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It looks like we will be seeing changes early on in the new year in Québec. Persistent rumours of an opening speech and cabinet shuffle lead us to believe that Philippe Couillard wants to rebuild his image by adopting a new tone following the disappointing results of the by-elections for his team.

He already seemed to want to make some changes following many consultations held this past fall. But the question remains: what actions will he take in keeping with his words?

Let’s be clear, it’s not because he hears that he is listening. We can measure the extent of his goodwill only by the actions he will take in education – from early childhood to university – as well as in health and social services. In every case, he will find us on his path to remind him of simple common sense.

Liberal austerity still hurts. The government needs to take quick action to revitalize hard hit public services. Let’s not forget that last December, right before the by-elections, he boasted about achieving surpluses of $1.7 billion. It’s disgraceful. Were these surpluses not achieved after imposing irresponsible, even outrageous cuts in the name of a sacred neoliberal ideology? Did he not deliberately decide to severely weaken our public services when they posed no threat? Other options were available and we’ve never missed an opportunity to remind him of it. We proposed several solutions on the fiscal, political and financial plans.

Let’s hope that in 2017, he will finally have the wisdom to make the right choices to help our society move towards greater social justice. As for us, we will not give up. We remember that yesterday’s battles allowed us to establish more just laws, such as pay equity – and today’s and tomorrow’s battles are sure to help us build a more egalitarian society.

As the new year gets underway, we hope for a real end to austerity. We deserve better, our society deserves better. I am counting on you so that we might continue our great mobilization to get the Couillard government moving in the right direction.

LOUISE CHABOT
PRESIDENT
No B-movie scenario will be accepted. The future education policy must be effective and address real issues.

NATHALIE CHABOT
CSQ ADVISOR

CONSULTATION ON EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

THE FUTURE POLICY MUST BE DESERVING OF AN AWARD

Education took centre stage last fall. The consultation by minister Proulx, though far from perfect, provided an opportunity to put forth our proposals for educational success.

The addition of professional resources and support through direct services for students, class composition, the importance of immediate action to prevent problems, a significant shift to better meet the realities of aboriginals, and access to quality early childhood services are all critical topics that drew attention during the various regional consultations.

Photo Pascal Ratthé
FIVE MAIN PRIORITIES

This consultative approach – which we have been requesting for many years – will lead to a policy on educational success in 2017. The process provided the ideal opportunity to put forward our five main propositions, anchored in the notion of equal opportunity, and rooted in the experience and skills of education personnel.

* The policy for educational success must be supported by social policies that allow for improving the living conditions of children, young people and adults in training.

* In addition to living conditions that help achieve success, we need to offer the best learning conditions possible. Training built on a strong foundation that allows everyone to thrive and participate fully in society, as well as measures that support the success of the most vulnerable and are available early on and as long as necessary, are all essential orientations to promote.

* Improved learning conditions go hand in hand with improved working conditions for personnel. Additional duties, overwork and job precarity are problems for which concrete solutions are needed. To offer quality education, we can't do away with measures that attract personnel, and promote professional integration and job retention.

* Too often underestimated, the daily work of education personnel must be recognized and valued. It is high time to raise awareness for the job as well as the great diversity of services offered, putting forward a positive vision.

* Finally, it is more than time to put an end to practices that encourage competition between educational institutions and causes an imbalance in the composition of classes and schools. The outcome goes against the objectives of perseverance, achieving success in greater numbers, and equal opportunity in education. Urgent action is needed. We expect the minister to take concrete action to guarantee a greater social and educational mix in classrooms and institutions.
A VISION, NOT A VIDEO CLIP

We will be able to judge the seriousness of this consultation in the light of the decisions made by the minister. Our expectations are high.

The new policy on educational success needs to be implemented quickly as a concrete plan of action. It must be accompanied by necessary and sufficient resources to allow key players in education to play their role fully and efficiently support students in their educational success.

It’s high time to give the education network back its much-needed momentum after years of underfunding.
FOR A STRONG QUÉBEC COLLEGE NETWORK

Greater access to higher education, yes. All-out flexibility in cégeps, no.

GABRIEL DANIS CSQ ADVISOR

The government’s recent consultations on the creation of a Council of Colleges and a Council of Universities should translate into bills in winter 2017. CSQ News met with Mario Beauchemin1 about these issues and changes to the College Education Regulations.

THE QUÉBEC COUNCIL OF COLLEGES

“For 20 years, we’ve witnessed a disintegration in the notion of a college network as well as increased competition between institutions for the same students. Within this context, the creation of a Québec Council of Colleges, which would be a place to analyze and reflect, can only be promising and contribute to increasing cohesion, complementarity and collaboration between cégeps,” he says.

