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In recent months, Québec has witnessed such a significant union mobilization that it will no doubt become a historic one. You demonstrated that Québec public services are important to you. You also showed the extent to which you are ready to mobilize and fight for the common good. Our fight has been so inspiring that it has won over parents, patients, and the population as a whole. I take my hat off to you!

During our jam-packed assemblies, you voted for strong mandates in support of our means of action. During our four strike days, I saw you proud to defend a just cause: decent working conditions and accessible, quality public services. In the street, honking and public support did not wane, on the contrary.

Despite the Couillard government’s stubborn hold on austerity, in December, we succeeded in undermining it and breaking its rigid financial framework. We blocked its numerous demands for extreme concessions, maintained benefits obtained in previous negotiations, and made some gains.

The day after the agreement in principle was concluded by the common front, the CSQ’s Conseil général des négociations voted in favour of its recommendation to members. In January, you will be invited to read it and vote on it during your union assemblies.

IT’S NOT OVER YET!

In 2016, if the Couillard government continues down the road to austerity and privatization, it will encounter the CSQ on its way. We will not allow it to cut our public services - services that have developed over 50 years and helped build our society.

In health, we will mobilize to make sure workers are able to continue offering quality services, despite mergers. In early childcare, we will defend public services that contribute to the future of young children day after day, while fighting against privatization. In education, we will, once again, demand a huge reinvestment so that our students can learn in the best possible conditions.

In fact, we are impatiently waiting for consultations on the school governance bill. It will be an opportunity for the CSQ to have its voice heard on this important issue. Furthermore, in the spring, our Centrale will hold a important event to reflect and take a stand regarding equal opportunity in education.

An end to austerity and greater equality: this is my new year’s wish for you. Together, strong and united, we will continue to work towards our common goal: a +JUST and democratic society.

Solidarity!

Louise Chabot
President
The first union assemblies of the year will be very important for all the components of the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (SISP), which includes the CSQ. The five-year agreement in principle reached between the Common Front and the government concerning salary and pension-related issues among others will be presented in detail and then submitted to a vote. Below is a brief overview.

Martin Coiteux, Chair of the Conseil du trésor, sparked a tremendous outpouring of anger and indignation in December 2014 when he presented public-sector workers with his initial offers. He proposed a salary freeze for the first two years, with an annual 1% increase for the following three years (0-0-1-1-1). In fall 2015, he added insult to injury by presenting a second, equally unacceptable proposal (0-1-1-1-0). In the end, the negotiations team forced him to think outside his financial framework and it wrested gains with regard to protecting members’ purchasing power.

### The government’s initial offer vs. Agreement in principle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The government’s initial offer</th>
<th>Agreement in principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1% of the average public-sector salary (about $500)</td>
<td>3% over 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>9.15% over 5 years (on average, including lump sums)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2.4% (average increase linked to integration into the salary structure on April 2, 2019)</td>
<td>0.5% of the average public-sector salary (about $250)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Details of the salary proposals

- **2015**: 1% of the average public-sector salary (about $500)
- **2016**: 1.5%
- **2017**: 1.75%
- **2018**: 2%
- **2019**: 2.4% (average increase linked to integration into the salary structure on April 2, 2019)
  - 0.5% of the average public-sector salary (about $250)

### PENSION PLAN: AN IMPORTANT ISSUE

For the Conseil du trésor, retirement age was another imperative issue. No agreement entailing the status quo could be reached and the Conseil was determined to take the necessary measures if we attempted to obstruct it. However, the negotiations team succeeded in forcing it to back down in a significant way from its demands to change the retirement age to 62 and to increase the actuarial penalty to 7.2%.

While the agreement in principle stipulates that retirement age will change to 61 years as of July 1, 2019, the effects of this change will be mitigated by the implementation of a new retirement eligibility criteria without penalty: factor 90. This will enable all persons who began contributing at age 30 or younger (about 70% to 75% of RREGOP contributors) to retire at age 60 without penalty.

