Merger of school boards
A PURELY IDEOLOGICAL REFORM

The Barrette reform
DIAGNOSTIC ERROR, CATASTROPHIC TREATMENT

Early childcare educational services
QUÉBEC AIMS FOR PRIVATIZATION

“NO TO AUSTERTY!”

Louise Chabot
November 29, 2014 demonstration

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The right fit.
For several weeks, we have been facing the austerity policies of the Couillard government, which is ruthlessly gutting our public services. No one is spared! What it is currently putting in place bear little resemblance with its election promises and inaugural speech. The blueprint that the government is imposing on us is austerity. It is certainly not a blueprint for a society. We did not vote for this.

Having misrepresented the actual state of public finances in the name of reaching a zero deficit at all costs, the Couillard government has decided to slash $6 billion over the next two years. We cannot accept this lie passed off as political argument.

How can we trust a government which claims at every opportunity that cutting public service staff will have no impact on services provided to the public? That upcoming education reforms will not jeopardize educational success for the greatest number of students? That reforms to health and social services will not sabotage local services and care? That the reform of childcare will not encourage the privatization of daycare services? That the adjustment of childcare service fees will not impoverish parents? A government that bases its action on the decisions of profiteers in education, childcare and health and social services is not protecting the interests of its population.

What about the employer proposals that Martin Coiteux, the Chair of the Treasury Board, dared to submit to us just before Christmas? Proposals that are contemptuous of government employees. Martin Coiteux’s lack of respect is exemplified in a two-year wage freeze and a 1% annual increase over the following three years. Ultimately, he wants to double our wage setback in addition to undermining our working conditions for the sake of austerity, in the interests of neoliberal ideology! Money is available to finance our public services! The Couillard government refuses to collect it from private-sector companies and banks, by accommodating tax benefits and havens.

It is really alarming to see our leaders governing Québec as though it were a private corporation. Allowing the growth of poverty and inequality in a society is not even remotely cost-effective! To stimulate the economy, you must invest in the quality of life of your population. You don’t need to be an economist to understand that!

We have arrived at a pivotal moment in our history. Our union and social battles have never been as critical as they are today. We cannot allow the destruction of the Québec model that we have been building for 40 years. It is essential that we stand up, that we not allow the society that we have chosen to be pillaged and that we refuse impoverishment. Our battle to defend our working conditions is also a battle to defend quality public services. We won’t give up!

As we enter the New Year, what I wish for us is all the collective solidarity, determination and strength that we are capable of summoning to shape the Québec of tomorrow!
Merger of school boards

A PURELY IDEOLOGICAL REFORM

CATHERINE GAUTHIER AND CLAUDE GIRARD CSQ Communication Advisors

Ideological measures of austerity imposed on the education sector over the years have hurt. And if that wasn’t enough, the government is at it again. With no mandate from the population, it continues to dismantle the Québec model.

New cuts seriously impacting student services have been announced. Moreover, the government plans on tabling a bill early in 2015 to merge school boards and review their governance, this in light of the results of the last elections.

Minister Bolduc claims to be acting out of a concern for the economy, in the name of unnecessary budgetary austerity that is inspired by an ideology rather than a reality. When questioned about projected savings, he is unable to provide numbers.

Recent history shows that mergers have never been the gold mine some would have us believe. School board mergers in 1998 were supposed to yield the government a return of $100 million. Rather, they cost the state and school boards $70 million.1

On a pedagogical level, the minister’s plan is no better. He has no research to show how services to students would improve following school board mergers. Furthermore, he is unable to explain how it would lead to greater academic success.

The minister’s final plans remain unknown. However, we can agree that while the structures are being rocked, we are not solving any real problems with education. Unfortunately, this educational reform will have consequences on both personnel and students. We must show great solidarity in the face of this new government offensive.

The CSQ is keeping a close eye on the situation. Political representatives at the Centrale and its federations in the school network have already met with Minister Bolduc to address the issues. A review of the reform plan will be published in the next edition of the magazine. Until then, any new developments will be communicated to members online at austerite.lacsq.org.

SUMMARY:
• Pure ideology and no vision for the academic success of students.
• No anticipated savings. Worse: extra expenses!
• Action without consultation. Unprecedented!
• Rocking the structures with no proof of real improvement for our public network.
• Unnecessary source of insecurity for all personnel in the network.
• Decentralization that may increase bureaucracy and accountability.

Obsession with the deficit masks a desire to reduce the state

PIERRE-ANTOINE HARVEY AND ÉRIK BOUCHARD-BOULIANNE CSQ Economists

Everyone agrees: Québec’s economy and public finances are in a pitiful state and having a hard time recovering from the crisis. But opinions vary as to solutions to balance public finances: do we reduce expenses or increase revenues?

The government wants to maximize restrictions on public expenses - and to do so, it aims to cut $6.3 billion over two years.

EXPENSES ARE NOT THE PROBLEM

Past deficits did not result from overspending. Rather, further to the Plan to restore fiscal balance in 2009, the increase in program spending has already been reduced by half. In fact, from 2009 to 2013, the budget for public services increased 2.6% on average, compared with 5.1% before the crisis.

Several ministries have already cut expenses and manpower. By itself, the primary and secondary education network has cut $800 million since 2010. And these cuts are having a serious impact on services to the population, as was recently confirmed by Québec Ombudsman Raymonde Saint-Germain.

AN IDEOLOGICAL EXERCISE

To achieve a balanced budget in 2015, the Couillard government wants to limit increased spending on programs to 1.6% for the first three years of its mandate. Worse, once balance is achieved, it promises not to reinvest in public services, but rather to use surpluses to repay the debt and decrease income taxes.

In reality, the current program to reduce expenses is more of an ideological exercise than a simple balancing of the budget. The liberal government wants to reduce the role of the state.

A problem of revenues

A lack in revenues is the main reason for the Treasury Board’s recurring deficits. By refusing to acknowledge this fact, the Liberal Party is sending Québec down the spiral of austerity. Yet, in this depressed economic climate, the government would do better by stimulating recovery.

