



EN ACTION

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Special Provincial Council – Negotiations
on May 25

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NO PROGRESS ON SALARIES AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES FIQ AND FIQP DELEGATES ARE MOBILIZED AND TURNING UP THE HEAT

Tired of seeing negotiations stalled, at a virtual special provincial council FIQ and FIQP delegates stepped up their mobilization by adopting a recommendation to hold, at an appropriate time, local general assemblies to consult members on obtaining a strike mandate that could lead to an unlimited general strike.

This first step toward going on strike is a clear warning: healthcare professionals have run out of patience at a time when the health network has reached a breaking point. At the bargaining table, the premier and Treasury Board president must prioritize healthcare professionals.

OFFERS ARE STILL INSUFFICIENT

Yes, an agreement was reached on working conditions in December 2020, but the government still hasn't tabled a new salary offer for healthcare professionals. Unlike what the premier has said in the media, currently the Treasury Board's only offer is the 5% salary increase over three years, plus 1% that is subject to economic growth, and lump sums. It's clearly not enough, when nurses, licensed practical nurses, respiratory therapists, and clinical perfusionists are demanding a 12.4% wage increase as recognition for their expertise, skills, and accountability.

It is the FIQ's duty to verify the government's intentions on differential offers, which the negotiation team will do as quickly as possible.

While the government says it is open as regards regional disparities, it must now make solid offers to tackle the specific problems that healthcare professionals face in remote regions.

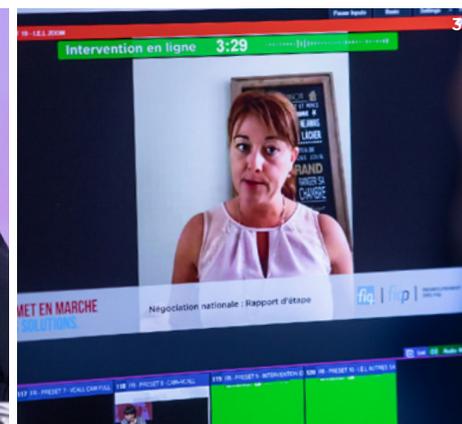
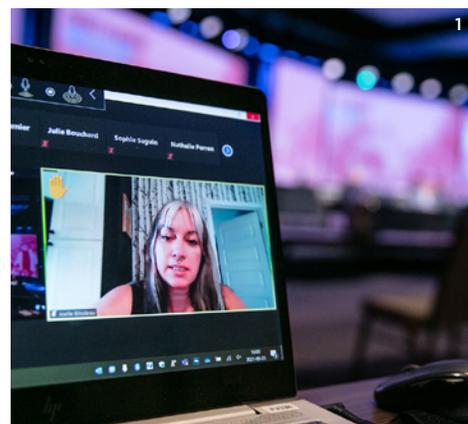
PROGRESS

The next negotiation progress reports will be crucial: there must be forward motion. The parliamentary session in Quebec City is nearly over. It would be unthinkable for these negotiations, which have gone on for over 18 months, to continue beyond the provincial holiday.

In parallel to strike preparations, mobilization and visibility actions continue both locally and provincially, still in collaboration with the APTS.

The very serious labour shortage makes the health network extremely vulnerable, endangering patients and healthcare professionals. The government is not doing enough to resolve the shortage and the population can see it.

Moreover, the dire shortage of healthcare professionals will be the theme of the Federations' next ad campaign. Every day FIQ and FIQP members risk their own health at work because there is not enough staff. In the coming weeks, members and union reps will demonstrate the disastrous effects of the labour shortage, which is making it very difficult to resume the network's activities and catch up on the backlog accumulated during the pandemic. The health of the Quebec population and those who provide the care is at stake. ■



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WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

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RUNNING THE LAST KILOMETRES TOGETHER

Nancy Bédard

At the last Special Provincial Council, we discussed all together how negotiations are progressing. Your analysis of the context is the same as mine; the coming weeks will be crucial.

Our discussions were up front, direct. We made important decisions for the next steps at the intersectoral bargaining table. I can feel your impatience. We are all tired of waiting. However, we have decided on clear objectives: we want the best agreement to rebuild the health network and to immediately tackle the serious healthcare professional shortage. This agreement should also be negotiated and not imposed by a special law. To achieve these objectives, we will have to adjust our strategy based on the new context we are in. Time is running out. The parliamentary session will end in a few weeks and we must use every opportunity to move negotiations along.

On May 2, 2021, at a meeting with union leaders, the premier said two important things for the timeline of negotiations. First, he publicly committed to advance negotiations within two to three weeks. Second, he said he had three priorities for these negotiations, one of which was healthcare professionals. He showed his hand when he announced differential offers for healthcare professionals.

Now at the end of the timeline Mr. Legault set, negotiations are stalled at the bargaining table. Our team hasn't received any improved salary offers: it's still a 5% increase over 3 years and not 8% as the government claims in its ads. And there has been nothing to address the specific problems that healthcare professionals in remote regions face.

So, by a vast majority, the delegates adopted recommendations that will give us freedom to move forward at the table. Our responsibility will be to set in motion all the energy necessary to verify the government's intention regarding differential offers for healthcare professionals.

Given the context, we have come to an agreement with the APTS to be as flexible as possible so that we can meet our objectives for the next step. Our alliance is still very much alive, especially as we mobilize in the field.

Furthermore, we cannot ignore the government's strategy, which is to stretch out negotiations. Since the meeting with the premier, there have only been three meetings with the

employer's negotiation committee. It is completely insufficient if we want to be able to reach an agreement quickly. We have to adopt a hard approach with the government so that it understands that we will not sign an agreement without salaries that show recognition for our expertise. We have over 76,000 members and we are not afraid to turn up the heat if need be! And so, the delegation says it is ready to plan a strike if the employer party does not put significantly improved salary offers on the table.

Negotiations are never easy. In a marathon, it is often the last kilometres that are the hardest. Your support is essential in the last stretch. We all have a role to play. Mobilization over the next three weeks will be crucial to supporting efforts at the bargaining table and exerting our bargaining power with the government. We need to be seen and heard!

Now more than ever, we must draw energy from our ability to stand together. It's our strength! ■

MAJOR PROVINCIAL DEMONSTRATION

A thousand demonstrators joined in the big march in the streets of Montreal on May 22 organized by the APTS and FIQ. From the Place des Montréalaises to Square Victoria, passing in front of the CHUM and the offices of several ministries and the Treasury Board, they loudly chanted that vocations are a thing of the past and they're done being paid a woman's wage!

Healthcare professionals, professionals and technicians of the health and social services network, members of ally organizations and citizens came from all across Quebec to walk in the May heat, many accompanied by their families, to remind Premier François Legault and Treasury Board President Sonia Label that negotiations aren't over.

FIQ President Nancy Bédard and the APTS's third Vice-President, Benoit Audet, spoke about the government's doublespeak in their speeches: "While the government shows that it is always ready to spend millions of dollars to attract top talent for the upper spheres of the economy or to launch colossal infrastructure projects, the money disappears when it is time to create leverage to attract youth, keep on the most experienced staff, and properly pay women in the health and social services network. It is irresponsible of Premier Legault to always prioritize predominantly male sectors during economic recoveries, while neglecting predominantly female sectors. He is helping to normalize gender inequalities," said the spokesperson.

