

The acquisition of workers' rights is a fight that has been going on for many years. With the advent of unions, we have seen a dramatic increase of these rights. If we think about the efforts that have been put into improving working conditions, into pay equity or into the inclusivity of workers, it is obvious that union actions are paying off. That is not to say, however, that working conditions are perfect. In view of pursuing their mission, unions should consider opening negotiations on how the employers manage the workload of their employees. Thus, this new initiative would be beneficial for everyone in the labour market.

First, the beginning of such negotiations would improve the physical and mental conditions of all workers. Indeed, it's no secret that even today, many employees have an enormous workload. In addition to many more overtime hours, the overworked workers are assigned exhausting tasks, generally more complex, which increases their stress level. Therefore, the accumulation of all these factors inevitably leads to a direct impact on the physical and psychological condition of these persons. In fact, according to an article in the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec*, numerous studies have shown that a heavy workload, along with little autonomy may cause cardiovascular problems, musculoskeletal and psychological conditions, as well as an increased level of absenteeism. Therefore, if unions were to focus on encouraging employers to re-evaluate their management and distribution of work in the workplace, this would necessarily have a positive impact. Not only would salaries be healthier, but the burden on their shoulders would be reduced. Result: the motivation for everyone to work would no longer be based on stressful and negative purposes which would greatly benefit the morale of everyone. In conclusion, a workload reduction would have an impact both on the psychological and physical condition of all workers.

Second, it is important to note that this initiative would be rather pertinent during this pandemic period. Indeed, the consequences of COVID-19 have resulted in major repercussions in many areas. For example, it has forced many employees to adjust to the online work model, it limited the number of staff in the same building and increased needs in several sectors, specifically, the health sector. All this has caused an excessive workload for many individuals.

According to Statistics Canada, we have noted that the "Overtime hours worked per week by nursing staff have increased from 6.6 hours in April 2019 to 9.7 hours in April 2020 and from 5.8 hours in May 2019 to 10.3 hours in May 2020". This citation is a perfect example of the adjustments that workers were ready to make for the wellness of the public. However, everyone has their limit. As the limits of employees continue to be stretched, a review of workload distribution should be done. We should also remember that the concept of working from home is completely new in some areas.

Therefore, it would be good to review the appropriate workload for these new conditions. To conclude, the pandemic suggests a review of the management of employee workloads that would reflect our new reality.

Third, a revisited workload management would allow for the improvement of relations between all individuals on the labour market. As explained previously, an excessive workload leads to increased stress. Not only is stress bad for the persons facing it, but it can also have an impact on employees' behaviour amongst themselves. For example, it is explained in an article of the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* that the pressure generated by work can harm relations between colleagues by creating too much competition. In addition, one has to think that the increase of tasks is not always required by one person. Thus, this can create tensions between bosses and employees, which is not conducive to a healthy work atmosphere. If the workload is reduced, or redistributed, conflicts will be easier to avoid, and actions generated by the pressure of productivity, such as competition, will be avoided. In summary, if work is well distributed, this will ensure a less tense working atmosphere.

Finally, renegotiating the parameters in the workplace that would take into account the current imbalance in order to put an end to the increased workload and its negative impacts on psychological health, mental burden and physical health, would help employees to be healthier, and would allow all to better adjust to the consequences resulting from COVID-19 (telework, hybrid workplace, remote management, and digital fatigue) and would establish a healthier workplace for the staff. We can also consider that the implementation of these new parameters to measure and prevent the increased workload would bring numerous advantages for all citizens who must learn to have a better work-life balance. In this respect, unions and their members have a lot to do. Technology is changing, the pace is increasing but humans are not inexhaustible resources. We must protect them.