

APTS WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

OUR UNION BATTLES



No 05
Last issue!



**Our union battles
from 1980 to the
present day**

Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST): 1980

Previously, there was no specific system to protect workers' health and safety. If someone was injured on the job and wanted compensation, they had to sue their employer through the ordinary courts. In 1909, under pressure from the unions, the government passed its first compensation law, the "*Loi concernant les responsabilités des accidents dont les ouvriers sont victimes dans leur travail et la réparation des dommages qui résultent*". This was a landmark moment in Occupational Health & Safety. This law introduced the principle of compensation for damages sustained in work-related accidents.

Following pressure from popular and union circles, the Lévesque government publishes a white paper on OHS. After decades characterized by a system that only covered compensation for victims, the preventive Act respecting occupational health and safety (AOHS) was finally adopted in 1979. It introduced the concepts of prevention and elimination at source of hazards to the health, safety and physical integrity of workers.

The *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CSST) was created in 1980. The CSST was replaced on January 1, 2016 by the *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CNESST).

On October 6, 2021, the adoption of the Act to modernize the occupational health and safety system (Bill 59, now the new Bill 27), which has been in force since April 6, will have an impact on the rights of Quebec workers. Preventive action is urgently needed. Unions must maintain their demands for real access to prevention and participation mechanisms.



Pay inequity between men and women is a reality in the workplace. Following a long struggle by women's groups and unions for recognition of women's right to "equal pay for work of equal value" with men, the Pay Equity Act (Loi sur l'équité salariale - LÉS) was passed by the Quebec National Assembly in 1996. This law, which was unique to Quebec at the time of its adoption, applies to all employers with 10 or more employees.

However, the Quebec government took a long time to apply it to its own public service. Indeed, the first draft of the law excluded public and parapublic sector employees from the equity exercise, on the pretext that the government had already done so. Several union organizations contested this section of the law, and won their case in 2004.

The fairness exercise was finally carried out in 2006. The results proved that discrimination did exist within the government apparatus, something the Conseil du trésor had always denied.

Once equity has been achieved, employers must maintain pay equity by ensuring that no new wage discrimination is reintroduced into the company if there are changes in tasks, duties and responsibilities, or in gender predominance. Since 2009, employers have been required to carry out a pay equity maintenance exercise, assessing changes that have occurred within a five-year period. Employers can carry out this assessment alone or in committee.

Despite these advances, we still have a long way to go to achieve parity. In the social services network, the APTS, in alliance with several union organizations, is demanding that the government finally settle the complaints that have persisted since 2016 and even 2011 for certain job titles. Along with the majority of union organizations present in the public and parapublic network, we also saw ourselves obliged to contest the new version of the law, dating from 2019, as it still does not respect, in our view, the Supreme Court decision we won in 2018, after almost 10 years of struggle.



We are a long way from the living conditions of our ancestors, but there are still many battles to be fought so that every citizen can enjoy decent living conditions. The trade union movement and the solidarity of all must be there.

Feminist battles

Being a feminist means believing, first and foremost, in the equality of men and women. It means acting individually and collectively to put an end to any situation of discrimination based on the division and hierarchization of the sexes. Now is the time for a society that meets the needs and respects the rights and dignity of all women.

At the national level, the *Intersyndicale des femmes*, of which the APTS is a member, is demanding the inclusion in the law of ten days' paid leave for victims of domestic violence. With the wave of feminicides in Quebec, it is urgent to act to offer victims a way out, including paid leave. No one should have to choose between their livelihood and their physical integrity.

Locally, a network of representatives from each establishment has been deployed to ensure that feminist analysis has a local reach, in your communities and in your actions around issues of particular concern to women.

Since 86% of our members are women, the APTS makes women's rights a fundamental issue.

Fighting discrimination

The early years of the 21st century have brought to light a large number of issues which, while not previously non-existent, have taken on a new dimension. Just think of the struggles denouncing the perpetuation of a social framework that trivializes acts of racism, homophobia and misogyny. In recent years, from "Black lives matter" to the denunciation of transphobia and the tide of denunciations linked to the #metoo movement, the unacceptable has been increasingly revealed and denounced.

APTS is delighted by this development and wishes to be part of this dynamic of engaging social innovation. At the political level, we are determined to support social groups that are mobilizing to put an end to the various forms of discrimination that persist despite certain advances. Our racialized fellow citizens experience systemic discrimination that has a negative impact on them: lower wages than the rest of the population, higher unemployment, more precarious living conditions, etc.

In our establishments, a recent survey of our members showed that a strong majority (80%) recognized systemic racism in the health and social services network. In order to take collective action, we set up the national Cultural Diversity and Gender Plurality Committee. In creating this committee, we are making an important organizational commitment: we want to do serious work on the issue of cultural and gender diversity.