The Liberal Government also refuses to admit that decreases in income taxes over the past decades affect public finances by depriving government coffers of nearly $4.5 billion per year. By itself, abolishing the capital tax deprives the government of $1.5 billion every year.

SOLUTIONS CLOSE AT HAND

Like its Social Front partners, the CSQ has been proposing concrete solutions to eliminate the deficit for years. These include savings measures (e.g. end to sub-contracting, controlling drug costs, etc.) and new tax contributions by profitable businesses and the wealthiest individuals. Yet, the government adamantly refuses to consider these options.

The debt will explode!

The public debt must be taken seriously, without destroying the Québec model. It is possible to delay budget balance for a few years without negatively impacting the debt or objectives to reduce its weight.

The government anticipates a deficit of $2.35 billion in 2014-2015. Yet, this number is inflated by the inclusion of the $1.3 billion allocated to the Generations Fund for repaying the debt.

LET’S LOOK AT FACTS ...

The real budgetary balance represents a deficit of $1 billion, which adds only 0.2 percentage points to our debt burden. Without this deficit, our net debt would be 50.8% rather than 51.0% of the GDP.

Despite the impact of the last financial crisis, the debt situation in Québec has improved in the last 20 years. In 1997-1998, the gross debt represented 57.7% of the GDP. It decreased to 48.6% in 2008-2009 and went up again to 54.3% in 2013-2014. Also, in 1996-1997, interest payments on the debt accounted for 15.7% of the government’s consolidated revenues, whereas they are only 11.2% in 2014-2015. /
Together to defend public services!

MAXIME CLÉMENT SISP Communications Advisor

On October 30, public sector negotiations got underway while the Common Front tabled demands for intersectoral matters to the Treasury Board. These demands had been adopted following an extensive consultation with members of the Common Front, from May to October.

To highlight the event, nearly 2000 demonstrators gathered in front of the National Assembly. At the same time, several activities took place in workplaces to raise the local employers’ awareness of the Common Front demands.

A GLANCE AT OUR DEMands

• Salary increase: 4.5% per year, for a 3-year collective agreement, i.e.:
  • 2% to make up for the lag in total compensation of 8.3% defined by the Institut de la statistique du Québec;
  • an additional 2% to maintain pay equity with other Québec employees and ensure protection against cost of living increases;
  • a fixed amount equal to 0.5% of the average salary so that provincial employees may benefit from collective enrichment.

• Regional disparities: the Common Front will negotiate improvements with regards to regional disparities, notably an increase in isolation and remote area allowances.

• Working conditions and quality of work life: the Common Front will demand concrete measures to decrease instability of personnel, counter loss of professional autonomy, stop resorting to subcontractors and privatization, as well as promote family-work-education balance.

• Attraction and retention of personnel: according to the government, there will be 15,000 retirements per year over the coming years. The Common Front will look for ways to promote retention and recruitment of personnel with decent working conditions to ensure the quality and continuity of public services.

Let’s mobilize!

The political context is gloomy. Increasing news of cutbacks, draft legislations threatening to create havoc in our public services while putting more power in the hands of cabinet members... and the government is promising stiffer measures next spring!

Added to this is the widening wage gap between public sector and other employees, budget cuts that negatively impact the quality of services, increasing numbers of managers that interfere with professional autonomy, and the sneaky infiltration of the private sector.

This adversity makes union action even more necessary. Common Front negotiators will need your support. By accepting the invitation of your union representatives, you will help make these negotiations a success!

A grand tour of the regions

From November 4 to December 11, 2014, Common Front representatives swept across the regions of Québec to meet with members to discuss union demands and the political situation. /
School network federations

Demands to ensure quality education

CLAUDE GIRARD CSQ Communications Advisor
KARINE LAPIERRE FPPE-CSQ Communications Advisor
SYLVIE LEMIEUX FSE-CSQ Press Attaché

Over the past years, budget cuts, integrating students with special needs without adequate support, various legislative changes and policies, and results-based management have all eroded the climate of work in schools and centres, as well as negatively impacting students’ success. Growing expectations as to the role of schools have created a workload that is now too heavy for personnel to carry. It’s therefore high time to change the situation in the school network and have a long-term vision of education.

On the eve of public sector negotiations, CSQ News presents an overview of sectoral demands presented to the management negotiating committees by the federations of the school network on October 30.

EDUCATION IS THE PRIORITY

Once again, the Fédération des syndicats de l’enseignement (FSE-CSQ) and the Association provinciale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec (APEQ) will be jointly negotiating the issues related to the working conditions of their members.

Because teaching is increasingly demanding, teachers of the FSE-CSQ are requesting fewer numbers of students per group for some grades, taking into account the composition of the group, notably the weighted value of students with behavioural problems, the presence or integration of students with special needs, as well as the services available to them. The FSE-CSQ is also seeking additional teaching resources to support those working with students with special needs.

According to FSE-CSQ president Josée Scalabrini, these measures would allow teaching personnel to dedicate more time to each student and conduct prevention and screening, all while focusing on intervention with students that are the most at-risk.

“In addition, we want respect for our professional autonomy and improvements in several aspects of our work. It’s a matter of giving us the tools to perform the various teaching duties, while acknowledging our expertise and competencies. For example, we ask that we be able to reclaim the content of our pedagogical development days because they’re essential to our work, either to prepare materials or to confer with our colleagues,” she says.
Other issues at the heart of the union demands: increased job stability to better attract and retain individuals who want to begin a career in teaching, particularly in vocational training and general adult education, an area in which obtaining positions that could become permanent remains a priority. The FSE-CSQ will work to support distance education for both general adult education and vocational training, in which a framework for individualized teaching will be offered. The FSE-CSQ will also strongly appeal to establish a maximum number of students in adult education classes. Furthermore, to improve working conditions for teaching personnel and promote a better family-work balance, the FSE-CSQ will request that employers contribute to the health insurance plan and create a bank of days of leave for parental or family obligations.

