Heading towards the 41st CSQ Congress
FIGHTING BACK!

Retirement plan
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

MATH, A WEAPON OF MASS SELECTION?

Negotiation
MOBILIZING AGAINST CONTEMPT

BUDGET: THE COUILLARD GOVERNMENT HIDES BILLIONS

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Official publication of the Centrale des syndicats du Québec
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In recent weeks, I have met many of you at seminars, assemblies or demonstrations. It is with great pride that I have seen your commitment to the various fights we are simultaneously leading on many fronts to maintain what we have taken years to build.

Currently, all the liberal government is proposing are cuts, reductions, and rate increases in public services. It’s known that austerity measures do not stimulate a country’s economy. Austerity is not a blueprint for society. And, we certainly didn’t vote for that.

Yet, it is what it’s proposing over a backdrop of a poorly veiled intention to reduce the size and role of the state. At least, it’s the message it’s sending out with reforms executed without genuine consultation and objectives that rest solely on reducing the debt. Whether in education, health or early childhood, the structures are being shaken and mergers are shamelessly implemented, ignoring communities and regions, in an attempt to balance numbers rather than sustain a society that prospers thanks to its social safety net. Despite solutions we continue to propose, minister Leitão refuses to consider alternatives for new sources of revenue.

And what is the government doing to stimulate the economy? It’s increasing poverty in women! It’s raising daycare fees in pernicious ways. It’s cutting funding to the Conseil du statut de la femme and the regional Chapeau les filles program. All measures directly affecting women!

It adds insult to injury with its contemptuous and insulting offers to public sector workers. And again, because they represent 75% of government workers, it’s the women who suffer most. Is this the reason the government has no problem letting the working conditions of state employees deteriorate?

Negotiations for the collective agreements getting underway will not be easy since they are going up against the ideology of a zero deficit in 2015-2016. Management offers prove it: the government wants more control over the cost of manpower, and greater flexibility, mobility, compromise and innovation from state workers.

And what about the salary freeze proposed for the next two years? Public sector workers have been doing their share for years. We have had enough of the lack of respect for our commitment to the health and education networks. We refuse to see our wage gap double compared to other workers in Québec. Despite the fact that we have already lost 10% of our purchasing power since 1989, the Treasury Board wants to decrease it 7% more over five years. It’s also out of the question that we watch our pensions melt away with deceitful calculations.

We are people who wish to see a more just and egalitarian society. And for this reason, we continue to fight together in solidarity!

Louise Chabot
President

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HEADING TOWARDS THE 41ST CSQ CONGRESS!

CATHERINE GAUTHIER Chief Editor

In a few weeks, the CSQ will launch its 41st Congress. Under the theme of *Agissons, ripostons!* representatives from every union will meet to reflect on and debate important issues, and decide on the directions the organization will move in during the next three years. *CSQ News* presents an overview of this noteworthy event.

The CSQ Congress is the organization’s most important forum. Fuelled by thought-provoking discussions and lively debates, the event generates a set of objectives, priorities and strategies that allow the organization, over the next three years, to intervene in specific matters and propose concrete solutions.

The event, which will take place at the Centre des congrès de Québec, from June 26 to 29, 2015, will welcome nearly 1,000 members and delegates. Together, they will work to build a better future, as well as elect the five members of the CSQ’s Executive Committee.

KEY ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

During the Congress, participants will debate and give their opinions on the proposals of the General Council. Union renewal will be among the issues at the heart of the discussion.

The goal of this initiative, which came out of the 2012 Congress, is to improve representativeness of the Centrale and the efficiency of its collective action in order that it remains a successful and committed agent of genuine social change. More than 2,000 members from all across Québec took part in the workings of the special commission on union renewal, fuelling the discussion.

Furthermore, the delegates will look into the matter of union strategies in the current context of austerity.

AN EVOCATIVE THEME

The theme *Agissons, ripostons!* sets the tone for the Congress. It encompasses union renewal and repeated attacks on workers and retired workers. The theme is a call to action and mobilization to push society forward and reduce social inequalities.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS VALUABLE

You would like to contribute to the process of reflection and setting objectives for your union? Keep an eye out for invitations from your local union and take part in proposed meetings. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated! You can also visit: congres2015.lacsq.org.