In addition, for those who would have accumulated 30 years of service if they had worked to age 60, but who decided to retire before then, the number of years penalized will be applied on the basis of 60 years and not 61 years.
As for the actuarial penalty, it will be increased from 4% to 6% in 2020. It should be recalled that it was 6% prior to 1996. Since that time, people who have opted for early retirement have been, in a sense, financed by other workers, as demonstrated by the numbers provided by CARRA. An actuarial penalty of 6% improves the balance between employees taking early retirement and other contributors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial management demands</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On January 1, 2017: retirement age adjusted to 62 years of age without penalty</td>
<td>On July 1, 2019: - retirement age adjusted to 61 years of age without penalty - implementation of a new retirement criterion without penalty: factor 90 (minimum 60 years of age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On January 1, 2017: actuarial reduction increased from 4% to 7.2% per year</td>
<td>On July 1, 2020: actuarial reduction increased from 4% to 6% per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculation of pension income based on the best 8 years instead of the best 5 years</td>
<td>SETBACK REVERSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic increase of retirement age based on life expectancy</td>
<td>SETBACK REVERSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of conditional indexing of pension benefits</td>
<td>SETBACK REVERSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligation to be at least 55 years of age before starting gradual retirement</td>
<td>SETBACK REVERSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in the cost of buying back and the cost of compulsory contributions for most leaves without pay, including early retirement (from 100% to 200%)</td>
<td>SETBACK REVERSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Possibility of contributing for up to 40 years of service instead of 38 (union demand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Transitional measures for persons having started progressive retirement (union demand)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NEWS ABOUT THE SALARY STRUCTURE**

Another important element is the new salary structure to take effect on April 2, 2019. The main objective we targeted throughout negotiation of this new salary structure was to eliminate a number of inconsistencies concerning job evaluation and to ensure that all job classes are remunerated at their true value. In other words, that a ranking = a salary scale or that a ranking = a single rate.

**PAY EQUITY AND RELATIVITY**

Note also that an important agreement was reached for college network student employees. As such, the pay equity dispute, tabled in 2007, has been resolved.

As far as pay relativity is concerned, the evaluation of 31 mixed categories has been completed for the vast majority, including college teachers, who will attain ranking 23. However, the parties will continue talks concerning five categories. In the interim, until the work is concluded, these employment categories will be remunerated according to management’s ranking.

**PARENTAL RIGHTS**

To date, all employees on maternity leave have been entitled to 93% of their remuneration (including Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) benefits and the employer’s complementary indemnities). This percentage was established to reflect the exemptions from contributions that these employees enjoy during this period (pension plans, QPIP and employment insurance).

However, during negotiations, we noted that this formula placed women earning more modest salaries at a disadvantage. As a result, an agreement was reached to introduce a basic amount at 100% in order to protect them.

**New formula:** 100% of the first $225 (gross) per week + 88% of the surplus over the first $225 (gross) per week – QPIP benefits

In the end, while the percentage of gross salary will vary, depending on the salary level, between 90% (for higher salaries) and 98% (for the lowest salaries), all employees will maintain a net income that is at least equal to their earnings prior to their maternity leave.
REGIONAL DISPARITIES, SKILLED WORKERS AND OTHER PREMIUMS

The agreement in principle will also improve certain working conditions, specifically with regard to regional disparities and the creation of an attraction and retention premium for our members who are skilled workers.

In addition, the negotiations team defeated the government’s plans to eliminate several premiums, thereby successfully preserving these positive measures that benefit personnel in the networks.

A SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE

“These negotiations took place in a very difficult context of ideological austerity. Our union struggle as part of the Common Front and our exceptional mobilization – which will mark the history of Québec – allowed us to undermine the government’s unreasonable demands for countless concessions at all the bargaining tables, to preserve important benefits that we have acquired through prior bargaining rounds and to make gains by compelling it to depart from the rigid financial framework that it clung to right to the very end,” explained Louise Chabot.

The President of the CSQ and SISP spokesperson recalled the pride and determination of our members, palpable on all the picket lines during the two phases of the strike, while highlighting the public’s support for our cause. The photo gallery at nego2015.org attests to the determination and the courage we have shown in all our actions.

THE FIGHT AGAINST AUSTERITY WILL CONTINUE

Louise Chabot was unequivocal: “The fight against austerity, cutbacks and privatization is far from over, because they jeopardize universal access to our public services. This revolution that the government wants to impose on us is nothing other than the rule of every man for himself, in the name of so-called freedom, which becomes absolutely meaningless as soon as some people no longer have the means to get an education, to access healthcare, or to go to work because they cannot afford childcare services for their children. Freedom without means is a sham. That is why we will pursue our mobilization in 2016, to protect our public services and prevent them from being dismantled.”

An outstanding team

Strategic, rigorous, astute, incisive and diligent: there is no better way to describe the outstanding quality of the members of the CSQ negotiations team who worked tirelessly to win an intersectoral agreement in principle as part of the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (SISP).

