Violence in a Nunavik School

A Courageous Battle

“The teaching conditions were simply intolerable.”
- Pierre-Luc Bélisle, teacher

Group Insurance Premiums: Understanding Them Better to Save More

Compulsory Union Dues... Why?

Taxation Matters in Québec

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IT’S IN OUR HANDS!
As summer ends and the colours of nature slowly change, it’s time to get back to work. Time flies! Too fast perhaps? When it comes to work – where does it fit into our lives? Will we ever be able to find a good balance of professional and family responsibilities, or will we continue to experience the anxiety that comes with a routine of metro-work-sleep?

You, our members, have told us that implementing measures to improve the balance of work and family life is a priority. I would also add that it is a necessity for a large number of workers. Therefore, over the past months, along with a group of several organizations, we have re-launched our call for a legal framework that will help create a better reconciliation of work and family life.

To address the topic, we met with Agnès Maltais, Minister of Labour, and Nicole Léger, Minister of Families, and submitted a request in the name of the group. Will these two women, ministers in a government that firmly believes in family values, have the will, the determination and the support of parliamentarians to help move the project forward? Although only time will tell, one thing is certain – we won’t give up!

Several reasons justify this renewed push. In 2013, a majority of workers still only had two weeks’ vacation. And what about the ten days of personal leave per year for family obligations, which are without pay and which many workers cannot take due to the nature or insecurity of their jobs? Also, because of the need for overtime and the availability of new technologies in many sectors, workdays are getting longer and work is a constant presence, even during personal time. As for voluntary measures to encourage a better work-family balance, they haven’t worked since less than 5% of businesses have implemented such policies.

Furthermore, according to recent statistics from the Council on the Status of Women, women are responsible for 90.5% of household activities, whereas men take on 79.1% of these same activities. And, for the most part, it is women who voluntarily dedicate over five hours per week to the care of the elderly.

All of these reasons demand that we focus on work-family balance. Implementing this type of legal framework would also benefit society as a whole by bringing its citizens together to promote improved working conditions and the collective well-being of families. During the 2003 elections, the Parti québécois had included such a framework in its campaign platform. Now, ten years later, it’s time to take action!

Louise Chabot
President
After a balanced budget was achieved in 1998-1999, governments dedicated any potential budget surpluses to reducing the tax burden. Subsequent reforms have had the effect of reducing the Québec government’s revenue. According to several estimates, the annual shortfall would be between three and six billion dollars. Thus, the economic downturn, a repercussion of the financial crisis of 2009, is not the sole cause of budgetary pressures.

A range of tax cuts has had specific consequences in terms of fairness. Reducing the number of tax brackets and raising their thresholds have favoured the most affluent. On the other hand, increasing refundable tax credits for childcare expenses and implementing the working premium have benefited parents and lower-paid employees. However, in the end, it is middle-class taxpayers who have derived the least benefit from these tax cuts.

As for the contribution of corporations, the abolishment of capital tax, which had yielded over $1.5 billion per year, has not been offset by modest increases in overall tax rates on profits or by the compensation tax for financial institutions.

Shift to Taxes and User Fees Feared

Since the implementation in 2009 of the Plan to return to balanced budgets, the Québec government has attempted to compensate for the effects of reduced income tax through consumption taxes, the health tax and by increasing user fees. Only the recent reform adopted by the Parti québécois represents a return, albeit a partial one, to a more progressive tax system.

Yet such a shift raises some major concerns, because it undermines the fairness of our tax system. In fact, unlike income tax rates, which rise along with income (from 16% to 25.75%), taxes and user fees are applied uniformly across the board. Tax exemptions on staple commodities (food, diapers, etc.), and tax credits for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the Québec Sales Tax (QST) certainly alleviate the fiscal burden for the most disadvantaged. On the other hand, as can be seen in Graph 1, this effect fades when the income level approaches that of the middle class ($92,673 for a couple who are employed). Lastly, since the most affluent do not spend all of their income (they save a portion of it), they are less affected by consumption taxes.

Graph 1: Share of gross income dedicated to all taxes, net of refundable credits, for a couple with two children, based on the income level for 2013 (in percentage)

Source: Canadian Tax and Credit Simulator, Kevin Milligan, University of British Columbia. Authors’ calculations.

