

IGNORE US NO MORE!

On January 28-29, the unions reviewed the progress of negotiations with our FSSS-CSN bargaining committee. Since we tabled our demands in October 2019, we've held approximately 54 sectoral bargaining sessions with the employer at the health and social services table and dozens of sessions at the central bargaining table with [Treasury Board](#). Unfortunately, despite our bargaining committee's best efforts to find solutions, despite the mobilization of our forces, despite the crisis that has driven home the urgent need to resolve the issues, the government is not offering any significant improvements.

We've all heard Premier Legault say many times that raising the wages of beneficiary attendants is a priority. Bear in mind that the government owes them money for pay equity going back to 2015, as is the case for many other job titles, some as far back as 2010. Yet nothing has been settled; at the bargaining table, the government has never offered the famous \$26 an hour that it is still promising them.

The crisis can't be the excuse for everything!

As employees in the health care system, we have of course been hard hit by the pandemic. But the problems we are facing are rooted in decades of government cutbacks, reforms and disregard for our real on-the-job needs. We are painfully aware of the impact on both workers and the public of government failure to invest in public services. For the CAQ, there will never be a right time to turn things around in public services and show appreciation for the work of employees. Yet, reinvesting in public services would be the best way to spur an economic recovery. But the government is willfully blind. It is quick to loosen the purse strings in order to "save" the flagships of the private sector, while taking for granted that it can always count on the dedication and professionalism of the hundreds of thousands of women who choose, despite everything, to continue working in the public sector to keep the health care system afloat and serve the public.

The government is turning a deaf ear

We have extended a hand to the government on several occasions in order to come to an agreement that will rectify the situation and begin to remedy the problems that have persisted for too long. In September 2020, we called on a mediator to help us break the deadlock at the bargaining table and he is still working with the parties. But so far the government has turned a deaf ear, im-

posing temporary and unfair halfway solutions such as creating an obstacle course of bonuses and lump sum payments, and issuing decrees to unilaterally modify working conditions, while denying us adequate protection from contagion, for example by refusing us access to N-95 masks where they are necessary. More than 30,000 workers in the health care system have contracted COVID-19 and 13 have died from it. What more proof does this government need that the situation is urgent?

The CAQ government's attitude at the bargaining table has been no different from that of its predecessors. They do not want to hear our arguments or look at our priorities. Rather than considering our solutions, they want to impose their own. They want to burnish their public image by giving preference to a handful of job titles. Their mantra is "divide and conquer." This is a pro-business government that is using the crisis to justify its ideological stance.

What next?

Clearly, this government has not yet grasped that there are more than 100,000 workers united behind our sectoral demands and more than 160,000 CSN members supporting our wage and financial demands. Perhaps they think they can wear us down. Perhaps they believe the crisis will make workers give up any expectation of improving their working conditions and conditions of practice.

Our bargaining committee considers what's on the table now to be totally insufficient to reach an agreement. Over the next few weeks, all our CSN members will have the opportunity to discuss this at general meetings. There will be a proposal to step up the mobilization and make all necessary preparations for a strike in the event that the

deadlock persists, while taking into account the evolving state of the health crisis. If the government does not change its tune and we do not reach that point, another general meeting will be held later to ask members to vote on an official strike mandate.

We need to dial up the pressure!

It gives us no pleasure to say this. Of course, the pandemic is interfering with our ability to mobilize in the ways we have in the past. But our bargaining committee believes we need to start gearing up now, using all the means at our disposal and applying our creativity to find new ways

to take action. The time has come to make the force of our mobilization felt at the bargaining table. We must make our voice heard clearly and decisively in order to induce the government to negotiate a satisfactory agreement – and avoid a strike which would be of their own making.

**Let's rise to this challenge
with a massive turnout at
the general meetings!**

A recap of our main sectoral demands

Reduce work-related expenses, for example by eliminating parking fees

End mandatory overtime

Improve occupational health and safety by introducing measures that have proven successful in other sectors and by doing more to prevent violence

Settle grievances more quickly and efficiently

Improve access to jobs and address issues related to job requirements and the evaluation of various job titles

Promote work-life-study balance

Make jobs more appealing to young people and more attractive for experienced workers by recognizing responsibilities and skills, and compensating workers for hardships.