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# Actualités

People's Summit

JOURNAL OF THE FIIQ

Little respite  
for nurses



solid in solidarity

6<sup>th</sup> Convention  
of the FIIQ

Special Report  
Second People's  
Summit: a follow-up

Pension credits:  
major gains

May 12  
Nurse' Day

Job evaluation  
process:  
stepping up  
the pace



People of  
the Americas  
March

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## Actualités

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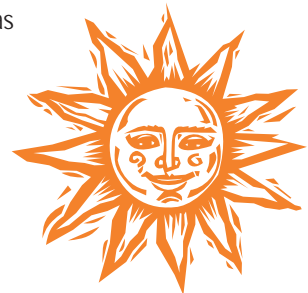
On the cover page  
 Photography by Josée Roy,  
 People of the Americas March

Spring is back and, with spring, there is an upsurge of energy. We all dream of endless sand beaches, the cool shade of a beach umbrella with cold drinks and lots of rest. But before enjoying the summer period, we have a lot of work ahead. The journal team has worked to put together the spring issue of *FIQ Actualités*.

In this issue, you can read articles discussing the issue of nursing externs, of nurses' negotiations in other provinces, subjects on the agenda of the upcoming convention, the improvement of certain pension credits, the job evaluation process. Subjects that will undoubtedly arouse your interest! In addition, there is a special report on the Second People's Summit of the Americas in the centrefold.

The journal team hopes you will find this issue stimulating and informative reading, and that the summer will be a sunny one for everyone.

*Marielle Ruel, nurse*



# In contact

## Little respite for nurses

Again this summer, we will probably hear talk of bed closings, nursing shortage and waiting lists in the health-care network.

Why should anybody be surprised? Over the past few years, the Government of Canada has cut health funding transfer payments to the provinces by one third and the Quebec Government has imposed severe economic therapy on the public to fight the deficit. In the health-care sector this has translated into unprecedented budget cuts, hospital closings, massive retirements without workforce planning, cuts in education programs, and the proliferation of jobs with casual status. In short, this is a network that increasingly finds it difficult to meet the public's needs and expectations, a network with insufficient resources and, as we all know, a network short of nurses.



## Difficult conditions of practice

In most health-care institutions, practising the nursing profession is difficult: a shortage, a lack of staff in other job categories, work overloads, unstable work teams, many cases of bumping, frequent and sometimes compulsory overtime, deferred vacations, etc. These conditions have inevitable consequences for nurses' physical and psychological health, which increases the rate of absenteeism.

To attract and keep nurses in health-care institutions, local and sometimes regional administrations are trying to negotiate working conditions and salaries that they refused in the last bargaining round. This gives free rein to arbitrary decisions and creates inequities in nurses' working conditions. It is a bidding war that displaces the nursing shortage without resolving it.

In every forum, the FIICQ and many of its affiliated unions are insisting that, in the short term, employers and the government make retention of nurses currently on the job their top priority to prevent the situation from worsening. This means immediately adding personnel in other job categories so that nurses can perform the tasks for which they are trained. It is also essential to offer as many full-time positions as possible to interested nurses and provide them with stable work teams. Sometimes, it will even be necessary to consider additional bed clos-

ings to avoid an excessive workload for nurses who are already exhausted.

The FIICQ will continue to demand that the government invest the necessary funds to implement the measures accepted by the Workforce Planning Committee and thus ensure the application of sustainable solutions to the nursing shortage.

## Not only in Quebec

The nursing shortage isn't only a Quebec problem, any more than the movement that is putting our public health-care system into question. A law now prohibits Quebec public institutions from running deficits and the governments of Canada and several provinces are questioning their financial capacity to invest in public services, despite budget surpluses unmatched in decades. In Quebec, Ontario and Alberta, several steps have already been taken to open the door to the private sector even wider.

As we observed during our participation in the People's Summit of the Americas last April, these are neoliberal policies, which seek to keep Canada in a competitive position for free trade. Even though our governments are trying to convince us that the health and social services system is not on the agenda of the negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), we now know that the negotiating documents talk about privatization.