Solutions for Strengthening Progressive Taxation

Since the middle class has derived the least benefit from tax cuts over the past two decades, future reforms must not penalize it further. In this regard, the shift toward taxes and user fees is alarming. Undoubtedly, a return to income tax is required, because it is the best instrument of redistribution. Otherwise, the way in which taxpayers are taxed will have to be changed so as not to penalize the middle class. Options such as taxes on luxury goods or an increase in GST and QST tax credits must be considered. Doesn’t this call for a major public debate on taxation in Québec?
Hands-on activities not to be missed at Pointe-à-Callière
Group Insurance Premiums

UNDERSTANDING THEM BETTER TO SAVE MORE!

Mélanie Michaud
CSQ Social Security Advisor

Group insurance premiums are a necessity that raises many questions. How are they determined? Why do they vary from one year to the next? And above all, how can we, as individuals, reduce the costs?

The basic principle of insurance is that the amount of premiums must cover the amount of benefits paid out to insured persons, plus the administrative and operational fees, as well as sums paid to third parties (for example, indirect taxes). The goal is to stay as close as possible to the real premium to make sure the plan remains sustainable and stable.

The CSQ’s group insurance contract is a retention plan. This means that if the premiums established are higher than the real costs, the plan will have a surplus, and these amounts can be used to grant premium exemptions. Conversely, if the premiums are lower than the real costs, we are merely postponing a premium hike.

What is Hidden Behind Premiums?

Many factors influence the cost of premiums. Internal factors are directly linked to the group (i.e., the group’s composition, consumption and experience) whereas external factors are associated with the economic and social context (e.g., the inflation rate, interest rates, amendments to social legislation, decommitment on the part of government, etc.). And all these factors impact, in various ways, the coverage provided in our group insurance plan, i.e., health insurance, dental care insurance, long-term disability insurance and life insurance.

How are Health and Dental Care Insurance Premiums Determined?

The method is basically the same in both cases. First, the group experience is analyzed. For example, for 2014, we studied the group experience from March 2012 to February 2013, which enabled us to establish a pattern of usage. In the course of this exercise, several variables were taken into account, including the group’s demographic makeup, the cost of and the increase in prescription drug consumption, increase in use of medical and dental care, the rising cost of compounds used in new treatments and decommitment on the part of government.

A projection factor is then established. Based on the group experience, this factor also encompasses the inflation rate and increased usage. It also takes into account an erosion of the deductible’s buffer effect. In fact, drug costs have risen so much that the deductible often only covers a portion of a drug’s cost, since the difference is relayed to insurance. Among the
other factors to be taken into consideration are the maximum eligible expenses. For health insurance, the threshold at which the insurer reimburses drugs at 100% is soon reached, whereas maximum eligible expenses in dental care are also quickly reached, because of the increase in treatment costs. All these factors contribute to inflating the projection factor and ultimately, the premiums to be paid.

The Costs of Life Insurance…
As for life insurance, the method used to determine premiums is different because the analysis of the group experience covers the previous seven years. Thus, for the renewal of 2014, we studied the period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2012. The benefits to be paid during the following year were anticipated on the basis of the group experience. Lastly, the reserves to be set up were evaluated in terms of age, trend, interest rates, and so forth.

Long-term Disability Insurance…
The factors taken into consideration for long-term disability insurance are basically the same as those for life insurance. However, since the first 24 months of disability are covered by the disability insurance plan in the public-sector collective agreements, the analysis must take into account this waiting period. This is why, for 2014, we analyzed the experience of persons whose period of disability began between 2006 and 2010. We then evaluated the reserves to be set up for each of the years we analyzed.

Helpful Hints for Saving Money!
In health insurance, the coverage that generates the most claims is undoubtedly drug insurance. It alone accounts for nearly 90% of all benefits paid. By changing our purchasing habits at the pharmacy, we can contribute to improving the group experience, while reducing our individual bills. How?

First, choosing the generic equivalent when it is available and when it has no undesirable side effects is an easy way of reducing your bill, because the reimbursement rate of our insurance plan is more attractive for this type of medication than for the original or innovative equivalents.

Also, for persons suffering from a stabilized chronic illness, it is cheaper to ask for a two-month, rather than a one-month renewal; you save money on the pharmacist’s fees.

