intimidation of those who denounce situations based on their professional obligations—all of this is inconsistent with the ultimate goals: to provide conditions that promote the retention of healthcare professionals in the public network and safe, quality care to the population.

We sounded the alarm over crisis management that is disconnected from reality, rejecting the cruel and authoritarian management currently used in the health network. Healthcare professionals' continuous efforts, personal accounts and surprise actions to denounce intolerable situations sparked major public debates about how prevention isn't prioritized, about accommodation and seniors' care, and about the need to show healthcare workers recognition and respect. We have won some battles, like for N95 masks, against great odds. Each of our interventions applied pressure to make change!

This next stage leads us to new decisive steps. Our solidarity is essential. We are impatient and tired but it's extremely important we hold on right now. We are close to an agreement and we need to do everything possible to ensure that nurses', licensed practical nurses', respiratory therapists' and clinical perfusionists' expertise is recognized and fairly compensated. We have high expectations. The

government's messages about recognizing healthcare professionals' work during the pandemic needs to translate into concrete changes and significant advances at the intersectoral bargaining table.

Hopes are high thanks to the vaccination campaign. Including for a recovery plan that could, this time, truly benefit women. For healthcare professionals, going back to normal would mean recovering a practice that respects their rights. That's the only way things can continue. And we will not bend! We will continue to make our voices heard on all platforms with unwavering strength.

The only battles we lose are those we don't fight! ■

On March 26, to demonstrate that the continued enforcement of Ministerial Order 007 is only worsening the workforce shortage in the health network, healthcare professionals from the Laurentians and Montérégie Ouest protested to say they have had enough and to denounce the suspension of their working conditions for over 365 days now.



ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Respiratory therapists' essential role A law on ratios is still necessary! FIQP Federal Council



RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS' ESSENTIAL ROLE

Since fall of 2018, a tactical committee has been endeavouring to enhance respiratory therapists' scope of practice. At the provincial council, FIQ and FIQP delegates received a second progress report on the committee's work.

The committee's mandate is to identify actions that can advance respiratory therapists' demands and to evaluate mobilization strategies that will help to achieve this objective.

During their presentation, the committee members revealed the rankings for facilities and institutions with the best respiratory therapist practice in terms of scope and professional autonomy. Initially scheduled for March 2020, this presentation was postponed because of the pandemic. The action and communication plans couldn't have been carried out, or at the very least, wouldn't have had the impact desired.

But in these last few months, more than ever, public awareness of respiratory therapists' work has increased. It has given new energy and life to the committee and their upcoming actions. Never before has the media given so much attention to respiratory therapists' essential work in the health network.

Over the next few weeks, the committee will evaluate whether or not the pandemic had a significant

impact on the provincial overview drawn up before COVID-19 and if the institutions with the best practices will be the same. Once this step is complete, we will set communication and mobilization actions into motion so that the respiratory therapy profession can finally receive fair recognition and fully develop its scope of practice. ■



A LAW ON RATIOS IS STILL NECESSARY!

Despite important progress made for safe ratios, as set out in the tentative agreement with the Quebec government on sectoral matters last December, obtaining a law on ratios remains the FIQ and FIQP's ultimate goal. At the council, delegates were presented an overview of ratio progress and the ground covered in the last few years. They also got a preview of the next steps planned to make sure that ratios are cemented in a law and implemented province-wide.

That said, even though the FIQ's ratio proposal has made giant leaps forward and become firmly rooted in public, media and political awareness, there is still clear resistance. Political resistance from the government, as well as resistance from network managers, especially from certain nursing directors. The FIQ and FIQP have demonstrated that safe healthcare professional-to-patient ratios are a promising solution for the future of the health network. They have made great strides, but it is important to keep the pressure on and to keep taking action on all fronts.

A plan has been developed to continue this important fight, both for healthcare professionals and patients. The FIQ and FIQP delegates will eventually weigh in on this action plan to coordinate and structure the battle for a law on ratios.

fiqp FEDERAL COUNCIL

One year later, the Federation is there to remind the government about the disastrous consequences of not listening to them.

A few days after the provincial commemoration in memory of the victims of COVID-19, Sonia Mancier, President, took a moment at the FIQP Federal Council to review the sad events of the past year.

More than 10,000 people, including 5,000 elderly, have lost their lives since the beginning of the health crisis. The healthcare professionals, especially those who work in CHSLDs, have suffered greatly from not being listened to by the government. Poorly protected, thousands of them have contracted the virus and several are left with serious after-effects, not to mention the psychological distress they experience after being exposed to

the worst. They suffered from the fact that their clinical judgement was not recognized, even though they had a front row seat to the spread of the virus by aerosol.

