

Press release

For immediate release

Québec government contracting to buy mental health services

A knife in the back for public sector psychologists

Montréal, January 21, 2021 – “Basically, Minister Carmant has just stabbed public sector psychologists in the back. At a time when the public sector is finding it extremely difficult to attract and retain psychologists, the government is turning to psychologists in the private sector and offering them fees equivalent to twice the highest hourly rate in the public sector. In fact, the minister is encouraging the privatization of mental health services. This is utterly outrageous.”

Such was the response of Andrée Poirier, president of the APTS (*Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux*), when she learned of the working conditions being offered psychologists and psychotherapists in the private sector by the minister of health and social services, Lionel Carmant, who is seeking to purchase mental health services from them. The APTS, which represents close to 1,700 psychologists in the public health and social services system, has been fighting for years to improve their compensation and make their profession more attractive.

“For the past twelve months, we’ve been negotiating with the government to attract and retain more employees in the health and social services system,” says Poirier. “And for the past twelve months, the Treasury Board has been blocking any kind of progress on this issue. It’s estimated that we’ll be missing 850 psychologists in the public system by 2023. And Minister Carmant chooses this moment to roll out the red carpet for the private sector. What makes it even more insulting is that psychologists from the private sector will have greater professional autonomy than our members. That is beyond unacceptable.”

The APTS also questions the temporary nature of this measure at a time when demand for mental health services has never been greater. The government withdrew activities in this area during the first wave of the pandemic, and vulnerable people were deprived of a wide range of services. As a consequence, waiting lists are now even longer.

“In hospitals, they keep telling us that withdrawal of activities in surgery has led to such a backlog that it will take us years to catch up,” says Poirier. “And now the minister is saying that eighteen months will do it in mental health? I find that very hard to believe. The only way to deal with these lists is to create attractive working conditions not only for psychologists, but also for other people working in mental health – and to show respect for their professional autonomy. At a time when 75% of new graduates are heading for private practice, immediate action is required in order to meet Quebecers’ needs.”

The APTS

The APTS ([Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux](#)) represents a total of 60,000 members who play a key role in ensuring that health and social services institutions run smoothly. Our members provide a wide range of services for the population as a whole, including diagnostic, rehabilitation, nutrition, psychosocial intervention, clinical support, and prevention services.

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