Shopping around for your pharmacy can also be a way of saving money. Many people believe that drugs have fixed prices, which is false.

Lastly, all too often, the reimbursement of the costs of drugs, paramedical equipment, professional services and disability insurance benefits is borne by our group insurance plans, whereas it should be assumed by the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST) or the Société de l’assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ). This situation significantly impacts our group experience and ultimately contributes to inflating the bill. Let’s be careful!
Keeping Your Online Image Clean!

Maxime Garneau
FSE Communications, Web and Social Media Advisor

It’s time to go back to work. The holidays were wonderful: fun times with family and friends, a trip to beach, lots of rest and, of course, a few festive evenings. These days, chances are your Facebook profile is witness to your busy holidays. So how about doing a little clean up?

Facebook is a fantastic way to stay in touch and share information with both your personal and professional contacts. However, many users don’t realize that the information they post is public, thereby giving up control over their private lives. That’s why it’s important to manage your “online image”.

Clean up Time
Let’s start by checking the content on your wall. Has a friend or acquaintance written something that you find embarrassing or that may compromise your image or reputation? No problem, you can delete it from your profile. Drag your cursor over the post in question. Two small icons will appear at the top right of the post. Click on the one shaped like a pencil (Edit or Delete), then twice on Delete. And voilà!

It’s also important to regularly visit the Photos section of your profile. It’s very easy for other users to add pictures in Facebook and tag you on them. As a result, these pictures end up on your profile and can be seen by anyone authorized in your settings. To delete a tag on a photo, you must once again drag your cursor over the picture in question, click on the pencil icon at the top right (Edit or Remove) and select Report/Remove Tag. You can then decide what action you want to take. Finally, click on Continue.

Keeping it Clean!
Now that you’ve cleaned up your profile, keep it clean. The best way to do so is to activate your notifications. Click on Settings (the small wheel icon at the top right of the screen), then Account Settings. In the Notifications section, under What You Get Notified About, make sure that Activity that involves you is ON. You will be alerted by SMS or email (according to the settings defined in the Notifications section) every time you are tagged in a publication or a photo. You can therefore quickly remove tags that you do not want, or alert Facebook of photos or publications with suspicious content.

As you can see, it’s relatively easy to manage content that concerns you in Facebook. This being said, prevention remains the best way to effectively manage your online image!

A Few Tips…

☛ Having minor issues with your boss or colleague? Remember that every employee has a duty to remain loyal to his or her employer. It might be more prudent to keep your thoughts to yourself…

☛ Angry with a friend? You’d like to share your feelings on Facebook? Wait at least 24 hours. Chances are you won’t be as angry the following day.

☛ Enjoying an evening out with some friends? Let them know at the beginning of the evening that you don’t want pictures of you on Facebook. That way, you won’t have to do any damage control the next day and you’ll maintain good relationships with your friends.

☛ Wondering if you should post personal information or photos on Facebook? Easy. Ask yourself if you’d be comfortable saying it out loud or showing the photo around a crowded room. If in doubt – don’t!
Violence at School

A Teacher Gets Justice with the Help of his Union

François Beauregard
Special Collaboration

Before the school year had ended, some parents had removed their teenagers from his class without giving them time to say goodbye. His school board suspended him with pay after having made false statements about him to the media. All because he publicly denounced the deplorable climate of violence present in the Iguarsivik school in the village of Puvirnituq. This is the story of a three-year nightmare that has come to an end.

With degrees in criminology, community action and child protection, Pierre-Luc Bélisle has always had a sense of adventure and a passion for social work. Early in his career, he developed an interest in teaching and completed a bachelor’s degree in special education. His training prepared him well to work with youth experiencing social adjustment and learning difficulties.

One day, he decided to apply for a teaching position in Northern Quebec and got one in Puvirnituq, an Inuit village with 1500 inhabitants on the east coast of Hudson’s Bay. “I wanted to experience something new. For me, Northern Quebec was like another country, a culture I was curious to discover,” recalls the 35-year old teacher.

At first, everything went well: he integrated nicely into the community and the parents of his students invited him into their homes and on a seal hunt. “It was truly one of the best experiences of my life,” he says. The classroom management plan he implemented had a positive impact, decreasing the number of late arrivals and absenteeism in his class, a recurrent problem in northern villages. And, because he has a degree in special education, his colleagues would often ask him to take charge of students with behavioural problems, which he did gladly.

