What fuels our next generation of activists?

For or against medical records online?

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The sums announced are inadequate to repair the damage. The Couillard government has wrecked our public services: health, education, and early childcare. There is a blatant lack of resources in all of these sectors.

In education, we were promised a national policy on educational success, which at the time of writing, has yet to see the light of day. Following a consultation, Minister Proulx was supposed to continue the dialogue with education personnel. It hasn’t happened yet...

Was this big shake-up no more than a marketing campaign to restore his government’s image? There is room for doubt... Regardless, we will continue to demand a comprehensive and coherent vision for education.

In early childcare, our public network of childcare centres continues to suffer from a lack of resources and the effects of fee modulations. Yet, Minister Proulx recognizes that education starts early. What is the government waiting for to provide real support?

In health, Minister Barrette continues to make decisions that undermine access to services. Think, for example, of the centralization of public medical laboratories affecting access to care, personnel, and the economic vitality of the regions. The reform was supposed to resolve all of these issues. Does anyone still have faith in Gaétan Barrette?

Our Centrale’s battles don’t stop there. Numerous others are being addressed from a broader perspective to obtain greater justice and social equity in the interest of all of our members and the general population. I am thinking, in particular, of the minimum wage of $15 per hour, a decent retirement for all, and a review of labour laws and standards. Our collective action finds its meaning in all of these battles.

Together, let’s continue to fight for the improvement of our working conditions and the progress of our society.

In solidarity!

LOUISE CHABOT
PRESIDENT
UNION ACTIVISTS: WHAT'S FUELLING THE NEXT GENERATION?

Inspiring, talkative, and enthusiastic, they've wasted no time immersing themselves in the union world. CSQ News met with three militant individuals who exemplify the energy of the next generation of union activists.

MARIE-EVE IMONTI AND CLAUDE GIRARD CSQ ADVISORS

A COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES

A primary school educator with the Commission scolaire des Bois-Francs, Suzie Hinse1 accidentally fell into union activism. "During my first contract in November 2006, I substituted for a teacher who was also a union delegate. By force of circumstance, I took over in that role as well," she says.

Bold but inexperienced, Suzie Hinse was mentored by Nancie Lafond, her union’s president, who explained how the union operates and introduced her to more experienced members. The following year, she applied to be a delegate, a position she has held for 11 years.

1 Suzie Hinse is a member of the Syndicat de l’enseignement des Bois-Francs (CSQ).
THE TIES THAT BIND

Over the years, the teacher has become a committed activist - an unexpected development for someone who grew up in a family with no union sympathies.

“At first, I was mostly looking to bond with my co-workers. Then, I became aware of how important it is to stick together to defend our working conditions and the education system we feel so strongly about.”

In the beginning, the school’s administration didn’t make it easy. “I took my first steps as delegate while I was still a temporary worker, a fact my employer was only too happy to remind me of. Despite this, I refused to be bullied and remained committed. Precarious employment is no reason to accept anything!”, she says proudly.

INSPIRING BATTLES

Suzie Hinse now militates within the Comité des jeunes de la CSQ. “The committee enables us to learn about union practices and exchange with others. These discussions are both valuable and useful as the battles we face in our respective regions are very similar.”

Who is her greatest union inspiration? She replies, not surprisingly, “The president of my union, Nancie Lafond. She is there in both good and bad times, by our side, ready to fight for us.”

COMMITTING FOR CO-WORKERS

Socially engaged before being involved in the union, Davie Melloul was a street worker and founder of a youth organization. For nine years, he has been a safety and prevention officer at Collège Ahuntsic.

“My union involvement began three years ago. I had filed a complaint with the CNESST and was being misled left and right, without understanding what was happening. I decided to get involved so that my colleagues never had to experience that. It’s worked so well that I’m still doing it!”

“Previously, although I was interested in unionism, I watched from afar. I’ve never regretted charging ahead. Today, whenever there is a demonstration, I’m really proud and happy to hear people speak up to defend those who are unable to. That’s the type of solidarity and mutual aid that should unite us.”

CHANGING THE PERCEPTION OF UNIONISM

What saddens him most is meeting colleagues who misunderstand unionism.
“A union is much more than a simple service counter. It’s a broad movement of workers who unite to defend their working conditions, as well as their view of a more just society. It’s for all of these battles that our union dues should serve.”