From left to right: Karen Harnois, CSQ Pay Equity and Evaluation Advisor, Julie-Catherine Pelissier, Director of CSQ Province-Wide Negotiations Services and Social Security as well as Coordinator of SISP Negotiations, Pierre-Antoine Harvey, CSQ Economist, Amélie Desrosiers-Théroux, Secretary for Province-Wide Negotiations, Mario Labbé, CSQ Social Security Advisor and Denis Curotte, Deputy Coordinator of CSQ Province-Wide Negotiations.
Over the course of recent months, CSQ members mobilized more than ever: they attended jam-packed union assemblies, took part in major inspirational rallies, voted strike mandates at 81.8%, kept up solid picket lines, and held impressive demonstrations during the three days of rotating strikes and the province-wide one-day walk-out. All this action was bolstered by strong public support.

The historic mobilization and the tireless work of all the negotiating teams for the school, postsecondary education, and health and social services networks prevailed over the government’s many contemptuous, unacceptable demands for clawbacks, which it justified by citing a climate of austerity. Its demands were designed to make major cuts to services and to curtail working conditions, solely for the purposes of achieving its ideological ambitions.

We faced the same management appetites at all the sectoral tables. In fact, it was very clear that these demands were coordinated and that they reflected “orders” originating with the Conseil du trésor: weakened job security, lower salary insurance benefits, reduced access to health insurance, limitations on the activities of accredited associations (e.g. more restrictive conditions for union releases) and many other demands to streamline work organization and make it more flexible (e.g. adjusted work schedules, granting positions based on clientele needs). In the end, all of the union negotiation teams succeeded in forcing management to back down.

In mid-December, the eight public-sector federations of the CSQ concluded agreements in principle. Only the sectoral bargaining tables for the Cree and Kativik school boards were still engaged in talks. At the time of writing, details of agreements in principle were to be submitted to members at union assemblies. In the end, the members will decide whether or not to ratify these agreements. CSQ News presents a brief overview.

SCHOOL NETWORK

FÉDÉRATION DES SYNDICATS DE L’ENSEIGNEMENT

Gains:

- Reduction in class sizes in kindergarten for 5-year-olds (-1 student)
- A 50% increase in the envelope for support for classroom composition, particularly with regard to the integration of students with behavioural disorders
- Addition of 400 full-time positions in vocational training and adult education, without offsets
- Recognition of 6 annual sick-leave days (with cash surrender value)
- Obligation to consult unions with regard to regulating distance education

Moreover, a letter of agreement guarantees follow-up on providing additional teaching resources in disadvantaged areas for the implementation of kindergarten for 4-year-olds, early screening in elementary school and support for secondary school students.
Public-Sector Negotiations

Protected gains:

- Protection of the 32-hour week on school premises
- Complete protection of class sizes (ratios) at all levels
- Protection of all envelopes for support for students with difficulties and full renewal of the appendix that covers integration of students with disabilities and those with serious behavioural disorders
- Preservation of so-called *a priori* weighting

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Increased time on school premises to 35 hours per week and elimination of time for work of a personal nature
- Significant increase in the number of students per class and elimination of average at all levels
- Elimination of envelopes for services for students with difficulties, including resource teachers and remedial education teachers
- Removal of *a priori* weighting and increase in the number of students with difficulties in classes, making it more difficult to recognize them, and with no guarantees for services
- Elimination of gradual entry to preschool, imposition of more multi-year groups, including kindergarten and Elementary 1
- Attack on job security and expansion of precarious employment, particularly in vocational training and adult education

FÉDÉRATION DU PERSONNEL DE SOUTIEN SCOLAIRE
FRANCOPHONE SECTOR

Gains:

- Obligation to merge positions in the same employment class to create positions involving more hours
- Reduction of contract work
- Tighter regulation of eligibility tests for positions
- Increase in bumping options in the general sector
- Increase in school board contributions to group insurance premiums
- Skilled workers’ premium (central table)

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Personnel mobility for more than 50 km
- Greater flexibility of personnel
- Clawbacks on health insurance and salary insurance
- Significant reductions in fringe benefits

ANGLOPHONE SECTOR

Gains:

- Increase in the vacation indemnity for school-bus drivers
- Study of the implementation of new technologies
- Implementation of the calendar seniority system
- Skilled workers’ premium (central table)

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Personnel mobility for more than 50 km
- Greater flexibility of personnel
- Significant reductions in fringe benefits
- Limitations on the rights of personnel

FÉDÉRATION DES PROFESSIONNELLES ET PROFESSIONNELS DE L’ÉDUCATION

Gains:

- Additional professional resources and continuation of amounts from the last agreement
- Enhanced recognition of all tasks and the importance of professional development
- Parity between the premium for psychologists and that of the health sector psychologists
- Increased amount for professional development for personnel in remote regions
- Ability to maintain benefits when changing employers
- Better recognition of continuous service for vacation purposes
Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:
- Several demands designed to increase precarious employment and flexibility for personnel
- Modifications that would highly penalize advancement in step
- Clawbacks on insurance plans
- Reduction in benefits for personnel with precarious employment status and ability to terminate contracts before expiry