The Nightmare Begins...

During the 2009-2010 school year, several violent incidents towards the teachers occurred. The student perpetrators were never sanctioned by the school’s administration. Pierre-Luc Bélisle felt this situation undermined the authority of the teaching personnel and negatively affected the atmosphere at the school. With the support of some of his colleagues, he approached the administration, requesting that the violence be addressed, but to no avail. The violence continued. “I had no disciplinary issues in my class, but every week, teachers were tossed around and went home with bruises. The teaching conditions were simply intolerable,” he states.

Confronted with this serious problem, the school council sent a letter to the village’s Education Committee condemning the “lack of consistent disciplinary action in cases of violent behaviour committed by students”. The school council proposed a series of steps aimed at correcting the situation. Ten days later and still no response, the letter is forwarded to the Kativik School Board, which in turn

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did not adequately follow-up due to the magnitude of the problem raised by the group of teachers. Then, in April 2010, Mr. Bélisle was assaulted by students outside his classroom. A physician put him on leave for two weeks. Meanwhile, his roommate, another teacher at the school, was hit in the face after attempting to separate students who were fighting. Soon after, he was shocked to find out that no disciplinary action was taken against the students who assaulted him. That was the last straw! Discouraged by the inaction of the school’s administration and the school board, he contacted a journalist in order to make a public appeal for help.

Breaking the Silence
His plea made the front page of the Journal de Montréal. “My intention was not to make headlines, nor to damage the reputation of the Kativik School Board, and even less so, to tarnish the image we, here in the South, have of the Inuit. But, having exhausted all internal options, I simply wanted to get help for a region that is in significant need of it and desperately lacking in resources. A few days later, the Kativik School Board responded in the media with allegations that Pierre-Luc Bélisle had trouble managing his classroom, was unprofessional, authoritarian and violent, and was unable to adapt to the realities of Northern Quebec. In short, the School Board blamed Mr. Bélisle and the teachers who supported him for the violence perpetrated against them. A grievance was filed by the Association of Employees of Northern Quebec (AENQ) against the Kativik School Board in the name of Mr. Bélisle. The arbitration board determined that all of the allegations made by the school board were false. “In situations of violence, the teacher must be able to count on the unwavering support of the school’s administration. It’s the basis for ensuring a climate that is conducive to learning, especially in isolated communities such as those in Northern Quebec. Pierre-Luc Bélisle encountered problems because he dared to break the silence surrounding violence in northern schools,” believes Patrick D’Astous, president of the AENQ. For his part, the teacher has no regrets. “My conscience is clear. In my heart, I believe it was my responsibility to denounce the violence that was continually tolerated by the authorities despite numerous complaints.”

Patrick D’Astous, who also has a long experience teaching in Northern Quebec, agrees, “The public interest is not well served when teachers remain silent out of fear of retaliation when confronted with a situation that compromises the learning environment, or threatens their health.

Education Statistics in Nunavik
- The drop out rate is close to 80%.
- The high school graduation rate after 7 years is 17.8%. (The rate for all of Quebec is 72.3%.)
- 92.8% of students are behind their grade level when entering high school. (The rate for all of Quebec is 16.7%.)
“Every employer has a duty to ensure a safe working environment.”

and safety, and the health and safety of their students. In addition, every employer has a duty to ensure a safe working environment for their staff.”

Currently, the turnover rate in the north is very high, with one third of teaching personnel leaving their jobs every year. “If additional resources were made available to schools to help the kids, we could better retain qualified personnel and the students would have the opportunity to bond with their teachers. This would increase the graduation rate, which is very low. Everyone would benefit: the students, the community, the teachers and the school board,” says Patrick D’Astous.

A Ruling in his Favour

Since the arbitration board’s decision, Pierre-Luc Bélisle can finally breathe easy. In fact, in addition to acknowledging that the statements made by the Kativik School Board against Mr. Bélisle were false and damaging to his reputation, the arbitration board’s ordered the school board to provide him with a letter of recommendation attesting to his professionalism. The school board was also required to pay Mr. Bélisle $15,000 in moral damages.