DEMANDS AIMED AT ATTRACTING AND RETAINING PROFESSIONALS

The Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ) will make attracting and retaining personnel the main issue of its negotiation. Over the years, the working conditions of professional workers and the recognition of professional competencies have eroded.

Repeated budget cuts, the uncertain future of school boards, increased decentralization of power and budgets to schools and centres, frequent changes following ministerial or legislative decisions (e.g.: kindergarten at age four, various bills, management agreements) have all led to this deterioration.

“The equation is simple: professionals that have appealing working conditions will want to invest in the education network and stay. In the end, the students are the ones who will benefit. Our demands therefore aim to improve the conditions of work and practice of our members, as well as obtaining recognition for their expertise and professional independence. This will help compensate for difficulties in recruitment and pursue higher levels of professional service,” says Johanne Pomerleau, FPPE-CSQ president.

Attracting and retaining personnel is also at the heart of the Fédération’s demands. “Support workers have unique abilities: their experience in intervention, their knowledge of the field, and their desire to get involved and grow in their careers need to be taken into consideration. Therefore, it’s necessary to stop resorting to external personnel who don’t understand the school network and who are often more expensive. Better working conditions are necessary to attract and retain support personnel,” he says.
Higher education federations

Ready to negotiate!

GABRIEL DANIS
CSQ Advisor for Higher Education

On October 30, the three federations for higher education tabled their sectoral demands following a consultation tour with their members. CSQ News has the highlights.

IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS AND BETTER RECOGNITION FOR SUPPORT STAFF

During the two stages of consultations staggered over a full year, members of the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ) raised several questions concerning staff movement, including access to a full-time schedule, job promotions, and retention. The Fédération will therefore propose solutions that aim to facilitate increased work hours for precarious workers and improve access to regular positions.

Also, the Fédération wants to address various issues affecting the organization of work, notably as it relates to subcontracting. “Often, tasks are outsourced even though our own members, who are full-time or part-time workers, are both qualified and available to do the job,” says Annie Roy, negotiations spokesperson for the FPSES-CSQ.

Besides the wage increases demanded by the Common Front, the Fédération is requesting several measures to improve the financial situation of support staff. These include: increasing the contributions colleges make to the health insurance plan, deregulating team leader premiums, and that colleges pay for professional order membership fees they demand of their staff, as well as reimbursement of fees for permits or licenses required by certain job classifications.

Finally, in support of work-life balance for support staff, the FPSES-CSQ is also demanding the creation of a bank of days of leave for family and parental responsibilities separate from the bank of sick-leave days.

BETTER ATTRACT, INTEGRATE AND RETAIN PROFESSIONALS

Questions about job uncertainty and insecurity are important concerns for professionals. With new public management, a new management style has taken over CEGEPs, namely the hiring of professionals for specific projects.

“In most cases, specific projects are not specific!” says Mélissa Tweddell, negotiations spokesperson for the Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges (FPPC-CSQ). Rather than hire professionals to fill regular positions, CEGEPs restrict them to these projects, which can last for a period of four years (or more), thus extending uncertainty. The Fédération is therefore asking for a clearer definition of specific projects and that their duration not exceed two years.

THE CSQ, THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE COLLEGE NETWORK

The CSQ is the only union organization to represent the three categories of CEGEP personnel. This provides the CSQ’s three college federations with a global understanding of the issues and allows them to harmonize their demands in the most optimal way.

We can be sure that support, professional and teaching personnel will be mobilized and united when it comes to signing satisfactory collective agreements that reflect all of the work done in CEGEPs and colleges throughout Québec.
Furthermore, the high turnover of professionals expected between now and 2020 makes it crucial to implement measures to attract, integrate and retain new employees.

“Improving work-family-life balance requires creativity. We believe that a new vision of work must, among others, include increased independence and flexibility in the organization of work and in the achievement of mandates entrusted to our members,” she says.

In line with this, the FPPC-CSQ is also demanding the creation of a bank of days of leave for family and parental responsibilities separate from the bank of sick-leave days. And, to attract and retain quality personnel, the Fédération asks that all degrees be recognized equally.

A HISTORIC ALLIANCE FOR CEGEP TEACHERS

The 60 unions of CEGEP teachers affiliated with the CSQ and the CSN have formed an alliance for sectoral negotiations, creating a new negotiating entity: the Alliance des syndicats des professeures et des professeurs de cégep (ASPP), representing all 21,000 CEGEP teachers.

There is no doubt that the consolidation of the college network will represent an important issue for teaching personnel, notably in terms of funding smaller cohorts and the development of distance education.

“With the recent publication of the Demers report on college education, we are aware that these issues are partly political and that they cannot be resolved strictly within the negotiation process. Mobilization with our professional and support colleagues will need to continue beyond the negotiation period,” says Louis-Philippe Paulet, spokesperson for the Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep (FEC-CSQ).

When it comes to recognition for teaching personnel, professional autonomy is at the heart of the demands, notably acknowledgment of disciplinary expertise and the central role teachers play in program management, as well as recognition of experience and competencies.

Furthermore, the issue of increasingly complex tasks has been well defined during these past years through the work of a joint committee. Now it’s time to find and implement tangible solutions.

“The challenge of this negotiation will be to identify solutions that will have a real impact on the work of a large majority of teachers, without splitting resources. The matter of students with disabilities will be central to this discussion,” he says.

AN INTERPROFESSIONAL COMMITTEE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The increase in the numbers of disabled students (étudiantes et étudiants en situation de handicap - EESH) attending CEGEPs is having a significant effect on the work of members of the three college federations. Looking at this issue from an isolated point of view would be a mistake, given the impact it is having on teachers, professionals and support personnel. For this reason, the FEC-CSQ, together with the FPPC-CSQ and the FPSES-CSQ, will be asking for the creation of a national intercategory joint committee to monitor the situation and formulate concrete recommendations to improve the integration and success of disabled students (EESH).
Health and social services

A lighter burden is at the core of negotiations

CLAUDE GIRARD  CSQ Communications Advisor

On November 19, 2014, the Fédération de la Santé du Québec (FSQ-CSQ) tabled its demands with the Comité patronal de négociation du secteur de la santé et des services sociaux. Notably, it is requesting concrete measures to improve team stability.