In our next issue: a special report on the CSQ’s 41st Congress!
The government and its budgetary margin of manoeuvre

PIERRE-ANTOINE HARVEY  CSQ Economist

When the government nominated its chief negotiator, Maurice Charlebois, it stated that a negotiated agreement would be possible as long as it guaranteed the elimination of budget deficits. This condition would, according to him, wipe out his margin of manoeuvre. Yet, when combing through the official documents, we discover the opposite...

In fact, the government's budget forecasts are clear: the 2015-2016 budget should produce a real surplus of 1.6 billion dollars. As for the following years, they should see an oscillating budget between 2 and 4 billion dollars. Yet, the government hides its surplus under an artificial definition of “budgetary balance” and says it needs to content itself with a simple “balanced budget”.

A WELL-CAMOUFLAGED MARGIN OF MANOEUVRE

By observing the following table, we find that the government represents payments to the Generations Fund as expenses, which cancels out accounting surpluses. There is therefore another goal hidden behind the aim of maintaining a balanced budget: accelerated debt repayment. In fact, payments to the Generations Fund, which rose to less than one billion dollars during the last years, will be increased to more than 3 billion dollars from now until 2018-2019.

A PREVIOUSLY POSTED MARGIN OF MANOEUVRE

And that’s not all: to this camouflaged margin of manoeuvre, we must add the amount posted in long-term budget forecasts, the sum of which adds up to more than 3.5 billion dollars...

In fact, program spending should go from 65.7 billion dollars in 2014-2015, to 73.5 billion dollars in 2019-2020. This represents an increase of 7.8 billion dollars, which hardly covers the increased cost of public services.

If the government maintains salary costs for unionized employees in program expenses at the current level (nearly 45%), it is therefore more than 3.5 billion more than anticipated to finance salary increases and additional personnel. The government has therefore already anticipated a margin of manoeuvre that is much higher than the meager salary offer it has made us. Clearly, it could offer more...

A MARGIN OF MANŒUVRE TO ACHIEVE

For several years, unions, popular groups and researchers have proposed solutions to find savings and new sources of revenue. By simply putting an end to subcontracting IT services, we could save 500 million dollars, while acknowledging the expertise in the public sector… At least, it’s the conclusion reached by Québec’s Auditor General.

Furthermore, a review of drug purchasing policies and the implementation of a universal drug insurance program would allow a savings of more than 1 billion dollars for the health care system. The solutions are many. What’s lacking is the determination of elected officials.

A POLITICAL CHOICE, NOT A FATALITY

Clearly, the government has done everything to reduce the size of the state by camouflaging its real margin of manoeuvre. The austerity measures it’s imposing are not carved in stone. They are purely political choices. /
SECTORAL NEGOTIATIONS

When the Treasury Board is pulling the strings

DENIS CUROTTE CSQ Assistant Coordinator of National Negotiations

The theme of austerity is very present at the different sectoral negotiating tables. Based on the difficult budgetary context, management negotiating committees are calling for limited manoeuvring for important concessions in work contracts, and attempting to recover the gains made by the unions during previous negotiations. CSQ News presents an overview of demands affecting members of the school networks, higher education, and health and social services.

If management claims to want to lead negotiations by problem solving, the reality is that the number and variety of demands contained in each of its offers reveal its intention to negotiate from cover-to-cover. Management’s most exhaustive offers include up to 60 or so demands affecting every chapter in the collective agreements.

TREASURY BOARD COMMANDS

Another important element: several demands are found in all offers. At some negotiating tables, some of them have been referred to as Treasury Board “commands” upon which the management negotiating team has had little control.

Included among shared management demands is a review of mechanisms relative to employment insurance, which aim notably to reduce the amount of disability benefits paid out and to review the procedures for gradual returns to work. For the latter, some management demands state that the agreement of the worker and the physician for a progressive return to work or a reassignment to occur would no longer be necessary.

MORE FLEXIBILITY...

Another important aspect in these demands is the desire to refocus collective agreements on the needs of customers and services being offered. Management deplores that collective agreements put the needs of workers first. It would rather introduce more flexibility in order that the working conditions allow for meeting the needs of customers.

To do so, management wants to change work schedules throughout the year, according to the needs of customers, and ease the mechanisms for assigning, granting and abolishing positions; mechanisms they consider too rigid. It also seeks to limit the taking of – or access to – many vacations. Overtime recovery or the taking of vacation days would, for example, be decided according to the needs of the organization.

Access to reduced working hours should also be more difficult. Management would like workers to be more stable in their assigned positions. For this reason, they propose a review of the rules relative to movement of personnel and filling of positions in order to limit said movements.