ANGLOPHONE SECTOR

Gains:
- Improvements for special leaves: parity with the Francoophone agreement

HIGHER EDUCATION

FÉDÉRATION DU PERSONNEL DE SOUTIEN DE L’ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR

Gains:
- Parity with the employer’s annual contribution to the health insurance plan
- Ability for a part-time substitute employee to accumulate two replacements
- Modification of the calculation of the waiting period for part-time employees with regard to health insurance
- Elimination of salary disparities for students that earn salaries (central table)
- Skilled workers’ premium (central table)

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:
- Abolition of positions at any time during the year
- Attacks on job security
- Setbacks regarding the movement of personnel
- Measures to facilitate grouping of services
- Undermining of union prerogatives

FÉDÉRATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DE CÉGEP

Gains:
- Decrease of the maximum individual workload
- Recognition that CEGEP teachers belong to the postsecondary education sector
- Improvements in support for students with disabilities

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:
- Reduced job security
- Reduced union releases
- Limited access to tenure

FÉDÉRATION DU PERSONNEL PROFESSIONNEL DES COLLEGES

Gains:
- Increase in the order of priority for part-time employees
- Creation (with release) of a committee for students with disabilities
- Bank of 4 hours to allow participation in general assemblies during work hours
Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Grouping of services with public, parapublic, municipal and governmental services, including abolition of positions
- Abolition of positions at any time
- Creation of part-time positions on an annual basis
- Work schedules defined without consent from personnel
- Expansion of the relocation range from 50 km to 250 km
- Attacks on union prerogatives

Health and Social Services

FÉDÉRATION DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC

Gains:

- Creation of a province-wide joint committee concerning care-providing professional / patient ratios
- Increase in full-time positions (province-wide targets)
- Reclassification of nurses with a bachelor’s degree in nursing
- Leave for the death of a spouse’s child
- Creation of a joint union committee to study needs and propose measures with regard to work-family-study balance

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Abolition of the clause concerning the 16-hour interval between a shift changes for the purposes of time and a half pay
- Elimination of enhanced evening, night and critical care premiums
- Redefinition of overtime
- Overtime rate payable only after the standard workweek
- Reduction of salary insurance
- Management’s ability to redeem, at the regular rate, the 4th week of annual vacation and certain statutory holidays
- Removal of the obligation to conclude an agreement with the union to implement atypical work hours (for example, a 12-hour schedule)

FÉDÉRATION DES SYNDICATS DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX

Gains:

- Introduction of a targeted 5% increase in hours per position per employment category
- Decrease in precarious employment status
- Improvement in job security
- Retention and attraction premiums
- Leave for the death of a spouse’s child
- Problems related to workload and follow-up of disabilities can no longer be ignored

Management unacceptable setbacks that we reversed:

- Modification of the length of the workweek
- Virtual abolishment of overtime
- Reduction of union releases by about 60%
- Creation of a minimum target for rotating shifts
School support staff

A NEW AFFILIATION IN JONQUIÈRE

FRANÇOIS BEAUREGARD Collaboration

School support workers at the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière joined the ranks of the CSQ last September, after disaffiliating with the Fédération indépendante des syndicats autonomes (FISA). The new executive board had just been elected when it was thrust into the turbulent waters of national negotiations. In this context, the union is thrilled for the support of a strong union and its new collaboration with regional unions.

Natacha Michaud is responsible for childcare services at École La Mosaïque, where she has worked since 2004. She loves her work, which allows her to see children develop and grow. With a team of five people, she actively participated in the recruitment campaign that led her union to join the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (FPSS-CSQ).

“The CSQ is more than just a big machine that represents us well at the national level, it’s also a union with a human dimension in which we feel fully supported. Mélanie Renaud and Éric Pronovost of the FPSS-CSQ are very energetic and always available to answer our questions,” says the childcare worker.

Donald Cyr was elected president of this union last October 5. What impresses him most at the CSQ is the team spirit. “When we decided to affiliate, our teachers and professionals were pleased. The atmosphere of cooperation with co-workers in the region is terrific. With the CSQ, we feel that we are part of a great big family,” says the childcare technician.

For Donald Cyr, the main issue for his members is the fight against precarity, a situation he has been living for a long time. In fact, only this year will he be able to become permanent, after ten years of service at his school. So much for the “fat cats” clichés about public service workers and their “concrete job security”. The battle against these strong biases is also part of the union mandate.

“This type of work requires a lot of creativity to maximize available resources. It’s very rewarding when we realize that for these young people we have become a very important person,” says the special education technician.