We must mobilize to denounce and put an end to all manifestations of racism by raising awareness among members and the Quebec population about the realities and violence experienced by racialized people, by developing information and training tools on this subject and by promoting local level engagement in defending the rights of racialized people in the workplace.

Defend the public health and social services network (RSSS)

Our public services are under attack and the health and social services network is not spared. To move forward and establish itself as an innovative player, the APTS has adopted a political platform that puts forward our desire to best embody a vision of the future for the RSSS. It is imperative to defend access to care as well as the public, free and universal nature of the services offered. Unfortunately, the Government of Quebec does not share this commitment. In the past, union struggles were central to creating the RSSS and defending its existence. In the future, these struggles will have to resume.

We must also review the structure of the RSSS to ensure its democratization and decentralization. A centralized and highly hierarchical structure does not help access to care, but rather tends to dehumanize it. At the moment, both the staff and the users and the populations of the localities served do not weigh very heavily when it comes to deciding the priorities and directions to give to the RSSS and the various establishments. Decisions must be made based on the needs of the population and not the needs of managers or politicians and to do this, all of the RSSS partners must be consulted.

In the years to come and following the adoption of our political platform, the APTS will launch a political campaign plan that aims precisely to put forward our vision of health and social services. A vision that respects workers, that ensures everyone has access to care and services while placing the principles of democratization and decentralization at its heart.

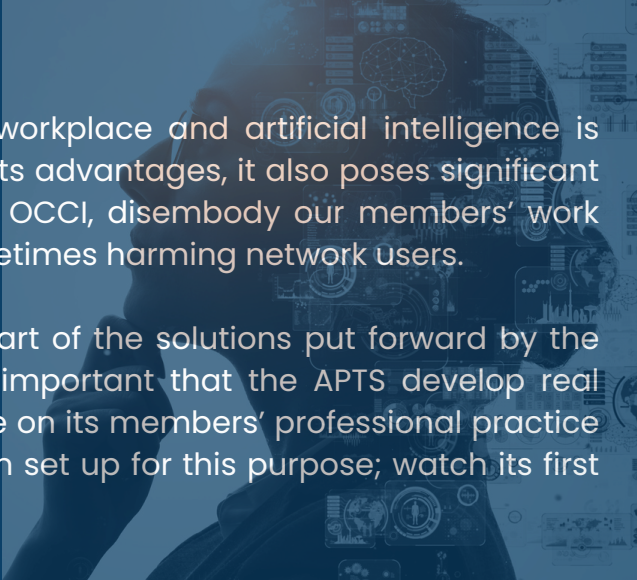
To move in this direction, we will continue our work with our partners in the union and community movement (in particular through the Solidarité santé coalition). It is together that we can make things happen!



Artificial Intelligence

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the workplace and artificial intelligence is already well established in professional practices. While it has its advantages, it also poses significant problems: some computerized assessment tools, such as the OCCI, disembodiment our members' work and undermine their professional autonomy, in addition to sometimes harming network users.

Despite this, it is a safe bet that artificial intelligence will be part of the solutions put forward by the government in a context of labour shortages. It is therefore important that the APTS develop real expertise in this area, analyze the effects of artificial intelligence on its members' professional practice and position itself on this issue. An ad hoc committee has been set up for this purpose; watch its first steps!



Climate change

A final central element is of course the unavoidable issue of combating climate change. On this front, it must be recognized that the union movement was relatively slow to get moving due to certain legitimate concerns. Employees, mainly in the private sector, often have questions like: "It's all well and good to fight for the environment, but what will happen to my job!?" Over time and through a lot of awareness-raising work, these concerns have not necessarily been entirely overcome, but we are able to respond to them more and more adequately, in particular with the help of the principle of just transition.

At our November 2021 congress, we adopted as part of our political platform that the APTS wanted to commit to "Taking care of our environment and mobilizing against its degradation". In the process, we also created a National Table on Environmental Issues to share successes and action plans between local executives; participate in the development and implementation of the APTS action plan on these specific issues; and affirm the APTS's leadership in the health and social services sector in Quebec with regard to the fight against climate change and sustainable development.

Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed these issues of "Our Union Battles"!

As you can see, unions are important players in improving working conditions and within society. Changes related to the environment and technology are disrupting the labor market. The Covid-19 pandemic has also left its mark. The economic context that is escalating, the reform of health and social services, the deterioration of your working conditions, work/family/personal life balance as well as teleworking, are issues to consider for the coming years... In short, unionism has many challenges to overcome. To achieve this, we must mobilize to create a real community around the issues of work and society!