THE PITFALLS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

However, Mario Beauchemin brings up a grey area: the government wants the Council to integrate the mission of the Commission d’évaluation de l’enseignement collégial.

“If it’s essential to evaluate the quality of activities and the educational environment in cégeps, it’s also important to question the effectiveness of current mechanisms and avoid the pitfalls of quality assurance that too often translate into tools for internal control applied by cégep administrations.”

CHANGES TO COLLEGE EDUCATION REGULATIONS

As for the seven changes to the College Education Regulations proposed by the government, some are desirable, notably those that allow for greater accessibility to college studies and continuing education, according to Mario Beauchemin.

“However, for these measures to work, it will be necessary to invest in refresher courses, mechanisms for recognition of experience and skills, as well as the addition of professional and support resources. On the other hand, proposals aimed at greater institutional flexibility for colleges risk disrupting student mobility and weakening the idea of a college network,” he says.

THE QUÉBEC COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITIES

Finally, Mario Beauchemin recalls that, for a few years already, the CSQ has been calling for an intermediary body between universities and the ministère de l’Enseignement supérieur.

“The student mobilization in the spring of 2012 illustrated the lack of transparency in funding and university activities. The Council of Universities will be welcomed if it focuses on a mission of analysis and research, and if its structure reflects the entire university community,” he concludes.

1 Third CSQ vice-president.
Advocating for important school reform

“Aboriginal knowledge must be the basis of our education.”

Nicole de Sève
Collaboration

Ida Faries and Ulaayu Pilurtuut1 are advocating for significant reform in the school system of the aboriginal peoples, rooted in preserving the language, culture and ancestral knowledge.

“School dropout rates for Cree and Inuit students rose to 85.2% in 2009-2010, compared with 17.4% in the rest of Québec,” says Ida Faries, 6th grade English teacher at the Waapinchikush Elementary School in Chisasibi.

Though the reasons for such a dropout rate are many – the Indian Act, residential schools, the lack or disuse of infrastructures and housing in communities – another reason also explains this alarming rate.

“Several studies have confirmed that the education system is not appropriate, notably the textbooks, the programs, and a school calendar that does not allow for practicing traditional activities. It is essential that students be able
Ida Faries and Ulaayu Pilurtuut are members of the Association of employees of Northern Quebec (AENQ-CSQ).

to learn their history, their culture in order to be proud of who they are and proud of their ancestors,” she says.

Ulaayu Pilurtuut agrees. She teaches Inuktitut to children in grade 3 at the Pitakallak School in Kuujjuaq. Her parents spoke neither English nor French. She became a teacher because she wanted to pass on the oral tradition she learned from her parents and reignite young peoples pride in being Inuit.

“Our language is who we are. By preserving our language, we preserve our identity. There are so many languages on the planet, and ours is one. We can’t lose it,” she says.

Ulaayu Pilurtuut has a dream: “The Inuit should have their own government, use Inuktitut as their teaching language, and make their own rules and school calendars. It’s important for the success of our young people.”

As for Ida Faries, she hopes for the implementation of a bicultural education. “Aboriginals must be able to revise the school curriculum, keeping what is necessary from the Québec curriculum and dedicating a large section to teaching our language, our history and our ancestral knowledge. It’s essential,” she concludes.

1 Ida Faries and Ulaayu Pilurtuut are members of the Association of employees of Northern Quebec (AENQ-CSQ).

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CARETAKER IN A HIGH SCHOOL

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS

“Although I don’t have any good stories to share about my own school years, I have many to share since working in a school. I am involved in everything because I am a part of the school.”

MARTIN CAYOUETTE FPSS-CSQ ADVISOR

Robert Blais is caretaker at École secondaire internationale du Phare and has worked for the Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke for 31 years. “I really love my work. Retirement is just around the corner and I’m not particularly excited about it.”

Robert Blais believes the qualities of a caretaker are, first and foremost, to love people and be positive. “I am the first person to arrive at school. If you arrive in a bad mood, you pass it on to the students. For me, it’s really important to always be in a good mood and laugh as often as possible.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK

He is especially proud of having stripped all of the school’s floors in a short time. In fact, they shine from the hallway to the classrooms to the offices. It was a big challenge since he’s only been at the school for three and a half years.

“It’s the first time that I’m in charge of a high school. I have worked in primary schools and high schools, but being in charge is not the same thing. It also means building relationships with other caretakers and making changes without upsetting anyone, while constantly aiming for efficient teamwork.”

CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE

His connection with the students is at the core of his work: “I am never in opposition with the students. There is always a way to speak to them, even if it’s to reprimand them. This is essential for me and we can feel it in the way they respect the cleanliness of the school.”