She also actively participated in the debate on affiliation. “The teachers union in our region supported our initiatives. We don’t feel alone anymore. For example, communication with elected members of the Fédération and the Centrale is excellent. Since we’ve joined the CSQ, our questions never remain unanswered. It’s great. However, the disaffiliation with FISA did hurt some individuals who were very involved. It’s understandable, but now that a majority decision has been made, it’s important that we rally together to strengthen our union lives locally,” she says.

One of her colleagues, Sarah Allard, helps teachers in a class that includes students with speech disorders. What she is most passionate about in her work is the connection she has with the students.

“With the CSQ, we feel that we are part of a great big family.”

Photos: Gagnon Temblay

Sarah Allard, Natacha Michaud and Sylvie Gagnon. Sylvie Gagnon, special education technician, was also involved in the affiliation.
At the time of writing, the bill concerning governance of school boards has just been made public. Essentially, it gives more power to the minister, strips school boards, and grants new powers and responsibilities to schools, which runs the risk of increasing competition between establishments, leading us further away from our objective of equal opportunity.

From the outset, it’s hard to see how shaking the foundation serves the students! There are also doubts as to how the bill is going to inspire engagement from school personnel. Although analyses of the ins and outs of the bill are only beginning, some conclusions have already been reached.

SUPPORT WORKERS PUSHED ASIDE

Bill n° 86 has exploded like a bomb on school support personnel. And for just cause! Minister Blais has pushed this category of workers out of the school councils, which are the new intermediate bodies the government wants to put in place. The minister’s disrespectful attitude and the voluntary ignorance he is exhibiting towards them are unacceptable. School support workers have undeniable knowledge, experience and expertise, as well as a great sense of belonging in schools. They are more than able to play an active role in decision-making and offer guidance in matters of education.

LITTLE RESPECT GIVEN TO PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT AND EXPERTISE OF TEACHING PERSONNEL

From the time he arrived, Minister Blais has engaged in rhetoric about the central role teaching personnel play, and the importance of recognizing their expertise and autonomy to manage their classrooms in ways that will promote student perseverance and success. It is critical that the professional autonomy of teachers be acknowledged on many levels, notably, pedagogical approaches, evaluation of learning and professional development. Yet, the only advance found in the bill is the added mention that teachers are “vital pedagogical experts”. It remains to be seen how this statement of principle will assert legitimate power on pedagogy, especially since this recognition of individual expertise contradicts many changes in the bill that reduce the collective expertise of teaching teams by increasing the powers of school boards at their expense.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES ON PROFESSIONAL AND SUPPORT WORKERS

The intentions of Minister Blais to “bring schools closer to decision-making” by transferring powers to local levels increases concerns about the significant risks of increased decentralization. For professional and support workers, a decentralized organization can quickly become nightmarish. In fact, it may result in a scattering of resources and division of responsibilities. In terms of the organization of work, this can also mean several immediate superiors who redefine tasks without sufficient knowledge of the work demands of professional workers.

In addition, the bill recommends implementation of a resource allocation committee, consisting mainly of school management, who would lead the consultation process for the purpose of allocating annual revenues. It would also decide on the allocation of additional educational services, and if desired, the distribution of other professional services. Even if the school board retains its mandate of appointing personnel to establishments, we are still apprehensive given the decentralization views of school management.

Furthermore, the bill could broaden service agreements with, among others, municipalities or community organizations, which opens the door to subcontracting. We will defend the idea that it is much more advantageous to choose public expertise over subcontracting!

In our analysis of the bill, we will pay particular attention to the impacts these changes could have on the organization of work, professional autonomy and balance in the service offering to students.

THE MINISTER INTENSIFIES RESULTS-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT

Through the years, changes made to the Education Act by the different governments have added levels of bureaucracy. With the Un élève, c’est bien plus qu’une statistique campaign, the CSQ and its federations have strongly denounced the implementation of mechanisms for “results-oriented management”. It is clear that Minister Blais has decided to consolidate these mechanisms. This way, he incorporates into the educational project components of the success plan, and of the management and educational success agreement, which would then be abolished. Therefore, quantitative indicators would be included in educational projects that are intended to be a tool to help schools define themselves, creating a tendency to transform education into a numbers race.

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1 Bill n°86: An Act to modify the organization and governance of school boards to give schools a greater say in decision-making and ensure parents’ presence within each school board’s decision-making body.
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, INCREASINGLY AT THE SERVICE OF BUSINESSES

Professional training is basic training that allows young people and adults to progress in life, either by learning a trade or pursuing other studies. This training must lead to a qualification and be transferable, opening doors to all the possibilities of a trade.