AN UNACCEPTABLE DELAY

The lists of union demands on sectoral matters were presented last fall to the different negotiating tables. According to the Labour Code, management must follow up within 60 days by submitting proposals to the union. At the time of writing, the negotiating tables with the management negotiating committee of the Kativik School Board were the only three that had not yet complied with the law.

DON’T MISS ANY NEWS ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR NEGOTIATIONS? SUBSCRIBE TO THE CSQ NEWSLETTER BY VISITING THE WEBSITE NEG02015.ORG.
JOB SECURITY IN SIGHT
Provisions surrounding job security are also in the government’s line of fire. They wish, notably, to increase mobility of personnel by raising the 50 km limit to reassign workers who have been laid off. Demands to restrict access to job security have also been submitted.

MORE POWER FOR MANAGEMENT...
Several demands aim to broaden the right of management to assign the workers they want, where they want, when they want, as well as the way they want and at the time they want. According to management negotiating committees, rules for posting, priority access to jobs (seniority), and fixed work schedules, are all archaic mechanisms that need modernizing.

RESTRICTING UNIONS
Other demands focus on union prerogatives. Management wants, among others, to limit the practice of accredited associations by tightening the terms of union leaves and reducing the transfer of information.

WHERE DO THE TALKS STAND?
Work at the negotiating tables is well underway. Meeting calendars have been set up. To support our demands, union negotiating teams are working at exposing work-related situations and the needs of members.

CENTRAL TABLE: OUTRAGEOUS OFFERS ON THE MENU
PIERRE-ANTOINE HARVEY CSQ Economist

The outrageous offers presented by the Treasury Board, last December 15, angered more than a few! And for good reason: these “offers” in no way address the preoccupations expressed by the Common Front. It’s as if for the government, the 450,000 or so employees of the state are only an expense and their professional concerns and living conditions are of no importance!

DIMINISHED PURCHASING POWER
The salary freeze proposed over the next two years, added to the 1% increase for the following three years, would decrease our purchasing power by 7%, which would double, at the very least, the wage gap compared to our colleagues in other sectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Union demands</th>
<th>Government “offers”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wage gap anticipated at the end of the agreement
0% Would increase from 7.6% to more than 14%

REGIONAL REALITIES SWEPT UNDER THE CARPET
Furthermore, the government is proposing a freeze on the overall spending envelope for regional disparities and getting rid of the 8% retention premium given to employees in Sept-Îles, Port-Cartier, Gallix and Rivière-Pentecôte, since the end of the 1960s. By doing so, the already difficult problem of attracting and retaining manpower will only get worse, and the regions’ economic vitality will be dealt a harsh blow.

WHAT ABOUT SKILLED WORKERS IN ALL OF THIS?
At the request of the Common Front, the Treasury Board agreed to pick up discussions surrounding problems of attracting and retaining skilled workers in public services. However, before discussing solutions and their implementation, it wants to continue working on identifying the categories of employment affected. The inter-union committee on skilled workers immediately got back to work trying to get the government to listen to reason.

ARGUMENTS, CONVICTIONS AND MOBILIZATION
We must meet these backward offers with strength and unity. The quality of our arguments at the negotiating table will only have an impact if our members truly have the courage of their convictions, and that they mobilize and encourage members of their entourage to follow.
The following examples illustrate the impact the government’s propositions would have on the annual pension annuity (retirement without reduction at 62 years, actuarial reduction of 7.2% per year, average of 8 best years, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement at 60 years, 30 years of service, salary during last year of service: $40,000</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Government proposal</th>
<th>Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$23,210/yr(^1)</td>
<td>$19,499/yr</td>
<td>$3,711/yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement at 60 years, 30 years of service, salary during last year of service: $70,000</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Government proposal</th>
<th>Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$40,617/yr</td>
<td>$34,124/yr</td>
<td>$6,493/yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement at 55 years, 25 years of service, salary during last year of service: $40,000</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Government proposal</th>
<th>Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$15,473/yr</td>
<td>$9,415/yr</td>
<td>$6,058/yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement at 55 years, 25 years of service, salary during last year of service: $70,000</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Government proposal</th>
<th>Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$27,078/yr</td>
<td>$16,477/yr</td>
<td>$10,601/yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, pension indexing after retirement could also be affected. Partial indexing for the cost of living might not be granted for some years, since it would depend on the plan’s financial situation.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

**THE GOVERNMENT IS LYING WHEN IT CLAIMS THAT ITS PROPOSALS ARE NECESSARY TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RREGOP?**

- In reality, the RREGOP is fully funded. With a capitalization rate of 96\(^2\), it is entirely able to meet the long-term pension commitments made to all plan members and retirees.
- Recent projections of the next 15 years indicate that the probability that the RREGOP’s contribution rate would decrease is greater than an increase.
- As it stands, the RREGOP is not in danger. Its financial situation is healthy, requiring no adjustments or decrease in benefits to ensure its sustainability.