## Liberalization and privatization: a blueprint for society to reject

We must refuse a blueprint for society that puts financial and economic interests ahead of human rights. We must insist that health-care not be considered a commodity. We must demand that the State continue to ensure the redistribution of wealth, social justice and respect for basic rights, including the right to health.

To ensure the Quebec public of quality care, delivered by a sufficient number of qualified nurses, we must defend our public health-care system. The FIICQ will also require the government to make financial commitments that meet the community's needs to eliminate the nursing shortage.

Despite the difficult situation, we wish those nurses who will be on vacation a well deserved rest, and hope that all of you will have a good summer.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennie Skene".

Jennie Skene,  
President

# Interview

## Coming soon, the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention

On the eve of the 6th Convention of the FIIQ, *FIIQ Actualités* gave priority to an interview with the Executive officer in charge of decision-making bodies, Régine Laurent. This 6th Convention is one of the most decisive in the FIIQ's history because crucial issues are on the agenda. Ms. Laurent gave a brief overview of the issues up for discussion and took the opportunity to remind us of the importance of solidarity and exchanges with other groups in a context of globalization. Here are Ms. Laurent's comments:

*Marielle Ruel, inurse.*



**At each Convention, discussions focus on one key idea. Could you explain the central theme of the upcoming Convention?**

The theme of the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention is in continuity with the theme debated at the 1998 Convention. You will recall that the theme of that convention focussed on how globalization affects our everyday lives as workers, nurses and women. This time, we will discuss the practice of nursing and nursing unionism in a context of neo-liberal globalization. We need only think of deregulation, the nursing

shortage and substitution. All of this is bringing about major changes for nurses. These changes are not a product of chance. On the contrary, they are the result of neo-liberal economic decisions. Together we must identify the necessary tools and alliances that will better allow us to defend our working conditions and improve our professional practice.

**What is the slogan for this convention?**

The slogan "*Solid in solidarity*" clearly reflects what we are as nurses and as a union organization. It emphasizes

the strength we have as a group. We are solid in solidarity. As an organization and as nurses, we have shown this with all the upheavals we have withstood in the network, in the action taken to support our demands during the negotiations, and in struggles that we believed to be legitimate. There are a fairly large number of issues on the agenda. Apart from the theme, we will continue look at the exploratory approach on the possibility of affiliation with a central labour organization, we will discuss the relevance of setting up a strike fund, and we will debate amendments to the FIIQ Constitution and By-laws. The Convention will also elect the members of the various committees.

**There is a major debate in our ranks on the future of the FIIQ, that is on the possibility of affiliating with a central labour organization. What is happening on this issue?**

One more step will be taken at the Convention, since the delegates will receive a report presenting information on each of the organizations contemplated by the approach: the CSN, the FTQ and the *Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU)*. Then, in September, delegates will have a complete analysis in hand, enabling them to make a recommendation to members on the best course of action for the future of the FIIQ and the nurses. Thinking about a potential affiliation gives us one more ace in our deck. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, nurses can only win, because the FIIQ is and will still remain an organization made strong by its members, and its past and future struggles.



### Régine Laurent

- Secretary of the FIIQ since 1991
- Executive officer in charge of decision-making bodies, Solidarity work and the Journal Committee
- Graduated from *Cegep du Vieux-Montréal* in 1979
- Nurse at Santa Cabrini Hospital
- A union representative since 1984, she was involved in the local union team in her centre and in the 1989 bargaining round as a member of the Info-Support team.



**What is the relevance for nurses of providing the FIIQ with a strike fund as a tool for collective action?**

We must remember that even before the strike, the idea of a strike fund was discussed in our decision-making bodies. On the picket lines, nurses often talked to us about the necessity of having a strike fund and some unions, out of their own funds, paid their members strike benefits. So this is a highly relevant debate. You will recall that after the strike, we collectively assumed the burden of reimbursing penalties and lost salary to nurses who had suffered financial losses as a result of the strike.

