

## **All Out to Support Nurses and Health Care Workers!**

# **Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec Nurses Say No! to Restructuring of Care on Backs of Workers**



**Mass rally at Sainte-Croix Hospital in Drummondville, February 26, 2023**

The nurses of Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec, supported by all health care workers, are engaged in a mass struggle to defeat the restructuring of care decreed by management at the region's Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre (CIUSSS MCQ).

On February 6, in the name of dealing with the shortage of nurses in the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec region's hospitals and residential and long-term care centres (CHSLDs), management at the CIUSSS announced that nurses in all sectors would have to work at least one weekend out of three. The measure came into effect on February 26 at Sainte-Croix Hospital in Drummondville and is to be gradually extended to all nurses in the region by the fall of 2023.

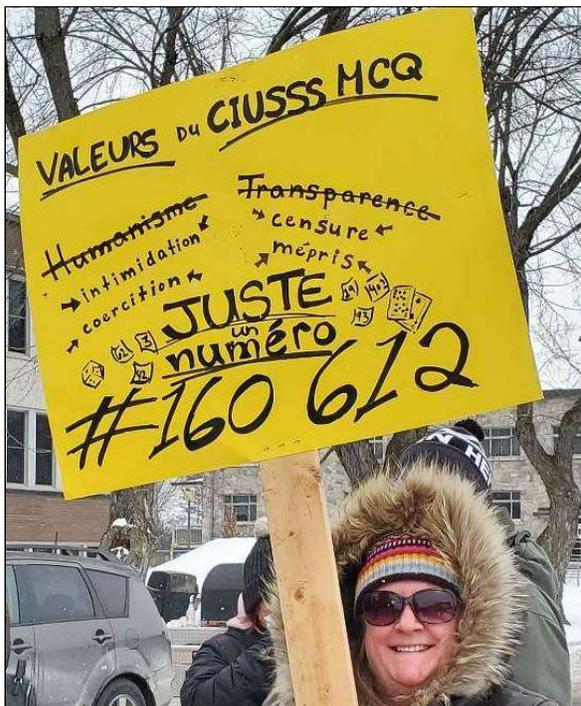
The directive includes moving nurses to wherever the CIUSSS assigns them to work on weekends. For example, nurses employed in home care or in a school setting may be forced to work in hospital emergency rooms or CHSLDs. CIUSSS management has also notified that other similar measures are to be announced soon with regard to the summer. The Union of Health Care Professionals for Mauricie-Centre-du-Québec (FIQ-SPSMCQ), which represents the nurses, has also been made aware of a document foreseeing the merging of departments in health facilities. This would mean a greater displacement of nurses to sectors unfamiliar to them, the closing of services, the elimination of positions, more exhaustion for nurses and a further deterioration of services overall.



All of this has been done without the approval or even consultation with those most affected: those delivering the services, caring for people and saving lives. It has been done in the name of relieving nurses who are experiencing the worst mandatory overtime situations and labour shortages. It is done by so-called increasing the flexibility of the working conditions and collective agreements of

all nurses. These are precisely two of the main themes of the Legault government's current offensive, which speaks volumes about what is meant by flexibility.

Nurses in the region have been involved in the fight against this arbitrariness and dictate since the announcements were made. During a general membership meeting, nurses expressed their resolve to resign *en masse* if the measures are not withdrawn. They started signing letters of resignation to show just how outraged and determined they are. They began engaging in job actions, such as no longer providing statistics unessential to care, used for management purposes. The union has announced a \$1 million defence fund to compensate nurses who face retaliatory measures because they refuse to change departments when working on weekends.



Instead of talking to the nurses and discussing with them how workforce and service issues can be addressed, CIUSSS management rushed to the Administrative Labour Tribunal (TAT) to have the nurses' actions declared illegal. It argued that the nurses' actions were concerted and akin to a strike during a period when the collective agreement is in effect, which is illegal under labour law. The judge agreed with them in her January 25 ruling. CIUSSS management cried victory, while nurses remain firmly opposed to the announced measures that only aggravate all the problems.

On January 26, hundreds of nurses and health care workers demonstrated in Drummondville to demand that the measures be withdrawn and to let it be known that the struggle continues.

Many nurses held placards displaying their job numbers, with slogans such as "From Heroes to

Just Numbers" or "Just a Number," denouncing the fact that the current system turns them into things when they are human beings with rights, including the essential right to play a decisive role in all decisions that affect them. The struggle continues and *Workers' Forum* salutes this vigorous fight in defence of the rights and voice of health care workers and the services people depend on for their existence.



(Photos: FIQ)

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