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\(^1\) In this example, the assumption is that the average of the best 5 years is $38,684 and of the best 8 years, $37,966.

\(^2\) That is, it holds 96% of the funds necessary to meet the commitments of the plan in the long term.
DID YOU KNOW THAT…
EVEN IN TERMS OF TOTAL COMPENSATION (INCLUDING THEIR SUPPOSEDLY “CHROME-PLATED” PENSION PLAN), STATE WORKERS LAG BEHIND OTHER WORKERS IN QUÉBEC BY 7.6% (INCLUDING THE PRIVATE SECTOR)?

• If the government’s proposed measures are one day implemented, government investment in the RREGOP will decrease. The gap in total compensation would grow even more.
• The government has mentioned that these proposed measures would reduce the contribution rate of state workers, thereby increasing their disposable income. This argument is false. Contributions made to the RREGOP by workers constitute a good retirement investment, as well as being tax deductible, which reduces their net cost.
• Decreases in RREGOP benefits do not represent enrichment for workers, but rather impoverishment for retirees.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…
THE RREGOP HAS BEEN MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF BILL 3 FOR A LONG TIME?

These are the principal requirements imposed on the municipal sector last fall:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill 3</th>
<th>For the RREGOP, it’s already done!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share costs 50-50</td>
<td>50-50 contributions since 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share deficits 50-50 (or even 55% by the employer if there is an agreement)</td>
<td>Plan members currently contribute 0.82% to pay their share (50%) of the RREGOP’s first deficit in 40 years of existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer-employee contribution rate to meet the plan’s commitments: maximum 18% of total payroll</td>
<td>Employer-employee contribution rate to meet the plan’s commitments: 15.2% of total payroll, a very reasonable amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans must be fully funded</td>
<td>On December 31, 2013, the RREGOP was almost entirely funded (96%) and its situation keeps improving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DID YOU KNOW THAT…
THE RREGOP KEEPS THE ECONOMY RUNNING IN QUÉBEC?

The RREGOP represents approximately 540,000 public and parapublic3 sector workers. Their contributions are deposited in a fund managed by the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ). The fund’s market value is more than $55 billion and represents 25% of all CDPQ assets. Since the CDPQ makes significant investments in Québec, the fund for RREGOP members helps keep the economy running in Québec. In other words, far from adding undue weight on public finances or plan members, the RREGOP constitutes a powerful tool for economic development that benefits the entire population.

Furthermore, in 2013, for example, premiums paid by the RREGOP represented an injection of $4.5 billion into the Québec economy. Remember that this amount comes from money put aside by state workers during their careers, and not from social programs, such as the Federal Guaranteed Income Supplement.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…
TO MAKE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POPULATION UNDERSTAND THAT OUR RETIREMENT PLAN IS HEALTHY AND THAT WE WANT TO PRESERVE ITS INTEGRITY, WE NEED TO MOBILIZE?

The CSQ and its partners at the SISP4 and the Common Front5 will do everything possible to preserve the integrity of our retirement plan.

Will you join us?

3 Networks in the education (school boards and CEGEPS), health and social services, and provincial public service sectors.
4 Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics, to which belong the CSQ and the Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec (SFPQ) and l’Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux (APTS).
5 Consisting of the SISP, the FTQ and the CSN.
The Supreme Court reaffirms workers’ right to strike

NATHALIE LÉGER CSQ Advisor

The Supreme Court of Canada has settled the matter: striking is a constitutionally protected right because of the role it plays in a genuine process of negotiations. Therefore, every unionized worker has the right to strike if there is a breakdown in negotiations for their working conditions.

This significant ruling was made last January in a matter in which the Saskatchewan government opposed the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, which represents public sector workers. The decision also confirmed that freedom of association includes the right to genuine negotiations.