He adds that the union movement is, first and foremost, human beings who care about the future of their colleagues and fellow citizens. Smiling, he tells about how when he participates in CNESST sessions a group of teachers from La Prairie always invites him to their table and that a bond has developed over time.

“This large family extends beyond our professions. It’s particularly true with the CSQ where, regardless of your profession, you belong and have a place within the family. We are all equal and united in solidarity,” he says.

JOINING A GREAT MOVEMENT

France Brochu-Proulx 4 started working as a home childcare provider (HCP) in Amos, in 2010, at a time when a great wave of unionization was spreading throughout the profession.

“The will of HCPs to take their working conditions in hand compelled me to take action. It’s what pushed me to engage in the fight to defend our rights.” It was a new experience for she who was unfamiliar with the world of unions.

THE SUPPORT OF A TEAM

“I had a lot to learn, but I was fortunate to count on my colleagues at ADIM Abitibi-Témiscamingue who have been there since the union was created. They taught me everything. It went so well that after my start as a delegate, I became vice-president in October 2012, a position I still hold today.”

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

France Brochu-Proulx acknowledges the daily challenges union activism represents, beginning with family-work-activism balance.

“When we decide to become involved in the union, we do so wholeheartedly. We try to devote the most time possible, but family obligations often conflict. We need to know how to organize our schedules to satisfy everybody.”

An added complication: the isolation of HCPs, where educators work in their own home environments. “Since we are spread out across a large territory, socializing is more difficult. Communication between members is a constant challenge.”

4 France Brochu-Proulx is a member of the Alliance des intervenantes en milieu familial (ADIM) de l’Abitibi-Témiscamingue (CSQ).
Inspiring the movement

When Line Camerlain joined the union movement in 1990, it was to fight against the injustices at the high school where she worked. Pierre-Paul Côté, former vice-president of the Syndicat de Champlain (CSQ) and now president of the AREQ-CSQ, has been an important figure for her.

MARIE-EVE IMONTI CSQ COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR

“Pierre-Paul was - and still is - an inspiring mentor. Professional and honest, he has always known how to rise above the fray and be respectful towards members. Meeting him has played an important role in my union journey, as I hoped our Centrale would go even further in supporting the next generation.”

MAKING THE NEXT GENERATION OF UNION ACTIVISTS A PRIORITY

Last April was the CSQ’s first Semaine de la relève syndicale, with dozens of activities organized by affiliated unions across Québec. The event culminated in a Camp CSQ de la relève syndicale.

“Our Centrale attaches great importance to the next generation. These two initiatives add to the range of other activities undertaken to support them. The next generation of militants are a source of pride. Their commitment is powerful fuel for our organization!”

To learn more, visit releve.lacsq.org.

1 Line Camerlain is vice-president of the CSQ and responsible for union training. Photo on the left: during her early days in 1990.
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE NORTH

Unique context, remoteness, and social realities: union organization in the North is definitely not the same as in the South.

NICOLE DE SÈVE COLLABORATION

The vastness of the territory\(^1\) is a significant factor. “Meeting with school or service administrators generally requires two days of travel. We also need to convince arbitrators to come to northern communities. Grievance hearings are often held in English and not all arbitrators are bilingual,” explains Larry Imbeault\(^2\).

Add to this the difficulty of meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. “The human and financial resources are insufficient, and funding envelopes available are not protected. School boards use them as they wish and students suffer as a result,” he says.

COUNTLESS SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Furthermore, the social realities, notably the cost of living and access to housing, are in conflict with the rules in the collective agreements.

“Individuals hired more than 50 kms away are mostly non-Aboriginal workers who have access to housing provided by their employer. On the other hand, Cree or Inuit workers hired locally live in government housing. This double standard creates a lot of tension due to the lack of decent housing for aboriginal workers in all communities,” says François Beauchemin\(^3\).

He notes that unfortunately the union has little influence over the government to invest in the construction of decent housing, a determining factor in educational success.

FOCUS ON SOLIDARITY AND RESPECT

By not giving up and continuing the extraordinary work begun 48 years ago by the AENQ-CSQ, Daniel B. Lafrenière\(^4\) believes the CSQ can support Aboriginal unions.

