

Public-sector and parapublic-sector contract talks

**After 16 days without protection, professionals and technicians in health
and social services issue an SOS to the Legault government**

Longueuil, March 29, 2020 – "16 days! 16 days that professionals and technicians have been without health equipment or protective materials, issuing SOS calls in every direction to have health and social services institutions apply social distancing measures. From personnel in laboratories and home support services, to workers in youth centres and long-term care homes, our members are being left to fend for themselves and are at times required to work in confined spaces. We don't send armies to the front lines without proper military protection, so why do that to employees working in settings that are in direct contact with COVID-19? It is imperative that the government take the necessary measures, by tomorrow, to protect our 'guardian angels' as the government likes to call them – and that's not negotiable," declared the president of the APTS, Andrée Poirier.

Ironically, intensive contract talks opened today, precisely to determine what measures are to be taken to protect health and social services technicians and professionals in the public and parapublic sectors. For the APTS, these measures must necessarily be consistent with public health directives and not be dependent on a collective bargaining process in which the employer side is doing everything it can to keep costs to a minimum for the government.

"Who will be there to provide the care and services that the population needs if technicians and professionals get sick? Who will do the lab tests and conduct examinations in the medical imaging rooms? Who will look after those who are vulnerable, and answer their distress calls? At some point, management negotiators at the bargaining table will have to acknowledge the state of emergency that the province is heading into. We're fed up with all this childishness! For the past 16 days, employees in health and social services have been putting their lives in danger. Urgent action has to be taken NOW. It's long overdue," declared Andrée Poirier.

Since the start of the crisis, the APTS has been trying to set up prevention measures such as enabling personnel to work from home and thereby reduce travel and vectors of transmission to a minimum. At every turn, these attempts have been met by stubborn refusal on the part of managers in the institutions, who are afraid that employees won't really get any work done when they're working from home.

"We should be doing the exact opposite and allowing as many workers as possible to work from home when feasible. We need to keep a reserve force safe, to replace the ones on the front lines who fall ill. It's senseless to exhaust all our personnel when we know that we have weeks ahead of us in the fight against COVID-19. We have to protect our guardian angels at all costs," concluded the APTS president.

The APTS

The APTS union ([*Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux*](#)) represents 55,000 members whose role is indispensable in ensuring that health and social services institutions run smoothly. Our members offer a myriad of services to the Québec population, including

diagnostic services, rehabilitation, nutrition, psychosocial intervention, clinical support and prevention services.

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