

Quebec nurses' action ruled illegal

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Quebec's Essential Services Council has ruled that an overtime ban by 47,500 nurses constitutes an illegal work stoppage. The Quebec Nurses Federation launched the ban June 22 to press the Quebec government, which funds the province's health care system, and the Quebec Hospital Association, which represents Quebec's hospital administrations, to hire at least 1,000 additional nurses.

The nurses charge that regular overtime shifts--three-quarters of hospitals are routinely scheduling overtime--are jeopardizing patient safety. Last year, the QNF leadership and the government agreed to a scheme to slash the province's wage bill by encouraging early retirements. Some 3,500 nurses availed themselves of this opportunity, but virtually no new staff were hired.

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