“The Supreme Court affirms that the right to strike is inherent in values of freedom, human dignity, equality, respect for autonomy and democracy. It stipulates that when at an impasse, striking asserts the dignity and personal autonomy of workers. It’s an important step ahead for the rights of workers!” says Louise Chabot, CSQ president.

A MESSAGE TO ALL PROVINCES

Recall than in May 2008, Saskatchewan adopted a law titled, The Public Service Essential Services Act, which restricted the right to strike of public sector workers providing essential services. The law allowed for what was referred to as a “controlled strike”, which managed the stoppage of essential services by setting a limit on the number of workers allowed to refuse to work during a strike, as well as by allowing the government-employer to decide – unilaterally and with no right of appeal – which services were considered essential, and who exactly had to keep working.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A LEGITIMATE BALANCE OF POWER

This most recent decision is a significant and progressive redefinition of freedom of association by the Supreme Court of Canada, which barely two weeks earlier ruled on two other important matters. It notably recalled that collective bargaining, within a context of work relations, is what gives meaning to the idea of freedom of association by allowing workers to obtain the balance of power they are usually deprived of when fighting alone for better working conditions.

It also acknowledged that putting just any type of negotiating mechanism in place does not respect workers’ freedom of association. The plan must allow workers to determine their negotiation objectives, as well as the association that will represent them. The Supreme Court also recognized that the association and the employer must be truly independent of each other.

NO TO RETROACTIVE CHANGES TO CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Other important fact: the Supreme Court warned governments against retroactively terminating freely negotiated work conditions. Otherwise, these measures run a high risk of being overturned as they go against the freedom of association of workers stipulated in the collective agreement. In fact, the Québec Court of Appeal will make a much-anticipated ruling on the matter sometime during the coming year.
From the Demers report on college education\(^1\), to the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation on improving school curricula and programs of study\(^2\), the question of the role of mathematics has resurfaced. What’s the real story? Has math become nothing more than a weapon of mass selection?

Out of the Summit on higher education, the Chantier sur l’offre de formation collégiale was mandated with promoting access, complementarity and feasibility of programs throughout the province. Yet, in the final report written by Guy Demers, one recommendation that has gone unnoticed is raising many questions.

The recommendation was stated as such: “To undertake a review of the particular admission prerequisites for these [technical] programs, with the goal of ensuring their validity, within a perspective of accessibility and recruitment of students, as well as with a concern for preserving the requirements needed to guarantee student success.”

NO ADMISSION WITHOUT THE REQUIRED MATH?

It is the situation of the IT program and its math prerequisites that is at the root of this reflection. Indeed, given that this program has trouble recruiting in several CEGEPs and that significant career opportunities are available for young people graduating in this field, is it wise to reject applications from students who have not completed the required secondary 5 math?

According to Éric Denis, IT professor at the Cégep de Matane and member of the FEC-CSQ’s negotiating committee: “This question stirs up a lot of discussion among teachers. We want to promote access to postsecondary studies, but we also want our students to have acquired the knowledge necessary to obtain their diplomas. We therefore need to reflect on whether the current situation adequately meets both objectives.”

It should be noted that, a few years ago, increasing the requirements to obtain a Diploma of Secondary Studies (DES) led to an improvement in the rates of success at the college level.

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ARE SPECIFIC PREREQUISITES RELEVANT?

Nearly 20 technical programs require a secondary 4 level of math. Included among these are Diplomas of College Studies (DCS) in architecture, water purification and industrial engineering. Another 22 programs require the highest level of secondary 5 math, such as natural sciences, civil engineering and bioecology.

Carol LaVack, president of the Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges (FPPC-CSQ), recalls the reason behind particular admission requirements. “Specific prerequisites are an extra condition that must be met before entering a college program. They are in addition to the basic requirements listed in the Règlement sur le régime des études collégiales for DES and DVS (Diploma of Vocational Studies) graduates. The objective is to ensure that the student masters certain skills before learning new ones.”

She believes, however, that it is completely appropriate to question their relevance. “Asking questions is at the heart of education. It would be interesting to ask ourselves if we need to maintain the prerequisites for some college programs, while reviewing what helps promote success in these same programs. After all, the education milieu is a place to learn,” she says.

IS THERE ONE OR MANY DESs?

The challenges created by the need for specific high school prerequisites to enter a college program raise questions concerning the different paths that lead to high school graduation. Yet, although different educational pathways existed before the reform, students now have more options. They must notably register in one of three proposed sequences as of secondary 4, each based on a profile of their aspirations and types of learning.