This is also the context in which the issue of accommodation in Québec and the inevitable forthcoming reform is framed. For decades, major problems have plagued CHSLDs and other seniors' residences and, despite successive

governments, they have continued to be ignored. It is hard to believe that it took the loss of more than 5,000 lives to finally realize the need for action. The FIQP hopes to be able to participate in the discussions on the future of private CHSLDs and it reiterated its interest to the Deputy Minister of Health last fall. ■

STATUS OF WOMEN

**Tools for boosting women's participation in union life
Addressing systemic racism:
Inclusion, listening and solidarity**



TOOLS FOR BOOSTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN UNION LIFE

Members of the Implementation and Monitoring Committee (PIMC) presented how the last three actions in the plan adopted in 2018 were implemented

A first training program, *Add your voice to debates at decision-making bodies*, is available in French and English for any union reps who have little to no experience in speaking up at meetings. Initially planned for in-person sessions, the program was redesigned to meet health measure

requirements during the pandemic. A second virtual training program about the electoral process will be launched in April. It will help union reps to demystify FIQ and FIQP elections and become familiar with the process on an individual basis, at their own pace.

Delegates were also informed about the upcoming mentorship pilot project. In preparation, there will be a call for mentors and recruitment of mentees (less experienced union reps) in April. We are aiming for five mentorship pairings per year. ■



Marie-Iris Légaré, CDPDJ

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM: INCLUSION, LISTENING AND SOLIDARITY

At the initiative of the Status of Women Sector and the 2021 Convention organizing team, a conference on the issues of systemic racism was offered to the delegates. Marie-Iris Légaré, from the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, addressed the participants virtually.

In addition to clarifying various concepts such as race, racism and racialized people, Ms. Légaré's presentation demystified the principle of systemic discrimination. According to the Commission, systemic discrimination results from the dynamic interaction between prejudiced decisions and attitudes. It can also arise from organizational models and institutional practices that have an intended or unintended adverse impact on groups protected by the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Ms. Légaré also stressed the importance of making racism visible by acknowledging its existence, by tackling prejudicial situations and using multidisciplinary expertise to measure disproportionate effects.

This exercise allowed for rich and constructive exchanges with the delegation. Talking about racism is part of the deep conviction that union and social struggles are intimately linked and interdependent. One thing stands out: change often involves painful and uncom-

fortable discussions, but that is how we can talk about women, all women. The Federation will discuss this issue in greater depth at the next convention, in a spirit of inclusion, listening and solidarity. ■



HAPPY RETIREMENT!

It was with a mixture of humour and emotion that the President, Nancy Bédard, marked the retirement of Chantal Martin. Over time, Ms. Martin has held different positions within the organization, but she ended her career at the FIQ as a union consultant in the Union Organizing Service.

2017 CONVENTION FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up on the recommendations adopted at the 2017 Convention The Ombudsperson and disclosure of wrongdoing



FOLLOW-UP ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED AT THE 2017 CONVENTION

The interdisciplinary committee, composed of union representatives and employees and set up to facilitate the application of the recommendations adopted at the 2017 Convention, shared its findings with the delegation.

After analysis and reflection, the members of the committee realized that some of the recommendations do not require follow-up on their part, as they are covered by the FIQ sectors and services. Developing the organization's social capital and regional base is one of the challenges raised and addressed more specifically by the committee. In this spirit, the identification and use of natural leaders is essential to mobilize and rally as many members

as possible to union actions and demands.

Moreover, with the end of the Regional Action and Consensus-Building Tables (TRAC), the committee is proposing the creation of a new political action setting whose development plan will be defined at the June 2021 Convention. The mission of this "setting" will be to involve the different regional stakeholders in reflecting and acting

together. It could be composed of various regional organizations and key individuals to contribute to the strategic development of the FIQ and FIQP demands in the regions: the ratios for example. This new "setting" will aim, among other things, to increase union strength to bring employers and the government to provide solutions that improve the members' working conditions. ■



Marie Rinfret, Ombudsperson

THE OMBUDSPERSON AND DISCLOSURE OF WRONGDOING

During the council, delegates were able to virtually meet Marie Rinfret, the Ombudsperson. Accompanied by H el ene Valli eres, Deputy Ombudsman, Institutional Affairs and Prevention, Ms. Rinfret began with an overview of complaints and reports from the health and social services network before briefly going over her mandate in public integrity.



H el ene Valli eres, Deputy Ombudsman, Institutional Affairs and Prevention

Delegates were able to learn more about the ombudsman's role, namely:

- To handle complaints about Quebec government departments and agencies
- To handle complaints (as a 2nd recourse) and reports regarding institutions of the health and social services network

- To handle the disclosure of wrongdoings concerning public bodies and reprisal complaints

The exchanges that followed focused primarily on the last mandate, as delegates wanted to learn more about the notion of wrongdoing and the disclosure process.