Robert Blais has also contributed to pedagogical projects, notably the creation of a large peace sign in the schoolyard.

“I was touched when a student came to ask for my help. She kept me involved throughout her project. When it was done, her parents told me how much my support and help had helped their daughter accomplish her task. Making a difference in the lives of the students, that’s my reward!”
CELL PHONES AND SANGRIA: STUDENTS LIVING THE GOOD LIFE?

During the Maple Spring, columnist Richard Martineau surprised striking students around a table on a terrace in Outremont. The lampoonish quality of his rant made some smile, others angry.

GABRIEL DANIS CSQ ADVISOR

Standards of living and study conditions vary greatly among students in college and university. Mostly unseen, this reality becomes apparent when speaking with Roxanne Dupuis1. Out of a population of nearly 6000 students at John Abbott College, more than 800 participate in the Québec government’s loans and bursaries program.

“People have a very homogeneous notion of the college student population, which includes many young people right out of high school, who still live with their parents. But these students study alongside adult students, single mothers, recent immigrants, and young people who have completely separated from their immediate families,” says the financial aid officer.

“MA’AM, I’M HUNGRY...”

Unable to make ends meet, buy their books or have enough to eat, some end up in her office in a state of crisis. “Many are surprised to learn that I also manage a small food bank and that, every year, Christmas baskets are given to many students,” she says.

Grocery cards, bookstore vouchers or monthly passes for public transportation: Roxanne Dupuis hands them out to students as needed, thanks to the support of the John Abbot College Foundation. “To be eligible, students must be registered in the government’s loans and bursaries program; it’s a must,” she says.

SERVICES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The government’s recent will to create a Council of Colleges and Universities addresses quality assurance in higher education. When speaking with Roxanne Dupuis, we understand that the concept of quality in education comprises more than graduation rates.

For us, quality also refers to the study environment, student services, and working conditions of personnel. The difference that Roxanne Dupuis and many other college support workers make in the lives of students is the best example.

1 Roxanne Dupuis is Vice-President of the Association du personnel de soutien administratif du Collège John Abbott (CSQ), affiliated with the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ).
For decades, the true value of women’s work – as well as their contribution to economic development and public services – went unrecognized. Every excuse was good to keep exploiting them, including the issue of corporate profitability and the state’s ability to pay. Yet nothing, except discrimination, justified the salary gap, whether it was the hours worked, level of education, work experience,” says Louise Chabot, President of the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ).

In 1975, the underlying principle of pay equity was integrated in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. “One year later, our congress adopted its first recommendation for pay equity. The Women’s Committee then became very active on the issue, making it, along with equality in the workplace, one of its biggest battles,” she continues.

THE BATTLE GROWS

In 1989, the Coalition for Pay Equity entered the scene. It was comprised of the CSQ (the CEQ at that time) and other union organizations, as well as women’s groups. The battle for recognition of the true worth of women’s work intensified.

“Grievances and pay relativity work enabled us to obtain some recognition for the value of women’s work, but without correcting the systemic discrimination against them. We therefore came to the conclusion that without a proactive law in matters of pay equity, it would be impossible to correct the situation. This became the main focus of our coalition,” recalls Louise Chabot.

AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE IS REACHED

On November 21, 1996, after years of fierce union and feminist battles, Québec unanimously adopted the Pay Equity Act. Though not perfect, the Act required that employers with ten or more employees, as well as the public sector, achieve and maintain pay equity to fairly remunerate women and correct salary gaps created by systemic discrimination on the basis of gender.

THE BEGINNING OF A LEGAL SAGA

Yet, everything was not settled. According to Chapter IX of the Act, an employer could be excluded from the process if they had already completed a pay equity or relativity plan. And, in 1999, that’s exactly what the government and large employers in Québec invoked. However, in 2004, the Supreme Court overruled them.

Two years later – and ten years after the Act was adopted - the government and public sector unions finally reached an agreement on the pay equity plan. In the public sector, some 326,000 persons, working in 140 predominantly female job categories, saw their salaries increased by an average of 6.3%, a revealing illustration of the scale of discrimination that existed.

Photo Jean-François Leblanc

“The Apocalypse” never happened, on the contrary!

The fight for equal pay for work of equal value marked a turning point in our society.

Catherine Gauthier Chief Editor
**A PREDICTION THAT DID NOT COME TRUE**

“Twenty years later, it is clear that the economic apocalypse predicted by neo-liberal proponents of the time did not take place. To the contrary! Women and the whole of society have moved forward thanks to pay equity, and we should be very proud,” adds Louise Chabot.