“It’s key to lightening a workload that has become much too heavy and to reducing the high rate of professional burnout,” says union leader Claire Montour.

The FSQ-CSQ will also demand implementation of a personnel-patient ratio in every sector, determined by the individual realities and needs of each sector. Claire Montour is aware that such a ratio would be a first, but she invites management to be open to finding solutions to problems that have gone on much too long.

“There’s a limit to the number of patients we can entrust to the care of personnel. It’s high time we re-examine the situation considering the amount of work it represents and the need to provide quality health care.”

Furthermore, the FSQ-CSQ will also request that employers support personnel who are required to take additional training made mandatory by their professional bodies, as well as plan budgets accordingly.

“As it stands, personnel don’t have access to training during work hours. And as for budgets planned for this, management is unfortunately allocating them to other areas,” says Claire Montour.

Finally, the Fédération will demand concrete measures to attract and retain personnel in the regions.

Demands that make good sense

CLAUDE GIRARD  CSQ Communications Advisor

On October 30, 2014, the demands of the Fédération des syndicats de la santé et des services sociaux (F4S-CSQ) were presented to the Comité patronal de négociation du secteur de la santé et des services sociaux (CPNSSS). With personnel running out of breath, the demands are primarily focused on working conditions that promote attracting and retaining personnel, as well as creating a more humane workplace.

“Given the growing revenue gap with the private sector, we need to offer more interesting working conditions if we want to attract and retain qualified personnel to the public sector,” explains Claude de Montigny, F4S-CSQ president.

Whether with paid leaves for family or parental obligations, a better work-family-studies balance, or by humanizing the treatment of people with disabilities, the members of the F4S-CSQ hope to create a more humane and less stressful climate.

“Our members are mobilized. They’re motivated to make the health and social services sector more attractive to personnel and offer better services to the population. We’re hoping for openness and common sense on the part of the CPNSSS, and that negotiators are as committed to seeking improved services for the population as we are!” he says. /
THE COUILLARD GOVERNMENT’S CONTEMPT

CHRISTINE MARCEAU CSQ Press Attaché

Just before Christmas, the Chair of the Conseil du trésor Martin Coiteux went so far as to propose absolutely nothing for the renewal of the public-sector collective agreements. Indeed, the Liberal government proposals provide for a two-year salary freeze and a 1% annual increase for the subsequent three years. Contemptuous offers for 400,000 public service employees.

CSQ president Louise Chabot believes that this shows nothing less than “a blatant lack of respect for the work of women and men employed in the education and health and social services sectors as well as the public service. Although the Treasury Board does not deny the existence of a salary gap, it does not wish to reduce it. On the contrary, in five years, the salary freeze it wants to impose on us would double the already huge gap between public service employees and other Québec wage earners.”

Moreover, the government is ignoring all of our proposals to improve working conditions and the management of public services. The reduction of precarity and sub-contracting, just like improvements to our professional autonomy and work-family-education balance measures, have all fallen on deaf ears. The government has turned a blind eye, just as it has for the many public service funding proposals we submitted. Thus, the Couillard government is implementing these measures not through necessity, but in fact, for ideological reasons. Unfortunately, women, representing 75% of public service employees, are the targets of achieving zero deficit.

Since the Plan to return to balanced budgets of 2009, our salaries have progressed at a slower pace than those of other employees in Québec. This has not only contributed to increasing our salary gap, but it has also cost us, on average, nearly $10,500 per person, over the period. For the government, this represents savings of over $4 billion since 2009. We’ve already given our share!

The government is attempting to present public service workers with a false dilemma: a wage freeze or a heavier workload. In a context of a labour shortage, no one is paid to be idle! If we want quality public services, then decent working conditions are required to attract and retain a quality workforce. In addition to the salary freeze, the government is going so far as to attempt to delay retirement age based on evolving life expectancy, reduce the average salary for the calculation of pensions and eliminate indexation of pension benefits.

Public service workers will not allow themselves to be impoverished to finance achievement of a zero deficit in the interests of neoliberal ideology. Our response to the salary freeze will be a hot winter.

WHAT ABOUT THE PENSION PLAN?
The government wants to modify the pension plan (RREGOP): raise retirement age without reduction, increase actuarial reduction in the event of early retirement and calculate pension benefits based on the best 8 years. However, this is merely an initial bargaining position and NOT A FINAL DECISION. And, even if such modifications are adopted, there will be no impact on people who retire by December 2016. Furthermore, over the coming months, it would be pointless to opt for phased retirement to be completed in or after 2017, because the new criteria will take effect. For more information, visit nego2015.org.

Just in!

Don’t miss the latest episode of News Flash, a bulletin featuring a humorous appraisal of the “achievements” of Philippe Couillard’s Liberal government. Watch and share the video at: nego2015.org/english.
FIGHTING THE AUSTERITY IDEOLOGY WITH LAUGHTER

KARINE LAPIERRE FPPE-CSQ Communications Advisor

What if guidance counsellors relied on spinning a bottle to predict a student’s future career? And what if psychological services were simply giving students in crisis a pat on the back, telling them that, “you win some, you lose some!”?

This type of absurdity is the basic premise of the recent promotional campaign of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ), produced for the upcoming period of negotiations.

Launched on November 17, 2014, for the Semaine des professionnelles et professionnels de l’éducation, under the theme “Give us the means” (On se donne les moyens), the three ads will run in Facebook’s news feed throughout the year.

The ads portray a parodic fictional manager, who represents the austerity ideology. His job is to cut professional services. For each sector, we watch as he destroys an office nameplate, throws it away or gets rid of it, and attempts to act as a replacement for the professional, in a clumsy and ridiculous manner.