These 3 sequences are: Cultural, Social and Technical (CST) for programs associated with social sciences, Technical and Scientific (TS) for technical programs, and Natural Sciences (NS) for science programs. Though the basics are the same, the content of the individual math program in each sequence is different.

For example, the CST sequence focuses on statistics and probabilities, whereas NS focuses on algebra. It should be pointed out that, due to lack of funding, TS is not always offered. Therefore, whereas in the past, math classes were identified by number (e.g. 416, 426 or 436, and 514, 526, or 536), today they are identified by sequence.

As for high school regulations, they require only four units of secondary 4 math to obtain a diploma. Therefore, not all students are required to pass secondary 5 math. In addition, the different sequences have variable levels, notably in terms of numbers of hours.

This leads to the question of whether there is not one DES, but several DESs, obtained by graduates with TS or NS secondary 5 math, to students having completed only secondary 4 math in the CST sequence.

 Whereas the former (TS or NS with secondary 5 math) have access to all college programs, the others (CST) only have access to approximately 60% of the programs. Should we therefore conclude that everything rides on the level of math in secondary 3, therefore, before the age of 15? Should we not wish for a broader range of choices at the time of registration for CEGEP?

ARE TOO MANY OPTIONS GETTING IN THE WAY?

According to Josée Scalabrini, president of the Fédération des syndicats de l’enseignement (FSE-CSQ), even if the school system has seen increased diversification of paths as of the second cycle of secondary school, the new sequences in math are not the only issue. In addition to an increase in particular projects, the reform created other changes in the curriculum, notably in French. It also implemented different training paths, focusing on employment or general education.

“What we now need to ask ourselves, is if this multitude of pathways is not getting in the way of the objective we are defending, that is, to help the greatest number of young people in Québec obtain a solid common basic education leading to a first diploma,” she wonders.
Besides entering a postsecondary program of their choice, another issue occurs here, that is, finding the best balance between diversified training - which meets the desires and aptitudes of each – and a school system that provides equal opportunities for all.

ACADEMIC COUNSELLING, AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

Johanne Pomerleau, president of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ), deplores the limited choices that are really offered to students, “Too often, their academic scores dictate the paths they take, rather than their motivations and ambitions.” A genuine career orientation approach includes an understanding of the education system and the workplace, as well as a better understanding of the individual.

She believes that this approach should be at the heart of a school’s preoccupations. “Because of its absence of vision, the government cut funding for academic counselling, and so we find ourselves with a flagrant lack of services, in particular to support students who are struggling.”

AT WHAT POINT IS SELECTION JUSTIFIED?

Reflecting on a review of the particular admission requirements for some college programs leads us to another question concerning the diversification of pathways leading to a DES as of the second cycle of high school.

Indeed, a first selection for college programs is made in secondary 3 on the basis of previously obtained math scores. This first classification of students can be a determining factor in accessing future university programs of their choice. Yet, if these young people don’t have equal chances of success right from the start, when does the selection process based on school marks, notably in math, become appropriate?

If the objective is to promote a common education, allowing the greatest number of young people access to a first diploma (DES), we can only blame the number of diversified pathways that are based on grades. In fact, this type of early selection harms the creation of more homogeneous groups that promote success and increase opportunities for students to pursue their studies according to their desires and aptitudes.

In spite of this, it’s clear that not everyone can aspire to obtain the same diplomas. In addition, if in order to promote access for college programs, selection decreases at the admission level, we will have to continue to work on supporting success. But recent cuts are not going in that direction. Needless to say, the ideal model is hard to find. Reflection on practices of selection in our educational system must nevertheless continue.

Should we conclude that everything rides on the level of math in secondary 3, therefore, before the age of 15?
Childcare centres in schools are traditionally a female domain. Few men show any interest, have the qualities necessary, or are bold enough to venture in. Benoît Brunet is a true pioneer: he has worked as an educator at the Cœur Soleil school in Laval for 29 years. After all the time spent with occasionally rambunctious students, he isn’t even considering retirement because he loves his job so much. Meet an energetic and enthusiastic educator.

Throughout his career, he’s never received a negative reaction from colleagues, parents or children, about the fact that he is one of the rare men to have chosen this career. “In recent years, we’ve seen men in childcare centres, attitudes are changing, it’s really great. It’s important for students to have male role models,” he says.