The current government is focusing on matching training to employment, meaning that the training meets the manpower requirements of businesses. By doing so, it hopes to decrease unemployment and social assistance, while meeting the demands of employers. By entering these principles in the bill, it reduces the role of professional training in the development of students and any consideration for their needs and aspirations.

A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO COME

A more in-depth analysis is necessary given the size of the bill and the significant impacts it could have on the educational sector. The CSQ and its school federations will devote the time and energy necessary to promote the viewpoints of members during the consultations that will begin at the end of January as part of the parliamentary committee.

In a nutshell

ABOUT THE COP21

Last November 29, on the eve of the 2015 United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21), 50 or so representatives from the EVB-CSQ, the Syndicat des employé(e)s du Collège St-Joseph-de-Hull (affiliated with the FPEP-CSQ), and the AREQ-CSQ, participated in the 100% Possible March for Climate Solutions and Justice in Ottawa. Also, on November 30, more than 20,000 young people from the EVB-CSQ observed a moment of silence for the earth just as world leaders assembled at the COP21 did the same.

Finally, note that Education International (EI), to which the CSQ is affiliated, participated in the COP21 as a civil society partner. EI wanted to demonstrate the role that education and the union movement play in reversing climate change. The organization argued that financial commitments are imperative to provide schools and teachers with the resources to adapt their programs to focus on climate change. For more information: ei-ie.org.

2016 CSQ RENDEZ-VOUS DE L’ÉDUCATION

The fourth edition of the CSQ Rendez-vous de l’éducation will be held in Montréal, on March 15 and 16. Equal opportunity in education has become an ideal to achieve. Over time, many changes have been made to the education network. Have we progressed towards achieving this ideal, or to the contrary, are we moving away from it? This question will be at the heart of the event. More information on programming and registration will soon be available at lacsq.org.
ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE, THE HOPE OF THEIR NATIONS

NICOLE DE SÈVE Collaboration

The incidents brought to light by Radio-Canada’s Enquête and a number of reports in La Presse focusing on the reality of Aboriginal women and young people, have deeply disturbed Quebecers. The shock wave attests to the invisibility of concerns and the reality experienced in these communities. Presenting a profile of certain aspects of education-related issues, this article is the first in series to be published in CSQ News about the reality of the Aboriginal peoples of Québec.

Aboriginal young people represent 31% of the Inuit population and 26% of the First Nations population under 15 years of age. These young people are the hope of their nations. Yet, despite inquiries, reports of the Auditor General of Canada, parliamentary committees and research, the persistent dropout rate and the ongoing distress of Aboriginal young people have to be addressed. Depending on the community, for example, close to 75% of Inuit youths do not finish their secondary school studies. How can we explain this?

CANADA’S GROSS NEGLIGENCE

The Indian Act had a major impact on Aboriginal peoples. Shunted onto reserves, denied their rights, placed under the tutorship of a Minister, subjected to laws enacted by others, Aboriginal peoples saw their social structures attacked and their autonomy robbed by governments.

The residential school system, which existed in Québec from 1934 to 1980, was designed to destroy Aboriginal culture and identity. “These children learned that they were inferior and how important it was to destroy the languages and the cultures they came from. Many resisted, but were left with the gap of years away from their parents and communities.”

This trauma has been passed down through generations and continues to affect communities. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission so eloquently revealed: “States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things.”

CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING OF EDUCATION

Today, the chronic underfunding of services on reserves undermines the development of communities and, specifically, the future of Aboriginal young people, as evidenced by the case of educational services. On the reserves, education funding was fully provided by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, pursuant to the Indian Act. Since the 1980s, band councils have been responsible for managing educational services for elementary and secondary schools in their jurisdiction.

However, it is clear that inadequate funds have been allocated to cover the costs of technological change, school libraries, the transportation of students, the maintenance of school buildings, and extracurricular and recreational activities. In short, the federal government has spent less on education for Aboriginal communities than provincial governments have spent on education for non-Aboriginals. By refusing to take responsibility for the real costs of educational services, the federal government has jeopardized the future of Aboriginal youths and has shirked its treaty responsibilities.

THE UNIQUENESS OF QUÉBEC

In Québec, three nations are not subject to federal imperatives. The communities that are party to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975) and the Northeastern Québec Agreement (1978) have their own school boards: the Kativik School Board and the Cree School Board. They are financed by both federal and provincial governments. The Naskapi are responsible for the administration of their schools within the Central Québec School Board.