“The consequences of austerity are hitting professional educational services hard. With this campaign, we hope to demonstrate the absurd situations created by budget cuts to services, as well as assert that reinvesting in these services is the only option for the future,” explains Johanne Pomerleau, FPPE-CSQ president.

According to campaign director Isabelle Phaneuf-Cyr, “The somewhat stinging tone of the campaign is perfectly suited to its audience, that is, young adult internet users. Using cognitive dissonance, we were inspired by the clichés regarding professional occupations and deconstructed them.”

The campaign addresses student services, the working conditions of professionals in education, and the economic benefits of investing in education.

“With this campaign, we want to show the population that investing in education is a societal choice we owe ourselves to guarantee the future. We’ve heard ad nauseam that Québec no longer has the means to pay for adequate public services. But the real question is: can we afford NOT to support students, workers, taxpayers, and the citizens of tomorrow? We need to stop simply looking at the present and make a choice to find the necessary financial resources to help students succeed, otherwise we’re leaving a whole generation high and dry,” concludes Joanne Pomerleau.

To watch the ads, visit: onsedonnelesmoyens.com.

And don’t hesitate to share them by email or social media! /
LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

Helping young people discover science and technology

FRANÇOIS BEAUREGARD Collaboration

Last year, the Cycle 1 students Linda Baker assisted placed first in the finals of the Défi génie inventif contest. For Linda Baker, this is a terrific source of satisfaction. Through her daily work and professional commitment, the laboratory technician takes great pride in helping young people develop a culture of science and technology at Le Carrefour school in Gatineau.

When asked what she is most passionate about in her work, with no hesitation and a sparkle in her eye, she answers that it’s the time she spends with students.

“Assisting young people in their discoveries and taking part in developing their scientific and technological culture is really amazing! We witness their delight in the results of their experiments and observe their evolution from the beginning of the year to the end. Knowing that we contribute to their learning by sharing our knowledge, guidance and encouragement, is truly rewarding,” says the lab technician in the field of biotechnology.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES IN THE LAB

According to Linda Baker, the duties of a laboratory technician require numerous skills: “We need to be versatile and know how to work equally with wood and technology, as well as chemical products in a laboratory. We also need to be highly organized because the equipment has to be ready and in good condition for lab experiments to avoid wasted time for students and teachers. Working closely with the teachers while planning educational activities is therefore absolutely essential. Setting up the equipment is particularly demanding because many different and often inexperienced individuals use the instruments. We often have to test the equipment before the students arrive to make sure everything is in good working order and well calibrated.”

STUDENT SAFETY COMES FIRST

In this field, safety is of great importance: “Safety is critical. Manipulating reactive chemical products or equipment with moving parts requires great care. I have to make sure the students respect safety rules at all times when working with the equipment and follow proper instructions to prevent accidents,” she says.

To be skilled in this career, it’s vital to be meticulous during preparations and extremely attentive to the flow of activities in the lab. It’s necessary to be ready to act in case of incident. The lab is no place for the distracted and nonchalant!

Safety is a constant preoccupation for Linda Baker. In her work, she is also responsible for meeting existing standards, and for the identification, storage and disposal of dangerous substances. Implementing a safe environment is one of the principal duties of lab technicians, who assist students in discovering the world of science and technology. Qualified and passionate individuals like Linda Baker support the school in their mission to educate students in the field of science and technology.
In 2014, thanks to its partnership with The Personal, the insurance provider of the CSQ, Les protections RésAut CSQ will pay out over $2,000,000 in dividends.

The offer applies to insurance policy renewals with an effective date between January 1 and December 31, 2014, and to new policies purchased prior to December 31, 2014. Conditions may apply. The Personal refers to The Personal General Insurance Inc.

Eastern Shores School Board

SUPPORT PERSONNEL BREAK FROM ISOLATION

CLAUDE GIRARD CSQ Communications Advisor

Last October, the 140 support workers of the Eastern Shores School Board decided to join the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (FPSS-CSQ). Since 1998, they had been represented by an independent union.

What explains this turnaround? “Most of the members realized that being isolated made them vulnerable in the face of a government advocating austerity. They were also fed up with the lack of transparency of their own executives,” said Lise Babin, president of the Eastern Shores Union Support Staff (ESUSS-CSQ).

The last straw: a 78% increase in group insurance premiums. For many, including Lise Babin, it was too much! The former vice president of the Syndicat de l’enseignement de la région du fer (until the English school boards merged in 1998) knew where to turn.

“With the support of the FPSS and the CSQ, we launched a campaign to convince members to join a union that is stronger, more democratic and transparent... a union that listens to and supports its members,” she says.

“We visited the 22 English educational establishments in Gaspésie, Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Côte-Nord to meet with members. It was really encouraging to see people get together to share a common goal,” adds Joe Dow, vice president of the ESUSS-CSQ.

In the short term, the union’s main priorities will be public sector negotiations and group insurance.

“As a union militant, I’ve always felt at home with the CSQ. Today, by joining the FPSS, it feels like our union has finally come home,” Linda Babin concludes.

“In 2014, thanks to its partnership with The Personal, the insurance provider of the CSQ, Les protections RésAut CSQ will pay out over $2,000,000 in dividends.

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INTERPRETERS: WHEN WORDS HURT

PIERRE LEFEBVRE  CSQ Occupational Health and Safety Advisor

We often see them on television, standing next to a dignitary making a speech. Visual language interpreters for the deaf or hard of hearing also play a key role in educational institutions. Their principal mandate is to simultaneously interpret classes and student life activities, and facilitate interactions to promote the success and integration of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This might appear quite easy when one has mastered interpreting techniques, but the reality is a whole other story.

“Every semester, our schedules, places of work, and most of all, the courses we need to interpret, change. Yet, we are not specialists in the content of classes, but rather in its transmission. It might be good for our own personal knowledge, but it represents a constant challenge on the cognitive front!” laughingly explains Valérie Fontaine, president of the Syndicat des interprètes professionnels du Cégep du Vieux-Montréal, affiliated with the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ).

