

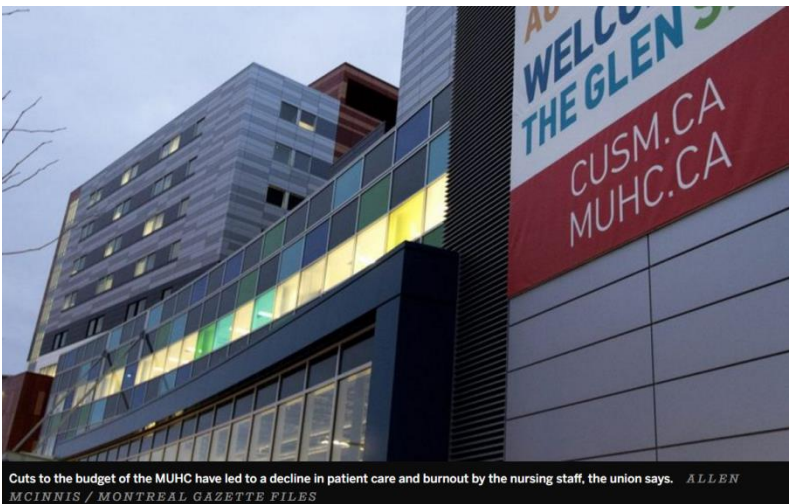
MUHC nurses petition with 14,000 signatures lands in Gaétan Barrette's lap

Budget cuts have led to a decline in patient care and burnout by the nursing staff, the union says



PHILIP AUTHIER, MONTREAL GAZETTE
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Cuts to the budget of the MUHC have led to a decline in patient care and burnout by the nursing staff, the union says. ALLEN MCINNIS / MONTREAL GAZETTE FILES

QUEBEC — A petition with 14,000 signatures protesting against funding cuts at the McGill University Health Centre is now in the hands of Gaétan Barrette.

With the support of two MNAs from the Coalition Avenir Québec, the head of the nurse's union, Denyse Joseph, dropped the big box containing the petitions at the health minister's Quebec City offices Thursday.

The signatures, all on paper, were gathered in a matter of days last spring by the nursing staff at the hospital, which set up tables in the MUHC's various locations to seek the support of patients.

The petition specifically denounces cuts the union says total \$120 million over the last five years to the hospital. The result has been a decline in patient care and burnout by the nursing staff, the union says.

"We didn't see the minister," Joseph said in an interview after dropping off the box with CAQ MNAs Nathalie Roy and Lise Lavallée. "But I am very happy we got the 14,000 signatures. I want to thank everyone who helped, and the patients who stood behind us."

"Last June, MUHC nurses gave a heartfelt cry to Gaétan Barrette," Roy said. "We were at their side. Four months later, the Liberal government is still ignoring the needs of at the MUHC."

"We are told the situation is worse than before; the staff are exhausted, beds are closing and operating rooms are empty due to a lack of funding."

Asked about the petition this week, Barrette said he welcomed the input.

“It’s always positive for me to see that people are involved in the quality of care and the performance of their institution,” Barrette said at a news conference devoted to another issue.

“What I answer is quite simple: we fund all institutions in this province the same way. When it is demonstrated that we did not make the right appraisal, the right estimate or even maybe that we made a mistake, I correct it.

“But the burden of proof is on their side. I cannot manage locally each institution in this province. The rules of funding are the same for everyone. If we are wrong, and it is demonstrated on solid grounds, we make the proper correction.”

But Joseph, a 30-year-veteran, insisted Barrette is using an antiquated formula in his calculations to come up with his own numbers. Patients today require more intensive care, which requires more specialized nursing and that costs money.

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