As this subject touches on concrete aspects of healthcare professionals'

work, the FIQ and FIQP are particularly concerned about the disclosure of wrongdoing, especially during a pandemic. ■

Ms. Rinfret invited healthcare professionals to visit the ombudsman's website, at protecteurducitoyen.qc.ca, to file a complaint or learn more about the services offered.

A MUST-ATTEND TRAINING SESSION FOR NEW UNION REPRESENTATIVES

As of September 2021, new union representatives will have access to the updated version of the Introduction to Union Life training session. Intended for union reps who have been involved for less than two years, the training covers different subjects: the major mobilizations and struggles led by the Federation, democracy and the structures in place in the organization, the roles and responsibilities of local union teams and much more. ■

SOCIOPOLITICAL

WE ARE THE SOLUTION.



At the 2017 convention, the delegation unanimously adopted a motion to mandate the Youth Committee, in collaboration with other FIQ sectors and services, to initiate a strategic action plan for a sustainable development policy.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT A POLICY IN LINE WITH OUR MISSION

A very enthusiastic representative from the Youth Committee talked to the delegates about the progress made in implementing a sustainable development policy in the organization.

Emphasizing the importance for the FIQ and FIQP to adopt such a policy and to act in alignment with their values, Virginie Lambert-Bérubé pointed out that the relationships between the environment and human health are clear and well-documented. Needless to say, it is key for organizations invested in the health sector to commit to protecting the environment and fighting climate change.

Since the 2017 convention, the Youth Committee, helped by a young consulting duo, analyzed the FIQ and FIQP's sustainable development practices. The analysis showed that the Federations have very advanced social justice and economic equity practices, but that, while they have some environmental initiatives, these are less developed than the two others.

Following this analysis, and after developing tools to raise awareness around sustainable development among members and union reps,

the Youth Committee chose to survey union reps' concerns by way of a consultation.

Here are some of the main findings from the committee's work, which will surely influence the sustainable development policy presented at the convention in June 2021:

- The union reps realize that the impacts of climate change will make healthcare professionals' workload heavier, increase comorbidity and the complexity of care in the coming years.
- The union reps are aware of the environmental footprint left by their union activities and would like them to be compensated by ecologically responsible practices.
- The union reps believe it is necessary to integrate more environmentally responsible raw and residual material, energy and greenhouse gas management.

- In order to align with the Federations' main mission, defending working conditions must feature strongly in the sustainable development policy.

- Social justice and union democracy are also priorities.

- Buying local, a recognized commitment to practices that respect workers' rights, and product sustainability are all important to union reps. ■

AN ENRICHING AND UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

Every two years, the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO) offers its members the chance to participate in a trade union solidarity internship. At the FIQ and FIQP, this internship is offered to union reps elected to the federation and provincial committees. In February 2020, Virginie Lambert-Bérubé of the Youth Committee and Isabelle Roy of the Internal Audit Committee were able to live this enriching and unforgettable experience thanks to the exchanges and sharing with Mexican union activists. They gave an enthusiastic and emotional presentation of their 10 days in Mexico. ■



Isabelle Roy, Internal Audit Committee, and Virginie Lambert-Bérubé, Youth Committee

ACCOMMODATION OF THE ELDERLY: AT A CROSSROADS

The COVID-19 pandemic in the CHSLDs was a powerful indicator of the current shortcomings of long-term care and the successive inaction of governments in recent decades. The FIQ and FIQP have always been involved in the important file of accommodation. Hence, during this provincial council, it was an opportunity to come back to the various positions taken by the Federations as well as the current and future issues towards which the next actions will be oriented.

The difficulties experienced in long-term care have been known for several years and have been repeatedly denounced, but the last few months have highlighted the urgency of resolving the issue. For the FIQ and FIQP, accommodation for the elderly is a major issue for the future of the health network. On the one hand, because many healthcare professionals work there daily and, on the other hand, because all the people residing there are entitled to safe, quality care, which was cruelly lacking during the health crisis.

The dramatic situation experienced in the CHSLDs over the past year places the current government in a delicate position and will force it to make choices. For the FIQ and FIQP, it is out of the question not to be involved in the upcoming debates on accommodation. The CAQ government made a series of piecemeal announcements, including the one about seniors' homes, without going into much detail about the roll-out of this major project. Several questions remain unanswered, including the clinical aspect of the care that will be provided and the identity of the «real» owners of these homes.

Hence, the FIQ and FIQP will continue their efforts to improve the living conditions of seniors and the working conditions of healthcare professionals at the local, regional and provincial levels.