“Our strategies must consider the particular circumstances of northern communities, beyond union life. We must adapt them to offer our members the solidarity that is characteristic of the CSQ with respect to their unique identities, specific demands, language, and culture,” he concludes.

1 Nunavik: 14 Inuit communities over more than 507,000 km. James Bay Cree Territory: 9 Cree communities over more than 340,000 km.
2 Larry Imbeault is president of the Association of employees of Northern Quebec (AENQ-CSQ).
3 François Beauchemin is a union advisor for the AENQ-CSQ.
4 Daniel B. Lafrenière is secretary-treasurer for the CSQ.
MAGGIE MacDONNELL: THE BEST TEACHER IN THE WORLD!

Being proclaimed best teacher in the world and receiving a $1 million prize: a dream come true?

MARIE-EVE IMONTI
CSQ ADVISOR

In March, the Varkey Foundation’s Global Teacher Prize was awarded to Maggie MacDonnell1, a teacher in Salluit, Nunavik. The scope of her projects and her impressive contribution to the community distinguished her from the other 20,000 applications.

INITIATIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Since her arrival in Nunavik, in 2011, Maggie MacDonnell has implemented a life skills program, a community kitchen, and a thrift store. She has also developed a coop program with the community daycare that allows students to obtain work experience. The objective is to help them understand the importance of early education, while improving their self-esteem.

A CONTAGIOUS PASSION FOR SPORT

Maggie MacDonnell has passed on her passion for physical fitness to the young people around her by launching a running club and establishing the community’s first fitness training centre. She plans on using the prize money to create a program that will revive the ancestral practice of kayaking, and encourage young people to reappropri-ate their land and culture.

“When you run by yourself you go fast, but when you run with others you can go so far,” – Maggie MacDonnell.

A SCIENCE TEACHER FROM LÉVIS WAS A FINALIST!

Another one of our teachers was among the finalists for the Global Teacher Prize. Yvan Girouard2 is so passionate about science that, in 2009, he transformed his classroom into a science museum! There is even a 10-metre dinosaur built of recycled materials! The educator uses science projects as a way to stimulate curiosity in his students.

Known as “Professor Duracell”, Yvan Girouard was also recognized last year when he was selected as one of the ten winners of the Prime Minister’s Awards for Teaching Excellence.

1 Maggie MacDonnell is a member of the Association of employees of Northern Quebec (AENQ-CSQ)
2 Yvan Girouard is a member of the Syndicat de l’enseignement des Deux-Rives (SEDR-CSQ)
FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD TO KINDERGARTEN

FOR A SMOOTHER TRANSITION

In its latest budget, Québec announced funding to facilitate the transition of young children to kindergarten.

KARINE LAPIERRE
FPPE-CSQ ADVISOR

Daniel Allard\(^1\) believes that the best way to succeed is to turn to early childhood counselors to play a central role between the stakeholders who circle around children as they enter school.

“Assisting children aged 4 entering school for the first time is a career in itself. I’ve been doing it for several years through the Passe-Partout program. I guide parents on how to support their children during their school years. I also facilitate meetings with the little ones to ease their transition into kindergarten, and if needed, I contribute to the screening process for difficulties,” says the early childhood counselor.

COORDINATION IS ESSENTIAL

“A large part of my work requires an interdisciplinary approach with teachers, and more broadly with daycare workers, and community, health and social services organizations. Being able to coordinate this way is essential since it allows to connect with parents and other stakeholders to ensure a harmonious transition into kindergarten,” he says.

This feeling is shared among members of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec, as revealed in a recent survey.

“Early childhood counselors are in the best position to coordinate services because the school must be the anchor point. The central role they play during the transition into school must be consolidated and recognized by the ministry of education,” asserts Johanne Pomerleau\(^2\).

FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT STRATEGY

Presented in several school boards, the Passe-Partout program is not currently offered everywhere. This situation, which is a contributing factor in the lack of communication between players in the transition to school, was denounced by the Commission sur l’éducation à la petite enfance in 2017, and the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, in 2012.

Johanne Pomerleau is categorical: “The government doesn’t need to reinvent the wheel! It only needs to recognize the expertise that has been present in school boards for nearly 40 years. How? By allocating funds exclusively for hiring professional personnel, such as early childhood counselors. And our federation will see to it!”

\(^1\) Daniel Allard is a member of the Syndicat du personnel professionnel de l’éducation du Cœur et du Centre du Québec.