Pierre-Luc Bélisle believes he has learned from his experience. “I never doubted my abilities or the merits of my approach,” he says in hindsight. He got through his ordeal with courage, determination and especially with the help of his union, the Association of Employees of Northern Quebec, affiliated to the Fédération des syndicats de l’enseignement. Indeed, the story does end well, with a victory for the union because the adjudicator upheld the grievance, as well as with a personal and professional victory for a teacher whose courage and perseverance have inspired the admiration of all.
Early Childhood Education and Care Centres Regulation

A MORATORIUM IS NEEDED for Negotiations!

On September 5, representatives of the 13,600 home childcare providers (HCP) in Quebec demonstrated at the offices of the Minister of Families, Nicole Léger. Together, they demanded a moratorium on the proposed changes to the regulation governing early childhood education and care centres, specifically home childcare centres that offer subsidized 7$ daycare.

And for good reason! Certain points in the regulation directly affect items in the home childcare providers group agreement for which specific union demands were filed last June. In mid-July, when the minister made the announcement in the media, the CSQ’s legal, labour relations and negotiation teams got to work reviewing the content of the regulation to prepare lobbying the Minister of Families.

During the demonstration, CSQ President, Louise Chabot, denounced the initiative, stating it was “more or less a unilateral imposition on certain working conditions for home childcare providers. The minister changed the regulation, which unquestionably affects their working conditions. The ministry must therefore allow room for negotiations and discussions in good faith with those directly affected by the regulation.”

“We are in favour of regulation that guarantees the quality of the services,” specified Sylvie Tonnelier, president of the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIPEQ-CSQ), during the press conference. “However, we fought long and hard to obtain the right to negotiate our working conditions and we plan on exercising that right!”

Home childcare providers put the welfare of the children first and appreciate all measures in place to improve the quality of their services. But, it must be done correctly. For this reason, we ask the minister to put a hold on these changes, so that we have time to address the question at the negotiation table,” concluded Mrs. Chabot.

A Quick Look at Negotiation Priorities

| Protection of the status of self-employed workers and professional independence |
| Review of the subsidy |
| Allocation of subsidized places |
| Training and skills development |
| Mechanisms for effective and adequate work relations |
| Vacations and holidays |
| Union recognition |
| Work and family reconciliation |

New Faces on the Executive Committee

Did you know that this past June, an election was held for three positions on the Executive Committee during the Federal Council of the FIPEQ-CSQ? Valérie Grenon, from the Syndicat de la Nouvelle-Union, was elected Secretary; Mélanie Lavigne, from the ADIM-Québec, was elected 1st Vice-president; and Dominique Michaud, from the ADIM Abitibi-Témiscamingue, will sit as 2nd Vice-president.

In the usual order: Dominique Michaud, Vincent Lefebvre, Sylvie Tonnelier, Mélanie Lavigne, Valérie Grenon.
Anne Dionne Accepts CHALLENGE of the Presidency

Anne Dionne’s union involvement is nothing new. Hired in the early 1990s as a laboratory technician at the École Polytechnique’s department of mechanical engineering, she first consulted her union, the Association du personnel de l’École polytechnique (APLEP-CSQ), after encountering difficulties with her supervisor at the time.

Over time, her interest in union activities grew and she became a union representative for ten years or so. She worked in different capacities with the APLEP-CSQ’s executive committee, while also acting as representative for the Federation’s various chapters. In 2009, she became FPSES-CSQ’s vice-president of finance.

"Although I’d been thinking about running for the presidency for awhile, such a big responsibility brings with it its share of doubt! This being said, the quality and devotion of our team is extremely reassuring," she says.

She, who would become the first president of the Federation to come from a university background, can count on the support of two close collaborators. Alain Sauvageau, vice-president of administration, with nearly ten years of union experience, and Johanne Ferland, vice-president of finance, with over 20 years of union experience. Mrs. Ferland was also an active participant in the last four national negotiations.

Many Challenges to Come

Managing workplace conditions and labour relations is a challenge that one does not usually associate with the work of a union leader. "I’ve become a union president and a boss overnight. It can be a little unsettling at times!"

Anne Dionne’s first priority is and always has been to acknowledge the work of support staff and improve their conditions in the workplace. "We are seeing a transformation in the way work is being managed with increasingly authoritarian management personnel who encourage precarious employment, while adding pressure to perform better. At the same time, the work of various support staff goes virtually unrecognized. We need to address these frustrating situations," she says.