A SERIOUS CULTURAL BARRIER

In addition to the underfunding of educational services, there is the cultural barrier. The programmed undermining of culture and languages on reserves is a factor that explains the education and social problems we experience today. Aboriginal language teachers are mainly active in preschool and elementary school, but they are not a strong presence in secondary education.

“Hundreds of studies have shown that a formal education system imposed in an Aboriginal context is inappropriate for the vast majority of children,” particularly with regard to school textbooks, education programs and academic schedules.

Moving away from their communities to pursue secondary and postsecondary studies is difficult. When young people are confronted with cultural differences, constant travel, and experiences of racism, the only thing that many of them really want to do is to go home to their communities, leaving school behind.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Socioeconomic problems, a housing shortage and appalling housing conditions have major impacts on the health of young people, from infancy. Furthermore, the pregnancy rate for Aboriginal teenagers is significant.

These factors contribute in no small measure to the incidence of learning difficulties and they undermine educational success. Many young people despair, and fall victim to addiction, while others choose suicide. The young people who are most vulnerable to suicide are 13 to 22 years of age, and this is particularly true in Inuit communities.

“ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE BEEN MAKING A COMEBACK”

Yet despite all these challenges, “Aboriginal peoples have been making a comeback,” and many communities have taken their destiny in hand. The collective awakening about Aboriginal language and culture has supported their demands for greater control over their education and healthcare systems, as well as childcare services.

SCHOOL STAFF HAS ACCOMPLISHED SMALL MIRACLES

Many Aboriginal schools have decided to prioritize education and assign resources, initially allocated to other community services, to youth education. The Mohawk Nation and the Huron Wendat Nation have demonstrated educational and graduation rates that are higher than other Aboriginal groups in Québec. Many schools perform small miracles thanks to staff. The next article will feature the voices of CSQ members who work in these communities.

4 SAUL, John (2014), cover page.
100% public prescription drug insurance

THERE IS A CURE FOR CUTS!

LISE GOULET Health and Social Services Advisor

The Couillard government boasts about wanting to clean up public finances. It insists that budgetary discipline requires cuts to public services. Yet, some of the pricier expenses that seem to escape its control should be the focus of special attention. The adoption of a new prescription drug policy, based on completely public drug insurance, would allow savings of one to three billion $ annually. What is Québec waiting for?

The magnitude of the increase in costs of drugs prescribed in Québec is putting pressure on our health care system. This cannot continue. In 2012, these costs reached nearly $7.5 billion, that is, 17% of total health care expenses. In 2014, Québec ranked second worldwide in prescription drug expenses per capita, just behind the United States.

Furthermore, the price of drugs is 30% higher in Québec and Canada than in most developed countries. Along with Switzerland, they are the most expensive worldwide.

THE HYBRID SYSTEM HAS NOT FULFILLED ITS PROMISES

Québec’s hybrid prescription drug insurance plan (public-private), implemented in 1997, has only partially fulfilled its promises. Though it has offered insurance to many who had none, it has been unable to guarantee reasonable and fair access to drug therapy for everyone. This was revealed in March 2015, in the latest study by the Commissaire à la santé et au bien-être. Currently, nearly 12% of the population of Québec are unable to obtain prescription medication due to lack of financial resources.

REGAINING CONTROL OF THE SITUATION

We have to admit that neither the Québec government nor private group insurance plans, which cover nearly 60% of the population, have succeeded in establishing a balance of power with pharmaceutical companies.

1 Gaétan Barrette, Health and Social Services minister, Carlos Leitão, Finance minister, Martin Coiteux, Treasury Board president, Commission de révision permanente des programmes, Coalition Solidarité Santé.
Remember that the Canadian provinces are the only ones among developed countries that have not integrated medications into their public health system. Yet, in countries that do have this type coverage – France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand – prescription drugs cost 16%-40% less than in Québec, and their annual indexation is two to three times lower.

In summary, the implementation of a 100% public plan would give the Québec government true negotiating power with the pharmaceutical industry and achieve economies of scale thanks to bulk purchasing. We can no longer continue without, and other Canadian provinces are already working on it...

**INCREASING PRESSURE A NOTCH**

More than 420 community and union organizations, including the CSQ, as well as numerous health specialists, have supported the campaign launched by the Union des consommateurs in 2009 to implement a 100% public prescription drug insurance plan. Yet, the Québec government has continued to ignore proposals and demands.

For the Coalition Solidarité Santé, the time has come to increase pressure a notch and call upon the population that is directly affected by the prohibitive costs of prescription drugs and by austerity measures affecting all public services.