The difficulties encountered and the amount of energy deployed for the reimbursement operation are some of the reasons in favour of the creation of a strike fund. Giving ourselves a tool that will equip us better for future struggles is essential. But as I said earlier, this will be part of our debates at the



Convention and delegates will decide whether or not they want to create a strike fund.

**In the context of globalization, will the solidarity work take on another dimension?**

At the last Convention, during the discussions and exchanges on how globalization affects our everyday lives, we decided to extend our solidarity to other groups, to become part of a broad-based social movement to defend the right to accessible, good quality public services and the rights of women who unfortunately are suffering more visibly from the rollbacks. The FIIQ since then has become a member of the *Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale*, the RQIC. In the wake of the People's Summit, the *Table de convergence Q•2001* has also been created, bringing together up to 41 groups or organizations.



When we assess our solidarity policy after ten years, we find that this is no longer a separate issue but is an integral part of all of the FIIQ's actions. In my opinion, the Solidarity issue is very strongly rooted among delegates, who can in turn increase members' awareness and explain the reasons for and importance of our involvement and our opening to the world.

**You are not seeking a new mandate. What motivated your decision?**

In the past ten years, I have been deeply involved in my work and in the nurses' cause. This means I had little time to do anything else. Today, I feel the need to pursue my studies and, above all, to return to nursing practice. I have therefore decided to terminate my mandate and not to seek a new one. I hope that other union representatives will get involved on the Executive Committee. Even though this is demanding, it is also very rewarding.



While serving on the Executive of the Federation, entails enormous responsibilities, to some extent it becomes a school where you learn the meaning of sharing, solidarity and listening, and it gave me the opportunity to discover women and men of great worth.

***I leave with a little twinge in my heart, of course, but with the feeling that I have done my duty.***

## A convention in two parts



This will be the theme of the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention of the FIIQ on June 12, 13 and 14 and September 26, 27 and 28. This two-stage convention will be a first for the FIIQ, and is explained by the difficulty for union representatives to obtain several consecutive days of leave to attend. Therefore, at a special Convention last March, delegates decided to hold the Convention in two stages, a first part in June and another at the end of September.

As mentioned by the Executive officer in charge of meetings, Régine Laurent, in her interview, the agenda includes the adoption of the reviews and activities reports of each of the sectors, services and committees. The convention will also take a position on proposed amendments to the FIIQ Constitution and By-laws, the by-laws of the Union Defence Fund, the creation of a strike fund and the financial statements.

The approximately 900 delegates will also have to elect the members of the Executive Committee, and of the other statutory and standing committees. Above all, they will have a progress report regarding the exploratory approach on affiliation. Information will be given on the progress of the talks with the CSN, the FTQ and the *Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions* and it will be debated by delegates in September.

Also in June, the theme of *nursing work and unionism in the context of globalization* will be presented to delegates for the first time. Through these exchanges and information, delegates will be better equipped for the eventual consultation of nurses to make a decision in September. The Convention will also take a position in September on a policy against violence, to ensure the application of Article 3 of the Collective Agreement.

This is an important Convention for the future of our Federation. Delegates will have to reflect and define the FIIQ's policies and actions, not only for today, but for tomorrow, in order that they may continue to be *solid in solidarity*.

*Danielle Couture, consultant  
Communication-Information Service*

## Régine ... a woman of honour and generosity!

Following Régine Laurent's decision not to seek a new mandate on the FIIQ Executive Committee, and since she is the executive officer in charge of the journal, the Committee cannot let the tremendous job Régine has accomplished go unmentioned.

Since 1991, she has served as Secretary of the FIIQ Executive Committee and has been responsible for decision-making bodies, the Journal Committee and Solidarity work. She has also steered work on major issues including the representativeness of decision-making bodies. This involved the introduction of a weighted voting system that considers the number of members represented by each union rep. As the guardian of the FIIQ Constitution and By-laws, she firmly and vigilantly enforced them. With her acute sense of democracy and justice, she showed concern for the rights of everyone, especially the most deprived. Since 1991, she has been very involved in CISO, alternately serving as President and Vice-President.