Many examples exist to support her statement. More and more, temporary personnel are called upon to serve needs that are not only regular, but recurring as well. "Why resort to external resources, such as contract workers, when personnel is available internally? Over time, this situation results in a loss of knowledge and a decrease in cost-control. We need to question this type of hasty and costly solution to a problem that can be resolved internally, in partnership with the union."

These concerns will very likely be included in future negotiations. The Fédération is now starting its consultation process with its unions. "Our bargaining demands must be an accurate reflection of the concerns of our members," concludes Anne Dionne.
For many young people, choosing a career is one of the most important decisions they will ever make. For some, the choice is easy. For others, it can be more difficult. Indeed, the numbers speak volumes, revealing a significant need for guidance. In fact, over one third of students will change programs during the course of their cégep studies, a statistic that reflects this tremendous period of uncertainty in the lives of young adults...

“Miss, I don’t know what to do with my life!” is a desperate cry that Hélène Trudeau, guidance counsellor at the Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, has heard many times throughout her career. “Making enlightened educational choices requires a certain degree of maturity and a willingness to engage in a process of career orientation. It also requires a degree of open-mindedness because the fear of making a mistake, false beliefs or anxiety, and indecisiveness, can all be paralyzing. As guidance counsellors, a part of our role consists in reducing the anxiety felt by young people who come to us for help making choices that align with their interests, strengths, abilities and personalities. It’s also important to be empathetic, speak at their level and help them find the words to verbalize their expectations,” she explains.

Claude Lévesque, a guidance counsellor at the Cégep de Sorel-Tracy for five years, agrees, “My role is not to make a decision for them, but to give them the tools necessary to make better choices in light of their aspirations and talents. It happens that young people, or even their parents, express unrealistic expectations - and because the labour market is not always favourable in some sectors of employment, we must occasionally explain the reality of the situation, tactfully and honestly.”

Whereas many worry about the financial costs of changing programs, Claude Lévesque doesn’t make too much of it, “It’s true that for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, reorientation is more difficult because of the associated costs, but it’s far less costly to do so in cégep that at the university level when the financial and social costs of changing career direction increase significantly.” In cégep, one could even say that it’s normal to experience a certain period of uncertainty. He adds, “We shouldn’t be too hard on them during this time of vocational exploration. They already feel tremendous pressure, it doesn’t help to add more.”

Can aptitude and personality interest tests help young people find their way? Hélène Trudeau, who is also president of the Association des C.O. du collégial (ACOC), explains regrettably, “Guidance counsellors are often seen merely as test administrators. Yet, our role is much more complex. Personally, I rarely use tests. Most of the time, I ask individuals to fill out an information form before meeting with me, and with my experience, this gives me a good
idea of the needs of the individual sitting in front of me. Although
tests can be useful tools, reducing the orientation process down to
taking a few tests is very cliché and minimizes the role of our pro-
profession, which is to evaluate how an individual functions and help
them learn more about themselves so that they may choose a
career that is best suited to them.”

Just like his colleague, Claude Lévesque does not administer tests
very often. “Guidance counsellors are too often perceived as exter-
nal to the success of young people,” he says. “When students
drop out, it’s often because they haven’t found their way and our
role is to help them make sense of their academic and career
goals. From this perspective, the role of guidance counsellors is
central to educational success.”

“Unfortunately, their work is not well understood, even within the
cegep system itself. So imagine how outsiders must perceive it!”

says Bernard Bérubé, president of the Fédération du personnel
professionnel des collèges (FPPC-CSQ). “Yet, their contributions to
the lives of young people are invaluable. As for their expertise in
mental health, it often comes in handy when providing other
forms of assistance.”

Unfortunately, budgetary cuts over the last few years have added
to the administrative constraints that already exist in certain
institutions, limiting the time counsellors have to spend on indi-
vidual consultations. In some cegeps, the waiting lists are
growing. Bernard Bérubé concludes that, “Too often, guidance
counsellors find themselves torn between their desire to do a
good job and the time they have to do it. Despite this often
challenging context, young people can always count on their
professionalism and their undeniable commitment to helping
them make sense of their career choices, their work and their
academic success.”