\(^2\) Johanne Pomerleau is president of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ).
CHEF IN A HIGH SCHOOL

“Innovating and drawing inspiration from the latest trends”

The shift towards health has created much change in school cafeterias.

MARTIN CAYOUETTE FPSS-CSQ ADVISOR

“I remember the days when we had vending machines that sold chocolate and soft drinks. We’ve come a long way since then,” says Brigitte Cloutier¹.

However, she admits that it hasn’t been easy to change habits. “In 1996, when the food policy was introduced, we experienced a drastic decrease in our clientele. We looked for solutions and now we have more lunch customers than we did before,” says she who has been a cook at École secondaire Veilleux for 27 years.

CHANGING HABITS

Among these changes has been the organization of a health committee, consisting of several stakeholders, that promotes healthy eating habits among young people.

“We also have several sport-study programs in our school, so students are even more aware of the advantages of nutritious foods.”

She underlines the challenge that comes with making the service accessible to all students in the school. “We’re very limited in terms of pricing, but I’m always ready to pay a bit more for quality foods. It makes a difference in the flavour.”

A SOURCE OF PRIDE

Brigitte Cloutier gets a lot of satisfaction when students appreciate a new menu she’s planned with her two coworkers. “We get comments right away and when we get more customers it becomes a source of pride for us.”

She takes her work to heart. “I work as though I were the owner of the cafeteria, even though I know I’m a school board employee. My coworkers and I are always looking to satisfy our customers and trying to find new ideas.”

It’s clear that these changes have paid off and everyone benefits from this collective success!

¹ Brigitte Cloutier is a member of the Syndicat du personnel de soutien scolaire de la Commission scolaire de la Beauce-Etchemin.
COLLEGE PROFESSIONALS
STEP OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Cégeps are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. Since the very beginning, professional workers have played an essential role in cégeps. Yet, their duties remain unknown, a situation that is not without consequence.

CLAUDE GIRARD CSQ ADVISOR

Suzanne Tousignant\(^1\) is categorical: the government’s lack of awareness – and lack of recognition – for the work of professional workers in the college sector is evident by the salary ranking it assigned to 12 of the 17 job titles represented by the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de collège during the last negotiation.

To correct the situation, the federation has put together a plan of action that aims to have the work of professionals recognized for its true value, as well as to obtain additional resources in cégeps. Unanimously adopted by the federal council last fall, the plan is being presented to members as part of a union tour ending in June.

Evoking the issues related to salary ranking, Suzanne Tousignant adds that two joint committees, consisting of representatives of the federation, the CSQ, and the government have been formed. “The first committee will analyze the ranking for academic advisors in terms of salary relativity, whereas the second will look at the issues of attracting and retaining academic advisors interacting with teaching personnel.”

A QUESTION OF PAY EQUITY

At the same time, the work related to the grievances regarding the maintenance of pay equity in 2010 – still active in several categories of employment such as librarians, guidance counsellors, special education, and academic advisors – will continue, just as it will for steps taken in 2015.

In this regard, let’s recall that in the fall of 2014, the CSQ had undertaken a full-scale investigation with its public sector federations, as it anticipated the government’s decision to achieve alone the maintenance of salary equity in 2015. The result? When posted, all of the elements were combined to file the complaints for the 17 categories\(^2\) of employment at the FPPC-CSQ.

Furthermore, over the past weeks, the federation consulted its 1200 members in order to compile the perfect profile of each of their categories of employment. The data will be very useful in putting together the federation’s plan of action, as well as preparing the next pay equity maintenance exercise.

“We hope to obtain adjustments to the salary ranking of several of our job categories and will spare no effort to get there!” concludes Suzanne Tousignant.

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1 Suzanne Tousignant is president of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de collège (FPPC-CSQ)
2 To consult the complete list of job classes affected, read the article at lacsq.org.
ARE PARENTS GETTING THEIR MONEY’S WORTH?

Every year, hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds are paid out in tax credits to parents whose children go to private daycare.

CHRISTOPHER YOUNG FIPEQ-CSQ ADVISOR

The amounts paid out for these tax credits rose from $185 million in 2007 to $487 million in 2012. This is from research on funding for childcare conducted by the Institut de recherche et d’informations socio-économiques, published in 2016.