According to him, several qualities are required to perform this type of work well: versatility, patience, respect for others and the ability to work in teams, but first and foremost, a love for children.

When asked to talk about his work, Monsieur Benoît, as the students affectionately call him, replies with great enthusiasm: “I have the best job in the world because I work with children and they are our future, our greatest resource. For this reason, childcare workers must have great values and have proper training.”

Early in his career, a secondary 5 diploma was all that was required to work in a childcare centre. Today, candidates must have an Attestation of Vocational Studies (AVS), consisting of 390 hours of training, including 45 hours of on-the-job training. In addition, first aid training is required and workers must have a first aid certificate in the event of emergency. According to this experienced educator, to succeed in this field, one must be able to intervene, plan and organize activities focused on the emotional, cognitive and psychomotor development of children, within the framework of the school curriculum.

Cœur-Soleil school’s curriculum is inspired by the values of UNICEF, and every year it focuses on a particular theme. This year, the theme is health. Benoît Brunet and his colleagues work as a team to develop activities related to nutrition, hygiene and physical fitness. The profession is gaining increasing recognition and he is thrilled, because “these days, working with children who have special needs requires specific competencies”, states Monsieur Benoît, who is also a trainer and guide for interns in the childcare education program.

“When a student asks me if they should enter this profession and I see they have the skills and competencies required, I answer yes without hesitation. Working with children is extremely rewarding,” concludes the educator whose energy is contagious.
An unprecedented viral success

With nearly 300,000 views, the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ)’s campaign, On se donne les moyens, has experienced unprecedented success! And it continues! Launched as part of the Fédération’s sectoral negotiations, the campaign stars Austerity Minister, Monsieur Coupe-Coupe, whose penny-pinching mission to save money by cutting back on professional services is creating completely outrageous situations.

“The consequences of austerity directly impact professional services in education. With this campaign, our goal is to show the ridiculous situations created by cuts to these services, as well as to assert that reinvestment is the only possible option for the future,” explains Johanne Pomerleau, FPPE-CSQ president. /

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“The current climate is difficult. Whether in colleges or universities, support workers are worried and afraid to be the first victims of upcoming budget cuts to higher education.”

The president of the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ), Anne Dionne, confirms that repeated announcements are increasing the sense of worry among members.

“When budgets are cut, support workers are often the first affected. Although we intervene at every level, our jobs are unrecognized and we become easy targets in times of austerity,” she says. She warns that cutting support staff is not without consequences on the quality of services in CEGEPs and universities.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Anne Dionne reminds us that there is a reason these jobs are referred to as support. “They ensure the proper functioning of CEGEPs and universities by supporting students, professors, professionals and the administration. They are, in some way, the girders upon which rest the establishments. And, just like girders, they melt into the background so that most people don’t even realize the weight they carry.”

AN UNUSUALLY GROWING WORKLOAD

Unfortunately, cuts imposed in recent years have hurt and the girders are weakening under increasing loads.

“It’s untrue that we can continue to reduce the number of jobs and increase the workload of remaining workers without consequence. Not replacing positions and simply redistributing duties is not a magic solution. Many workers already carry an excessive workload and the situation could get increasingly worse with upcoming measures. And all of this for an average yearly salary of $30,000 per year,” she says.

The union leader specifies that as taxpayers, these members are also subjected to the various tax increases imposed by the governments, without being able to count on adequate salary raises.

A CALL FOR SOLIDARITY

Anne Dionne suspects that the Fédération des cégeps and the universities’ boards of governors will have less flexibility in the face of a government obsessed with a zero deficit and budget austerity.

“Increasingly, directives come from the Treasury Board, which knows nothing about our reality. It makes decisions based on numbers, with no thought for our educational mission. Our members have every reason to be worried. The best weapon against the right in Québec remains, more than ever, solidarity among all workers. Whether in the employ of the public sector or not, they will eventually be affected as both the parapublic and private sectors always end up being affected by what goes on in the public sector,” she concludes.
A forced reform with numerous uncertainties

In spite of general opposition from the health and social services network, as well as within the population, the Couillard government, spurred on by its impetuous minister Gaétan Barrette, finally forced the adoption of its infamous Bill 10, changing the organization and governance of the health and social services network, notably by abolishing regional agencies.