And What About High School?
By helping students identify their goals,
guidance counsellors promote student
retention. How do they do it? What chal-
lenges do they face? To learn more,
watch the video produced as part of
the Fédération des professionnelles et
des professionnels de l’éducation (FPPECSQ)’s campaign, Pour changer le
monde: bit.ly/g-counselor
Compulsory Union Dues...

Why?

It’s 1946. A long and painful labour conflict persists at the Ford plant in Windsor, Ontario. The union demands that Ford deduct union dues directly off workers’ pay-cheques. The union also demands compulsory union membership. With no resolution in sight, both sides agree to the services of an arbitrator. Justice Rand is appointed and renders his sentence: he denies the union’s call for mandatory union membership, but requires the employer to automatically deduct union dues from all workers. The Rand Formula is born.

Justice Rand’s ruling was based on the fact that all employees benefit from the terms negotiated and introduced into the collective agreement. Therefore, they should all share the costs associated to it, whether they are members of the union or not. Justice Rand stated, “I consider it entirely equitable then that all employees should be required to shoulder their portion of the burden of expense for administering the law of their employment, the union contract; that they must take the burden along with the benefit.”

Another important fact is that the Rand Formula guaranteed financial security to the unions for the first time, which in turn enabled the unions to represent and defend their members against employers who had the means to fight.

Following this historic decision, several unions across the country began demanding that the Rand formula be introduced into their collective agreements. Some employers complied, whereas others outright refused, which led to important labour disputes, such as the one in Québec, in 1975-76, at United Aircraft (Pratt & Whitney today).

This last conflict became violent: cars and homes of management personnel were vandalized, phone threats, non-union members were assaulted, striking workers were beaten, etc. It should be noted that United Aircraft added fuel to the fire by hiring scabs, who walked right passed the striking workers every day.

This particular dispute led the Parti québécois to adopt two important provisions in 1977: the Rand formula and anti-scab legislation. Since that time, the Rand formula has become an integral part of the law and employers in Québec are required to collect union dues through automatic payroll deductions.

A Poorly Veiled Threat…

Why revisit history now that the Rand formula is a legal obligation? Simply because even acquired rights are susceptible to attack. For some time now, a few Conservative MPs have been discussing the Rand formula…and they’re certainly not debating its virtues…

In fact, in December 2012, the Conservative party passed Bill C-377, which would force Canadian unions to disclose confidential financial and organisational information to the government. The information would then be made public through Revenue Canada’s website.

However, explosive Senate debates surrounding the bill have since slowed its progress. As a result of important amendments made by the senators, the bill has been sent back to the House of Commons. At this time, its future remains uncertain as the Parliament has been prorogated.

Introduced under the guise of greater transparency, Bill C-377 was in fact created to attack the unions. Several organizations, including some affiliated to the Quebec Employers Council and to the Barreau, have criticized the bill for infringing on fundamental rights of freedom of association, personal privacy and professional secrecy. And there’s more – during public debates, it’s been said that the bill is a prelude to attacks on the Rand Formula.

Union dues do not infringe upon personal freedom – a decision that was made by the Supreme Court of Canada.
Some organisations, such as the Montreal Economic Institute and a few Conservative MPs, believe that the Rand formula infringes upon the employees’ freedom of association. They also oppose the way unions manage and spend the dues they collect, and some believe that union funds should be used strictly for labour relations - not to fight political and social battles.

Getting the Facts Straight!

Union dues do not infringe upon personal freedom – a decision that was made by the Supreme Court of Canada twice, in 1991 and in 2001. Furthermore, it stated that union dues are justified in a free and democratic society as the economic survival of the unions ensures greater social justice for all.

Moreover, the judges were unanimous in defending the idea that unions cannot simply limit their activities to negotiating working conditions. Quoting two eminent researchers, “In addition to collective bargaining activities, it’s a natural progression for unions to be involved in socio-political causes. Political activities are inextricably linked to union ones.”

What if Union Dues Were No Longer Mandatory?

The real trap is granting union members the right not to pay dues. This right was introduced in 22 American states. Not surprisingly, over a 40-year period, union membership decreased from 40% to 12%, while income inequality has continued to grow. Plus, by decreasing the power of the unions, governments literally attack the working conditions of the middle class. This is exactly what the Harper government is trying to do. It has stated that the measures implemented by Bill C-377 were put in place to defend workers, while at the same time making changes to Employment Insurance in order to limit access to benefits for a growing number of people…

A Question of Social Peace and Justice

History speaks for itself: the Rand formula has improved social peace by making violent work-related conflicts a thing of the past. What’s more, when it was adopted in Quebec in 1977, the National Assembly added an important element that protects union members.