This also means that interpreters must continually adapt to new rhythms of speech, accents, vocabulary, etc. Since Québec sign language is relatively new, they are constantly looking for mutually agreed upon signs with students to designate current realities. This is particularly true for college-level vocational education, and graduate and post-graduate university studies.

A PHYSICALLY DEMANDING CAREER

Interpretation requires awkward movements: arms up, elbows bent, repetitive movements of the wrists and hands, etc., all of which add to the muscular tension resulting from psychosocial constraints. “Also, when moving from one location to another, our posture at the wheel of a car is the same as in class,” says Valérie Fontaine.

Many interpreters experience pain in their wrists, arms, shoulders or necks. This pain can become incapacitating to the point of requiring a short or long-term absence from work. Others develop such problems that they can no longer practice their profession.

INJURIES THAT GO UNRECOGNIZED

The CSST rarely accepts claims made by interpreters. It refuses to recognize the relationship between diagnoses of various musculoskeletal problems and the physical demands of the job. “Even in front of the Commission des lésions professionnelles, we only win half the time, on average,” specifies François Meunier, FPSES-CSQ lawyer and union advisor. Individual fitness levels, working within normal limits, rest time between movements, these are just some of the many reasons given by the tribunal to reject claims.

CLEAR DEMANDS

To increase recognition of constraints suffered by its interpreter members, the FPSES-CSQ hopes that researchers in the field of ergonomics will eventually analyze the work of interpreters. For prevention purposes, the Federation is also formulating demands for the current round of negotiations.

“This type of work needs to be recognized for its true value and all stakeholders need to be made aware of the daily realities of interpreters,” concludes Anne Dionne, FPSES-CSQ president.
CAROL LAVACK ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE FPPC-CSQ

Her first name, Carol, may be spelled without an e, but make no mistake, she is the woman elected president of the most important group of Cégep professionals in Quebec, the Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges (FPPC-CSQ). And this is not the only distinctive feature in her name of Scottish descent as her last name is spelled with two capital letters. Meet a committed professional.

“When I was young, my father called me his little tomboy. My entire life, my name has created misunderstandings because it was assumed that I was a man (Editor’s note: in French, Carol written without an “e” is typically considered a man’s name). I thought it was funny. Ironically, today I’m the first woman to fill a position traditionally held by a man since the Fédération was founded in 1993,” she says laughingly.

Carol, who began her career as a teacher and guidance counselor, succeeds Bernard Bérubé, who was president at the FPPC-CSQ for nine years.

DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Carol LaVack has a few diplomas under her belt and her career path is lined with diverse experiences she plans on putting to good use to defend the working conditions of those she represents. Having defended the members of her union in front of her CEGEP’s labour relations board for several years, she is well aware of the many challenges on the horizon.

“For the moment, austerity measures imposed by the Couillard government affect mainly precarious workers, such as project managers whose contracts are not renewed. Their projects end up on the desks of permanent workers. This situation can lead to professional burnout and risks making hiring more difficult in CEGEPs that already have trouble filling certain jobs,” she explains.

A COLLEGIALITY TO MAINTAIN AND AUTONOMY TO PRESERVE

Because of funding, competition between colleges impedes the cooperation necessary to the proper functioning of the network. In time, the quality of training and the network itself risk suffering from the potential isolation created by the lack of collegiality between teaching institutions.

“In some CEGEPs, increasingly hierarchical management styles compromise cooperation, which has always ensured the growth of the network. Within this context, it’s imperative that we preserve the autonomy of professionals so that they may continue to play a role in the pedagogical and educational organization of their colleges. Their expertise has greatly contributed to the success of CEGEPs since their creation. Allow me the following analogy: professionals are the central nervous system of CEGEPs. They are essential to the life of colleges,” she concludes.
The Barrette reform

DIAGNOSTIC ERROR, CATASTROPHIC TREATMENT

LISE GOULET CSQ Health and Social Services Advisor

The Barrette reform1 jeopardizes the public health and social services system. Implemented quickly – without consultation – the reform disregards the real stakes: services provided, quality of care and working conditions of personnel. Worse, it grants the minister undue powers and represents an unprecedented step backwards for democracy. Despite loud opposition and no mandate from the population, our stubborn minister pushes on.

REAL ISSUES ARE SIDELINED

“Everyone knows: access to services and care remains the top priority for the health care system. But, the proposed reform offers no solution to the problem of access to family physicians or home care,” says Louise Chabot, CSQ president.

The government is promising to decrease bureaucracy to reinvest in services, however no firm commitment has been made. “The minister is asking that we trust him. He is attempting to reassure us, saying it’s an interim bill. We will certainly not write him a blank check!” she says.

AN IDEOLOGICAL, EXPENSIVE AND IRRESPONSIBLE REFORM

In addition to offering only a partial view of the changes to come, the bill is not based on any rigorous assessment of past experiences or on evidence-based analyses of available data.

As for the promised recurrent savings of $220 million, which is not founded on any known financial scenario, it is highly unlikely. Much research has shown that large-scale administrative mergers, such as those proposed, do not generate any savings – they end up costing more.2

In fact, the minister has already admitted that his reform will generate extra costs of $150 million in 2015-2016. So why is the government pursuing this?

“This exercise is part of the government’s austerity plan, whose ultimate and ideological goal is to achieve a balanced budget and shamelessly reduce the role of the state,” says Louise Chabot.

A foolish and undemocratic plan

In concrete terms, every health region will be served by a regional centre3 created by merging the health and social services agencies and all of the public institutions. The new integrated health and social services centres (CISSS) will offer care and services to the population within their respective territories, including the public health aspect.

For example, a single CISSS will serve the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec, which currently count:

• 503,355 people in an area of 47,000 square kilometres;
• More than 1400 centres and organizations providing health and social services, 12 of which, including 8 CSSSs, cover 132 points of service.