More recently, Régine worked body and soul on organizing the Second People's Summit of the Americas. As coordinator of *Table de convergence Q • 2001*, a coalition of 42 groups from a wide variety of backgrounds, she spoke for the FIIQ alongside all those who expressed their disagreement with the proposed FTAA and uncontrolled globalization. She has worthily represented the nurses alongside people who are looking for an alternative and who want to develop the globalization of solidarity.

When Régine believes in a cause, nothing stops her. First and foremost, she believes in the cause of nurses together in the same federation. She is a real workhorse who doesn't count her hours: all that matters are the interests of the FIIQ and of its members. We would not go wrong in saying that, with her sense of humour and frankness, Régine knows how to make herself both respected and loved.

Always diligent in the Journal Committee meetings, she has brought us her joviality, her critical mind and her expertise. With humour and tactfulness, she knows how to correct a poorly formulated sentence or a mismatched auxiliary verb. The Committee members have learned and gained a lot in working with Régine.

Thank you, Régine, for the ten years you have devoted to the Federation. Thank you for your help, your support, your good humour and your generosity. Thank you is a small word, but it is still the most appropriate because we - Marielle, Michèle, Micheline, Danielle, Céline, Jean-François and Chantal - mean it with all our heart. We respect your decision to leave after 10 years of total involvement, but we will miss you. Good luck to a woman of honour and generosity.

*The team that worked,  
in one way or another, on FIIQ-Actualités.*

# A follow-up



## Second People's Summit

### Declaration of the Second People's Summit of the Americas

#### No to the FTAA!

#### Another Americas is possible!

*We, the delegates of the Second People's Summit of the Americas, declare our opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), project concocted secretly by the 34 Heads of state and government hand in hand with the American Business Forum.*

*Who are we? We are the Hemispheric Social Alliance, the voices of the unions, popular and environmental organisations, women's groups, human rights organisations, international solidarity groups, indigenous, peasant and student associations and church groups.*

*We reject this project of liberalised trade and investment, deregulation and privatization. We are opposed to a neo-liberal, racist, sexist and inequitable project that is destructive of the environment.*

*We propose to build new modes of continental integration based on democracy, equality, solidarity, respect for human rights and the environment. [...]*

#### The asymmetric Americas

*Indeed, we live in an Americas marked by intolerable inequalities and unjustifiable political and economic disparities:*

- *Half of the population of 800 million, of whom almost 500 million are Latin American, live in poverty;*
- *The South has a debt of US \$792 billion to the North, resulting in a debt servicing of US \$123 billion in 1999 alone;*
- *Capital, technologies and patents are concentrated in the North;*
- *Canada and the United States hold 89% of the economic might;*
- *A labour market where a high number of jobs are in the informal sector; where workers have no voice and their rights are constantly trampled on.*

*Free trade agreements widen the gap between the rich and the poor, between men and women, between North and South; they sever the connection between humanity and the environment. Just 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of the planet's natural resources. These free trade agreements create export economies to the detriment of local communities. They represent the consolidation of economic and legal corporate power at the expense of the sovereignty of peoples. [...]*

*Free trade agreements lead to an increasing feminisation of poverty and an exacerbation of existing inequalities between men and women. They produce workplaces where women earn less than men for the same work; where workers work in harsh and often degrading conditions without union rights. They promote unpaid and unrecognised work in the home and community, domestic violence and the sexual trafficking of women.*

*There is no possible fair agreement in such a context.*

#### What we want

*[...]*

*We demand absolute respect for universal, equal and indivisible human rights. [...]*

*We want real equality between men and women, the care of all children ensured, respect for the environment and an equitable distribution of resources.*

*We want complete respect for worker's rights, trade union rights, including collective bargaining and the right to strike. These rights must also be guaranteed for migrant workers. [...]*

*We want states to guarantee universal, free access to quality public education, to social and health services, including services especially for women (motherhood, contraception and abortion); states must eliminate violence against women and children; they must ensure respect for the environment on behalf of the current and future generations. [...]*

*We call upon the peoples of the Americas to intensify their mobilization to fight the FTAA projects and to develop other models of integration based on democracy, social justice and environment protection*

#### ANOTHER AMERICAS IS POSSIBLE!



# At the People's Summit

## Activities open to the public

**I**n the context of the People's Summit, various groups of the coalition *Table de convergence Québec 2001* felt it was important that there be public activities, where all those interested could come to discuss the impacts of the FTAA.