Indeed, in return for paying union dues, the unions are required to represent and defend all of their members, indiscriminately, consistently and with care. If not, members who believe they have not been properly represented may sue the union.

If the Rand Formula were abolished, non-contributing workers would have to defend themselves against employers who have far greater means at their disposal. Labour conditions would deteriorate and revenue inequalities would increase… We would likely re-experience work-related conflicts such as the infamous United Aircraft one. Is this really the society we want to live in? Simply asking the question is answer enough.

The Rand formula has improved social peace.

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- Personnel from the Collège Clarétain, represented by the Syndicat du personnel du Collège Clarétain.
- Personnel from the Centre de réadaptation en dépendance Foster, represented by the Union of CRD Foster Employees.
Activity-Based Funding in Hospitals

A Threat to the Overall Care of Patients?

Lise Goulet
CSQ Health and Social Services Advisor
For some time now, the performance of healthcare facilities has been closely scrutinized. Hospital funding is being questioned. Although many stakeholders agree on the need to improve budgets and their efficiency, not everyone agrees on how to do it.

According to former Finance Minister, Raymond Bachand, a global reform of the current system of financing is needed. In March 2012, he mandated a panel of experts to evaluate different models of activity-based funding, for both healthcare facilities and physicians. The findings report is expected sometime before the end of 2013.

What is Activity-based Funding?
Activity-based funding is a method of funding hospitals based on the type of service provided, such as delivering a baby or replacing a hip. Funding might correspond to the average cost of an intervention or the cost of recognized best practices, that is, the lowest. This type of approach would mark the end of globally managed budgets in hospitals.

For some, this approach would significantly improve the effectiveness, efficiency and safety of healthcare services. For others, it would commercialize healthcare and lead to the creation of a market for hospital services. Some countries have tried this type of financing, only to then question its value as a result of its perverse effects from a clinical standpoint.

An Overview of the Issues
According to Wendy Thomson, professor and head of McGill University’s Department of Social Work, and president of the Expert Panel on Activity-Based Funding, changing the way organizations are funded is required to reduce inequities in healthcare, and improve transparency and performance of the healthcare system. In addition, she states that research findings in this area are clear: activity-based funding would reduce wait times and guarantee better control over costs and accountability, therefore a better return on sums invested.

Saideh Khadir, emergency room physician at the CHUM St-Luc and administrator for the Médecins québécois pour le régime public, holds quite opposing views. According to Dr. Khadir, there is no research to support the effectiveness of activity-based funding. In fact, several studies have demonstrated a reduction in the quality of care and an increase in costs associated with this type of funding. She urges caution before changing the way the healthcare system is funded and suggests that the panel of experts wait for the results of the meta-analysis – over 16,000 scientific articles – expected before the end of 2013.

For Saideh Khadir, saying that financial incentives would increase hospital activities, implies that personnel contribute to the slowdown and that there are sufficient resources to meet the eventual increase in demand of services. The slowdown observed is rather due to the multiple budget cuts imposed over several years.

The Issues from a Clinical Perspective
Many questions remain unanswered. For example, would replacing the hip of an athlete with a low risk of complications have the same value as treating an elderly patient with cardiac problems? Is there a danger that hospitals pick and choose the cases they treat based on financial returns or available budgets? Or that they send sick patients home early and then charge again when they are readmitted due to complications?

Furthermore, delivering complex care is not well suited to activity-based funding – funding every intervention separately requires categorizing interventions and establishing norms. Some activities are difficult to categorize, for example a delivery can take anywhere from 30 minutes to 72 hours and present with multiple clinical complications. Delivering unnecessary, yet highly profitable clinical services is another concern.

Rather than a complete overhaul of the system, Saideh Khadir recommends optimizing processes currently in place, a gradual implementation of proven systems and increased control over healthcare spending in the private sector.
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For more information on the protocol CSQ-Fonds, contact the local representative (LR) in your workplace, your local union or Langis Beaulieu, coordinator – CSQ at 1 800 361-5017.
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