The result? Current centres will become points of service. Local workers and care personnel will no longer be able to make decisions adapted to the realities of their regions.

Furthermore, of the 200 or so existing boards of directors, on which sit more than 2000 community players, only 28 will remain to manage the new centres. All of their members, mostly independent, will be appointed directly by the minister, exposing his will to impose his own vision and ideology, as well as his desire to control the management of regional centres.

Without the significant involvement of local resources and communities, the CISSSs will not have the ability to accurately identify needs and guarantee access to services for the entire population within their immense territories.

1 Bill 10: Bill changing the organization and management of the health and social services network, notably through the abolition of regional agencies.
3 The Montréal area will count five regional centres and four supraregional centres (university hospitals).
Workers’ rights get trampled on

With the implementation of Bill 30 (An Act respecting bargaining units in the social affairs sector), union certification units will be merged during the days following the conclusion of the public sector negotiations.

“Everything leads to believe that the minister will significantly reduce the number of union leaves, even in cases of negotiable matters. This will impact the ability of unions to represent members and monitor employers. Think only of job postings and control of allocations. Plus, the loss of room for dialogue between management and personnel, combined with the increased duties of the union, will undermine the work of the unions to improve the working and practice conditions of their members,” explains Claire Montour, president of the Fédération de la Santé du Québec (FSQ-CSQ).

Furthermore, local provisions will be renegotiated within two years of the merger of certifications. Seniority lists of all institutions within a CISSS will be merged at the end of local negotiations. This will impact team spirit, stability of personnel and knowledge of the area.

“One of the objectives is to obtain greater availability and flexibility of personnel. An employer will be able to demand, for example, that workers on a seniority list be available in more than one point of service. But nothing is planned to ensure team stability, nor to attract and retain personnel,” she adds.

A MINISTER WITH EXCESSIVE POWER

Many responsibilities and much discretionary power will be centralized in the hands of Minister Barrette. Notably, he will be able to:

- intervene in the micromanagement of institutions;
- merge other centres to ensure, according to his own assessment, a better flow of services;
- change any established service corridors he considers inadequate to ensure continuity or access to services;
- adopt any regulation deemed necessary or useful without requiring publication or a start date.

And that’s not all: he will also have the power to intervene with centres for the conclusion of service agreements. Yet, nowhere is it mentioned that these agreements have to be made with public institutions, thereby providing greater access for the private sector.

Another important point: the minister will be able to create and implement regional plans for manpower planning and human resources development. He will also be able to prescribe, by regulation, any action to better organize and manage a centre’s resources, notably in terms of implementing programs and providing services to users.

“If manpower planning is centralized in Québec, we will be unable to meet the specific needs of the regions. For example, the DEP-DEC formula for Nursing diplomas would never have seen the light of day in Gaspésie without an understanding of the issues in the region and the willingness of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux, the CSSSSs and the union, to solve attraction and retention problems,” says Micheline Barriault, president of the Syndicat des infirmières, infirmières auxiliaires et inhalothérapeutes de l’Est du Québec (SIHIEQ). “We need to keep the ability to act at the local level.”

AN UNHEALTHY CLIMATE OF INSECURITY

“Changes to the structure and organization of work in past years are in part the reason for increased hours in salary insurance and for the fact that more than one third of the personnel on disability are suffering from a mental health problem. Yet, the enormous magnitude of the reform and the tremendous insecurity it will create will not improve things. To the contrary!” says Claire Montour.

And what about the fact that decision making for the CISSSs, now far away from the regions, will eliminate or render ineffective any room for dialogue between management and workers.

“Since the merger of centres in the Côte-Nord, we have no direct management on site to intervene quickly to resolve problems. Worse, because of the distance, several managers are unaware of, or simply don’t understand the specific issues in our communities and work environments. Plus, they often have to travel by plane. Where are the cost and efficiency savings in that?” asks Nathalie Savard, president of the Syndicat des intervenantes et intervenants de la santé du Nord-Est québécois (SIISNEQ).
SOCIAL AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS AT RISK

Furthermore, grouping several dozen centres with very different missions will make it impossible to maintain an adequate level of preventive and psychosocial services.

“Ensuring equity in the allocation of resources between underfunded social services and highly specialized services that have already received the lion’s share will be a real headache for administrators who have neither the expertise nor the leeway that is necessary to arbitrate these decisions,” says Claude de Montigny, president of the Fédération des syndicats de la santé et des services sociaux (F4S-CSQ).

Combined with catastrophic budget cuts, the mergers threaten the future of services for the most vulnerable clientele. Jacques Normand, president of the Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du Centre Dollard-Cormier, sounds the alarm and says, “The mission of our addiction rehabilitation centre will slowly disappear within a megacentre dominated by the medical model. The competencies acquired in special needs’ areas will be lost. It’s unacceptable!”

PUBLIC HEALTH IS UNDERVALUED

“Not everything can be done from Québec City. Public health must maintain real means to evaluate and monitor the health of its local populations, including marginalized groups, and have a true capacity to act in cases of emergency in the population,” says Claude de Montigny.

“Public health is about more than setting national guidelines to fight against the West Nile virus or bed bugs. It also acts locally on factors that directly impact health, such as poverty and the environment. Activities around occupational health and safety, environmental health and infectious diseases, must all be maintained,” says Daria Pereg, president of the Syndicat du personnel professionnel et technique de l’Agence de la Capitale-Nationale.

International public health officials agree: every dollar invested in prevention saves ten dollars in health care. It’s a profitable, long-term investment.

“We refuse to question Québec’s model of health and social services under the pretext that we can no longer afford it. Big investments by the state in public services and social programs, combined with efficient cost management, is THE model to follow. All that’s missing is the political will and courage to do so,” says Louise Chabot.