The president of the Fédération de la Santé du Québec (FSQ-CSQ), Claire Montour, and the president of the Fédération des syndicats de la santé et des services sociaux (F4S-CSQ), Claude de Montigny, recall that since last September, their organizations have fought on every front in an attempt to force the government to back off.

“We did battle as a Federation and as a Centrale, with strong support from the CSQ. We also militated within the Coalition Solidarité Santé and took part, with our partners, in various attempts to convince MNAs to oppose the bill. Mobilization spread across all regions. However, we were faced with a government obsessed with austerity and determined to implement its reform to the detriment of the wellbeing of the population,” said Claire Montour.

**A FIGHT THAT’S JUST GETTING STARTED**

The two union leaders are not giving up, in the face of the major upcoming shake-up. “We are witnessing an enormous overhaul of the structures as health and social service agencies make way for regional megastructures: the Centres intégrés de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS). Moreover, the Centres intégrés universitaires en santé et services sociaux (CIUSSS) will be set up in regions where there are universities that offer complete undergraduate medical programs,” she added.

**A MORE POWERFUL MINISTER**

The public network will therefore go from 182 to 33 establishments. But these larger structures will not be any more powerful.

“Essentially, Gaétan Barrette is making sure that he can maintain control over the regional establishments. He will hold tremendous power over the choice of individuals on the new boards of directors. The same applies for the chief executive officer of the establishment, who will be appointed by the government under the recommendation of the minister, no less!,” said Claude de Montigny.

Furthermore, the regions and establishments will lose tremendous autonomy and independence. In fact, decision-making and organization and coordination of services will now be centralized in Québec, in the minister’s office itself. As for boards of directors, their influence will be limited to organizing the services offered by the establishments according to the orientations and budgets provided by the minister. In short, regional administrators will do no more than execute decisions made in Québec.

**ANTICIPATED CONFUSION AND DESTABILIZATION**

Within this context, Claire Montour and Claude de Montigny anticipate a period of confusion and destabilization in the network. “Direct and indirect impacts are expected for workers, but at this time, it’s too early to know how significant. The CSQ’s professional resources are monitoring the situation very closely and will proceed with a rigorous analysis of the new bill to set the record straight for the members we represent,” they concluded.
A second collective agreement for HCPs

KATHY GIBSON FIPEQ-CSQ Communications Advisor

Negotiations for the second collective agreement for home childcare providers (HCPs), members of the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIPEQ-CSQ), came to a conclusion in January. Members voted 66% in favour of offers made by the Ministry of Families.

These negotiations allowed for appreciable improvement in the daily working conditions of HCPs. Notably, significant gains were made in granting greater recognition for their professional autonomy and easing of conditions regarding vacation days.

“The labour relations regime will also be more effective with coordinating offices at the local level. This issue was one of our negotiating priorities,” said Kathleen Courville, FIPEQ-CSQ president.

The ministry also committed to bringing solutions to the issue of HCPs having their own children present during daycare hours. Remember that last July, the FIPEQ-CSQ publicly denounced these absurd restrictions imposed by the minister.

“From now on, HCPs in Québec will be able to keep their children at home if they respect the ratio. The quality of family life for thousands of women – and their children – will be greatly improved, thanks to this important gain,” she added.

AN EXEMPLARY MOBILIZATION

During the 15 months of negotiations, the numerous actions taken by HCPs, both locally and nationally, helped maintain pressure on the Ministry of Families.

“The exemplary mobilization of the FIPEQ-CSQ’s HCPs would probably have led to even better results had it not been for the unfavourable circumstances in which the negotiations took place. It’s only a matter of time: we will vigorously pursue our efforts until the profession of Québec’s 15,000 HCPs is recognized for its full value,” she concluded.

CHILDCARE WORKERS BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS

During the month of March, negotiations will begin for public childcare workers (CPE) who are members of the syndicats des intervenantes en petite enfance (SIPE), affiliated with the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIPEQ-CSQ).

Negotiation and mobilization committees are ready and consultations regarding union demands are complete. The list of demands will focus on five major areas: equity among workers, day-to-day work, vacations, training and development, as well as improving workers’ rights. Tabling these demands will mark the official launch of negotiations.

From left to right: Nathalie Fillion (SIPE Québec), Manon Dion (SIPE Abitibi-Témiscamingue), Daniel Gosselin (CSQ Advisor and Spokesperson), Nathalie Charland (SIPE Montréal), Valérie Grenon (FIPEQ-CSQ) and Nancy Drouin (SIPE Estrie)
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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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