“It is urgent that we question the government’s choices regarding public finances and demand implementation of a prescription drug insurance plan that is entirely public. We can improve access to medications for the population, and at a better cost. We have the means to maintain our public services, and even improve them. What is the government waiting for to act?” says Jaques Benoit, coordinator at Coalition Solidarité Santé.
In December 2015, the liberal government delivered a rather unpleasant Christmas gift to Québec parents and childcare workers: the announcement of at least $120 million in cuts to the public childcare network at the next budget.

These draconian budget cuts are in addition to $74 million and $100 million in cuts already made over the last two years. There are limits to doing more with less and these limits were passed a long time ago. We are now looking at thousands of jobs in jeopardy if the government remains focused on its ill-advised objective.

This sad announcement is the latest example of the Couillard government’s complete lack of vision for a childcare network that has already proven itself.

THE QUIET PRIVATIZATION

Hiding behind the excuse of “more effective management”, the Couillard government is slowly dismantling the network that Québec has developed over the past 20 years.

Whereas public childcare services have seen their funding decrease year after year, private daycares are experiencing unprecedented growth. Since the adjustment of fees and introduction of tax credits, it has become more advantageous financially for many parents to use the private network. We are therefore seeing the quiet privatization of early childcare.

The double standards don’t end there: while the private system continues to operate unregulated, the regulatory vise keeps tightening around home childcare providers (HCP). Heavy bureaucracy and binding requirements – for example, carbon monoxide detectors on every floor – the demands put on them are endless.

Yet, most complaints from parents are made against the private network: more than 900 complaints between April 1 and September 30, 2015. That’s nine times more than home childcare providers (HCP) and 700 more complaints than early childcare providers (CPE). But not a word from the government on that topic.

A HEFTY BILL THIS SPRING

Because when it rains it pours, the latest wave of liberal cuts is not the only surprise for parents who send their children to public childcare centres. This spring, during tax season, tens of thousands of parents will have to get their checkbooks out for the first time due to adjustments to childcare fees.

After paying $7.30 per child all year, parents will be required to pay the difference between this amount and another amount calculated by the government according to their incomes, which could go up to $20 per day, per child. For many middle class families, the bill will be a hefty one: no need to be a millionaire for the government to claim hundreds, maybe thousands, of additional dollars for childcare costs on their income taxes.

Between repeated cuts, measures to promote private childcare, and increasing fees for parents, the continued assaults against the early childcare network are worrisome for their future.
HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM WILL NOT INCREASE

MÉLANIE MICHAUD CSQ Social Security Advisor

The costs of health insurance plans, specifically those related to drugs, continue to increase due to rising prescription drug use, the increase in chronic illnesses, and the government’s disengagement. Despite this, CSQ members will not see an increase in their health insurance premiums in 2016. The cost will remain exactly the same as in 2015.

This good news is thanks to a change made to the CSQ’s collective insurance coverage during the organization’s General Council, last October. As such, since January 1, 2016, innovative medications are reimbursed at the lower cost of generic ones, which allows the health insurance premium to remain at the same level as last year.

However, if an insured individual cannot use a generic drug as per documented medical contraindications (for example, an allergy or sensitivity to a non-active ingredient in the generic version), the brand-name medication will be reimbursed at 80%.

REIMBURSEMENT ACCORDING TO TYPE OF DRUG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of drug</th>
<th>Before January 1, 2016</th>
<th>Since January 1, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 80% of the cost of the unique medication</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 80% of the cost of the unique medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patented drug for which no alternative exists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 68% of the cost of the brand-name medication</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 80% of the cost of the equivalent generic version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug with an expired patent and for which there is a generic version. Also called Reference Product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 80% of the cost of the generic version</td>
<td>Reimbursement of 80% of the cost of the generic version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of a brand-name drug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The information in this table does not include the deductible applicable in the health insurance plan.

Example: for a specific problem, the brand-name drug costs $100 and the generic version is $50. Mr. Smith has no particular health issue preventing him from taking the generic version. For personal reasons however, he prefers taking the brand-name drug. Before January 1, 2016, his medication cost $32, considering the reimbursement of $68 paid by the CSQ’s health insurance plan. From now on, the same drug will cost $60 since the plan will only reimburse the amount that would be reimbursed for the generic version, that is, $40 (80% of $50).

GENERIC OR BRAND-NAME: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

A generic drug is a copy of a brand-name drug. It contains the same active ingredients. It is of the same quality and meets the same rigorous standards. Moreover, its purity, effectiveness, and safety are identical. In Quebec hospitals, more than 90% of drugs administered are generic.

The only difference: the name of the product, its appearance (due to non-active ingredients), and the price. The generic version is always less expensive because the makers invest less in research, development, and promotion.
CSQ, PROUD PARTNER OF THE FONDS DE SOLIDARITÉ FTQ.

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.