To learn more about this issue, visit cmalade.org.
EARLY CHILDCARE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Québec reneges on its promises and aims for privatization

VÉRONIQUE BROUILLETTE  CSQ Union Advisor
KATHY GIBSON  FIPEQ-CSQ Communications Advisor

Since it took power in the spring of 2014, the liberal government seems to be gearing up to dismantle regulated public educational childcare services. Several actions, which could be qualified as underhanded attacks, preceded Bills 27 and 28, and are destabilizing an entire network... A network that has contributed tremendously to the condition of women, as well as being highly beneficial for children and the economy. CSQ News retraces the events.

Last January, when home childcare providers (HCPs) began what was to be a long process of negotiations, Family Minister Francine Charbonneau demonstrated her profound lack of understanding of the work they perform every day. In addition to refusing to acknowledge the 50 hours per week they dedicate to the children in their care (HCPs are paid for 35 hours), the minister lit a fire by refusing to recognize their competencies as educators, qualifying them as mere housewives.

Then in the fall, the Couillard government attempted to prepare the population for it reneging on its electoral promise not to increase fees. Referring to the Commission permanente de révision des programmes, he asserted that early childcare services were too costly to the state and he asked early childcare centres and coordinating offices to refund their surpluses, i.e. $45.5 million.

In November, the axe fell: the Ministry of Families tabled Bills 27 and 28, raising anger from parents and early childcare providers.

Recall that with Bill 28, the government wanted to implement variable fees according to parental income, from $8 to $20 per day per child, contrary to the current universal fee of $7.30. This type of variable fee would put an end to the principal of universality of early childcare services, which was at the core of Québec's family policy in 1997.

Yet, during the election campaign, the liberals were strongly committed to not increasing fees to “prevent a fee shock for families”. They even said they would limit any increase to the rate of inflation, which they quickly did by increasing the rate from $7 to $7.30. This bill will benefit private daycares because parents will receive a tax credit. And for some families, choosing a private centre over a public one will be a better financial option.

As for Bill 27, it aims to limit the number of “phantom spots” in childcare centres... The government plans on requiring that all providers, both early childcare centres and HCPs, respect a service agreement prescribed by the Ministry. Parents or educators providing false or misleading information would be sanctioned. This announcement sustained the discontent already felt within the network and the population, because it does not consider the realities of newborns integrating a new environment and parents who work atypical hours, among other issues.

In short, the Couillard government seems to be doing every thing to promote private daycares to the detriment of the network of public educational childcare centres, which are a great source of pride in Québec. According to his actions, the state should get out of this sector. Clearly, the government does not understand the importance of the public network to our society. It's simply repeating its ideological mantra of austerity at all costs, at the expense of children, women and families.

HCP negotiations

THE GOVERNMENT RETREATS INTO SILENCE

At the time of writing in mid-December, negotiations for the second collective agreement for HCPs are at a standstill. To arrive at an agreement, the FIPEQ-CSQ has revised its demands, keeping recognition for the real work of its members at their core. As for the Couillard government, it’s taking its time... /
Anne-Marie Bellerose

A PASSIONATE, COMMITTED AND MILITANT EDUCATOR

FÉLIX CAUCHY-CHAREST CSQ Web Community Manager

When discussing her profession, her face lights up. Anne-Marie Bellerose has always known she would be an early childhood educator. Working with children is her passion. CSQ News met with the delegate from the Syndicat des intervenantes en petite enfance de Montréal (SIPEM) to learn more about the realities of educators working in Québec’s early childcare centres (centres de la petite enfance - CPE).

CSQ NEWS: WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR AN EDUCATOR?
Anne-Marie Bellerose: No two days are the same! We need to know how to adjust. A group of 10 kids is like a micro-society in which the little ones learn to interact with each other. There are conflicts, crises and tears. There is also lots of laughter, amazement, discovery and learning. The kids are so innocent and honest… It’s very rewarding.

WHAT LED YOU TO UNIONIZE?
The employer wanted to change our working conditions. We wanted to keep our benefits and have some input into our schedule and working conditions. So we mobilized. We felt that we were in the best position to determine what works and what doesn’t in our daily activities.

HOW DID YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR EMPLOYER CHANGE?
At first, we felt a bit of a chill. It’s normal because this meant an important change for management. At our end, we had to adapt to this new role. Today, we work in partnership with our employer. We evaluate our needs and determine priorities as they relate to our working conditions and the realities of working with young children.

WHY CHOOSE THE CSQ?
We liked the combative and respectful approach of the CSQ. We liked this way to unionize and defend our rights: gentle, yet firm. We also very much appreciated the way they listened.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO EDUCATORS WHO ARE UNSURE ABOUT UNIONIZING?
Knowing that you can count on the same working conditions every day brings a certain peace of mind – as does knowing that they won’t change unless an agreement is made between the union and the employer. Plus, you can count on job security and there will always be someone there to support, advise and defend you, if needed. The union’s protection and the balance of power it creates with the employer are so important.

WHAT CHALLENGES WILL THIS SECTOR FACE IN THE COMING YEARS?
Children with special needs represent an important challenge. To provide quality service, we need to obtain the necessary funding and support from the Ministry. The other challenge remains family-work balance. We are mothers who work with children. That’s quite a balancing act!

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY TO PHILIPPE COUILLARD ABOUT THE EXPLOSION OF SPOTS IN PRIVATE DAYCARES?
Early childcare centres (CPEs) were created to offer quality service and ensure the global development of all children, rich and poor. Research has shown that children in early childcare centres are better equipped to succeed when they start school. We have to stop thinking about “how much it costs”, without considering the positive effects they have on our society!

WHAT UNION BATTLE IS COMING NEXT?
We need to increase recognition of our profession and the importance of this great public network. Through our work, we contribute to the well-being and development of children, while providing support to parents. In the end, our entire society benefits.

WHAT CAN OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CSQ DO TO HELP SUPPORT YOU?
Help us gain recognition for our profession. We don’t want to hear the word babysitter anymore! We are professionals! We need help to be recognized as such by the population. We need to encourage early childcare personnel by telling them, “We recognize your work. You are important.” This solidarity makes all the difference! /
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