The study’s conclusion could not be more clear: “Although the network of private, unsubsidized daycares does not receive money directly from the various levels of government, it is nevertheless largely funded by State policies, without being accountable to the public.”

It is precisely this lack of accountability that is problematic: the government is indirectly subsidizing thousands of daycares over which it has little or no control.

A DOUBLE STANDARD

The contrast is particularly striking when we compare the two types of service.

Regulated and subsidized home childcare is closely supervised by the government through the coordinating offices, with strict safety standards and guarantees on the quality of the supervision of children.

In private home childcare settings, there is no oversight and there are no safety standards. In fact, the government does not even conduct inspections. As a result, millions of dollars are paid out in the form of tax credits for daycare settings that the government knows nothing about!

REVEALING NUMBERS

The number of complaints clearly illustrates the quality gap that stems from such differences in terms of oversight. According to the numbers for 2015, the complaint rate per 100 spaces for private, unsubsidized daycares was 1.82, that is, 4.5 times higher than for childcare centres (CPE—centres de la petite enfance) and 7 times higher than for regulated, subsidized home childcare!

While the sums paid to private, unsubsidized daycares continue to rise, despite the quality gap, the public childcare network is required to do more with less.

The government should be wondering how appropriate it is to pay out hundreds of millions of dollars through tax credits without any guarantees on the quality of services provided to children, and instead invest these amounts in public, regulated and subsidized services where everything is in place to ensure that children receive the best care.
FOR OR AGAINST MEDICAL RECORDS ONLINE?

Within one year, we should be able to consult our medical records online. At least, that’s what Minister Barrette is hoping for.

LISE GOULET CSQ ADVISOR

Although the prospect is generating interest, it’s also causing concern, as revealed by the results of a recent survey\(^1\) of CSQ members.

A LITTLE-KNOWN DIGITAL RECORD

Currently, the Québec Health Record (QHR) allows some 54,000 health professionals (nursing staff, physicians and pharmacists, interns and residents, biochemists and microbiologists, medical archivists, and technical support workers) quick access to information deemed useful for managing patient care.

Gradually implemented across Québec since 2013, the QHR’s content and usage rules remain virtually unknown to the general public, as revealed by the survey results.

In fact, 96% of survey respondents don’t know – or only partially know – what data it contains; 92% have no - or somewhat no - idea which health professionals have access to it; and nearly 98% don’t know how long the data is saved.

A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ABOUT OUR HEALTH

The public launch of the QHR is generating concern because it allows for the collection, conservation and consultation of a great deal of information, such as lists of prescribed medications, vaccines administered, results of laboratory analyses and medical imaging, hospitalization summaries, as well as allergies and sensitivities. In addition, under certain circumstances, the information can be used for the purposes of research and analysis.

“Although virtual access to health information is of great interest, the numerous comments from CSQ members also reveal great concern, notably in terms of the safety of personal information. Many people worry that access to data banks is inadequately protected and that their employers or insurers, for example, can obtain information that may be prejudicial,” says Sonia Éthier\(^2\).

A PERFECTLY CONTROLLED RISK?

It’s important to know that the procedures for professionals accessing information are highly secure. Access is limited to authorized individuals using specially configured workstations. There are periodic authentication requirements, an access device, and personal passwords. Plus, information saved under a unique identification number does not allow identifying users.
These safety rules demonstrate the importance of issues regarding confidentiality and protection of personal health information.

“Minister Barrette asserts that the online solution allowing the general public access to their medical records will be as safe as online banking solutions, but as we know, zero risk does not exist,” adds Sonia Éthier.

MANY QUESTIONS STILL PENDING

Beyond safety measures, numerous other questions have been raised: the notion of consent, operating costs, procedures to review and correct erroneous data, and more.

“Even though online access to health records offers many advantages, it can also be risky and inconvenient. Think, for example, of the anxiety generated from receiving medical information without adequate clinical support… The concerns brought to our attention will allow us to follow up closely on the evolution of this situation and better inform our members when the time comes.”

83.7% of respondents would like to have access to their health records from their phones or computers.

Two thirds are worried about the safety of their personal health information; 21.6% are very worried.

Nearly three quarters understand somewhat, or not at all, the potential risks and consequences of piracy.

80% want to be better informed about the risks related to having their medical records online.

To learn more about the QHR: dossierdesante.gouv.qc.ca.

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