**A PROCESS IN CONSTANT EVOLUTION**

In 2009, the Act was significantly changed with the introduction of measures requiring employers to ensure, every 5 years, that pay gaps that are discriminatory against predominantly female employment categories do not reoccur, and that pay equity is maintained.

As well, the government has committed to conducting a review in 2019 of the implementation of the Act following these changes. For the CSQ, the review conducted by the Commission des normes, de l’équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) will be the opportunity to demonstrate, one more time, the importance of maintaining this law.

“Although much headway has been made, equality has not been achieved. Plus, the job market is constantly changing. Increasingly complex tasks and salary discrimination based on gender continue to require special attention,” she adds.

**A BATTLE IN THE CSQ’S DNA**

Louise Chabot reminds us that all women should be protected by the Pay Equity Act, regardless of the number of employees in a business.

“The right to equal pay is a fundamental one. In the 1930s, it was at the core of the fight for recognition of the value of the work of rural teachers led by Laure Gaudreault, founder of our Centrale. This important battle is part of our Centrale’s DNA. And we will fight ‘til the end!” she concludes.
EARLY CHILDHOOD UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Early childhood has experienced its share of upheaval in recent years

CHRISTOPHER YOUNG FIPEQ-CSQ ADVISOR

“From changes to childcare fees, an increase in private daycares and repeated cutbacks, we find ourselves with a network that is far different than the one anticipated at the outset,” explains Valérie Grenon.

AN EXTENSIVE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Last October, twenty years after the adoption of Québec’s family policy, the Québec Commission on Early Childhood Education began a consultation tour to determine where we stand, and mostly, how to improve childcare services.

Led by the Institut du Nouveau Monde, the Commission went across Québec before holding, in early December, large national consultations in Montréal in which the CSQ and FIPEQ-CSQ took part. A final summit is planned in May 2017, during which recommendations will be presented.

“If one thing is clear, it’s that Quebecers love their early childhood network and want to see it grow. They want the best for their little ones, and the best is found in public childcare services,” she adds.

“Everywhere, our members – whether they are government subsidized home childcare providers or early childcare providers (CPE) – addressed the commissioners to defend their vision of a future defined notably by a return to universal childcare fees and the end of growing numbers of private childcare centres.”

REMEMBERING DREAMS OF YESTERDAY

“In 1987, when the family policy was adopted, one of the dreams was for a universal network of public childcare services. Unfortunately, along the way, the government decided to prioritize private childcare centres of inconsistent quality, rather than give public home childcare providers and CPEs the resources needed to serve all children in Québec. It’s time to change direction and reignite that dream,” concludes Valérie Grenon.

1 Valérie Grenon is Vice-President of the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIPEQ-CSQ).
The Supreme Court rules in favour of teaching personnel

Can the government suddenly void complete sections of the collective agreement, such as student/teacher ratios?

NATHALIE LÉGER, CSQ LAWYER

Last November, the Supreme Court of Canada heard a case involving a dispute between the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) and the government of British Columbia. It rendered a decision within minutes (which is extremely rare!), ruling that a government cannot unilaterally void entire sections of negotiated collective agreements - under the pretext that they are tied to public policies – to submit them to a democratic process, that is, a consultation preceding a bill.

This ruling is significant for the rights of teaching personnel, as well as for all public sector employees in Canada. It also confirms that the learning conditions of students are closely related to the working conditions of teachers.

THE STORY OF AN IMPORTANT CAUSE

In 2002, British Columbia voided dozens of articles in the collective agreements of the education and health sectors. A union battle ensued. In 2007, the Supreme Court rendered an important decision: it recognized that freedom of association protects the right to a real process of collective negotiation.

Despite this, the government refused to negotiate. In 2011, an arbitrator granted the government one year to adopt a new bill. The government did not budge: negotiating issues in dispute was out of the question. It then decided to replace negotiations by a pre-legislative consultation in which the union would only be heard. As for other elements in the collective agreement, they would be negotiated in parallel.

Then in 2012, it adopted a law similar to the one declared unconstitutional in 2011. This time, subjects in dispute could not be negotiated, but only for the duration of the collective agreement, not indefinitely. In 2013, the Superior Court declared the consultation insufficient, and judged the new bill unconstitutional, undermining the dignity and autonomy of teaching personnel.

However, the Court of Appeal reversed the decision by insisting that the issues in question (student/teacher ratio, etc.) are tied to public policy and that therefore the right to collective negotiations is lesser. The Supreme Court ended this long battle by ruling in favour of the BCTF.

THE CSQ INTERVENED IN THE CAUSE

The CSQ is the only union organization in Québec to have received authorization to intervene in front of the Supreme Court, in addition to six other union groups in Canada, and of course, the BCTF. This victory is a good reflection of the strength of union solidarity.
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.