

Code of silence in the health and social services system

Action is needed from Minister McCann

Longueuil, May 5, 2020 – The APTS was not surprised to hear health and social services minister Danielle McCann once again pledge to put an end to the code of silence that prevails in Québec's health and social services sector.

"The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the gap between the minister's directives and how they are applied by managers in the sector. In addition to battling COVID-19, professional and technical employees also have to fight to have these directives implemented, with the help of their union representatives. As always, we welcome Ms. McCann's pledge but are wondering how she'll be able to prevent reprisals against employees who expose problematic situations encountered in our health and social services facilities," declared APTS president Andrée Poirier.

This is the third time in six months that the minister or someone in her entourage has ordered an end to the code of silence plaguing the health and social services system. Certain managers, however, seem to be reluctant to comply. The APTS is concerned about the penalties its members might face if they don't uphold their "duty of loyalty."

"Our duty of loyalty must be to the population, first and foremost. The code of silence has to be eliminated. Managers are trying to protect themselves by muzzling employees, and it is the population that will ultimately pay the price. Minister McCann has to set up effective protective measures to ensure that those who dare to denounce unacceptable situations don't suffer negative consequences or jeopardize their career," added Andrée Poirier.

This code of silence is even spilling over into social media networks, where people paid by an integrated health and social services centre are monitoring statements made by employees on their personal account, which is often their only outlet if their employer isn't willing to listen or help.

"We can talk all we want and propose solutions, but the employer isn't willing to listen. Employees are being asked to endorse false information peddled by certain managers. They are living with fear, stress and anxiety and have to hide their identity in order to speak out about what's actually happening or not happening in our health and social services system. This kind of tyrannical surveillance is inadmissible," decried the president of the APTS.

A union is indispensable under a reign of silence

The best protection for public health and social services professionals and technicians if they want to expose breaches in services, unwarranted decisions by their employer, or other problematic situations that have serious consequences for the population is to turn to their local union executive.

"Going to the media is the last resort we have as a union to get the integrated centres to react and rectify unjustifiable situations. We give a voice to the thousands of members who are living in fear of losing their jobs. And when they speak out to denounce what the employer wants to hide, we're there to defend them," concluded the union president.

The APTS

The APTS ([Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux](#)) represents 56,000 members whose role is indispensable in ensuring that health and social services institutions run smoothly. Our members offer a myriad of services to the population in all regions of Québec, including diagnostic services, rehabilitation, nutrition, psychosocial intervention, clinical support and prevention services.

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