### Citizens' FTAA:

On the site of the Old Port in Quebec City, a day-long exchange of information and discussion. "*Americas Street*" offered educational activities on the consequences of the FTAA. "*Alternatives Street*", for its part, was an opportunity for different groups to present practical alternatives to neo-liberal globalization. A show was held to close this day of citizens activities.

### Free trade and financial speculation

This activity was held at Laval University. Guest speakers from ATTAC-France and ATTAC-Quebec spoke about the struggle waged against financial speculation and suggested ways of continuing this battle.

### A people's court

Organized by the *World March of Women*, this people's court was inspired by a Native tradition. Indeed, a group of "elders" heard first-hand accounts of the effects of globalization on women both in the North and in the South. These "elders" were then called upon to judge the

systems that maintain inequality and injustice towards women. All the women present also proposed ways of repairing damages and holding back the fervour of the upholders of this globalization. As the *Fédération des Femmes du Québec* stated in the last issue of the journal *En marche*, "*The importance of the subjects discussed, the life and militant experience of the participants, the intensity of the testimonies, the attentiveness and climate of trust that prevailed, the profoundness of the comments made this activity a big success.*"

### A perimeter of solidarity

The perimeter of solidarity was located in the neighbourhood of Limoilou in Quebec City. The activities that took place there were varied: conferences, debates, shows. It was designed to offer a forum to those who wanted to discuss freely the effects of neo-liberal globalization and the various forms of resistance that are organizing. This perimeter also wanted to create an area where activist experience and know-how could be pooled. This activity was organized by OQP 2001.



## Thematic forums

**A** few thousand activists from the three Americas participated in the various forums organized in the context of the Second People's Summit. Environment, agriculture, work, health, the situation of women, the role of the State, ... are all questions that were dealt with during the three days preceding the Summit of the Americas. The FIIQ participated more particularly in the Forum organized by the *Fédération des Femmes du Québec* where the issue of women's rights was discussed, the Labour Forum organized by the RQIC where the issue of work was discussed, and the Forum on government disinvolvement, organized by *Solidarité populaire Québec*.

### The Women's Forum

Participants at the Women's Forum discussed the constant deterioration of women's daily lives. More and more often, women are the victims of massive cutbacks in public services, and are driven back to housework and family responsibilities (natural helpers). Participants discussed violence, and the commodification of women's and young girls' bodies that is increasing considerably, as a result of the possibilities which free trade has opened up.

Participants also noted that women are growing poorer and poorer, and that that there are setbacks with regard to their rights. In fact, we say without hesitation that globalization is not only neoliberal, it is also sexist. This forum was in line with the *World March of Women* in that it revealed a determination to struggle against neoliberal globalization. Women therefore reasserted their determination to continue upholding their demands with regard to poverty and violence.

### The forum on the role of the State

At the People's Summit, the forum on "*the role of the State in the redistribution of wealth, as a way of fighting poverty*" dealt with three subjects: social programmes, the civil service and health care.

All those who have access to the texts being negotiated now speak of "free trade" of services. Yet, both the Quebec and Canadian governments state that the health-care and social services network are not covered by the FTAA negotiations or by negotiated trade agreements like the WTO (*World Trade Organization*). With the WTO discipline, that is the

clauses: 1- of the most privileged nation; 2- of national treatment; 3- on continuous bargaining and 4- the latch mechanism, we can expect that considerable setbacks are yet to come in the field of education and health care.

There were several examples of this: private clinics, rehabilitation services, sellable social services, independent community action, prescription drugs. What will remain of the health and social services network after the signature of the FTAA? Very little.

This is why health and social services must be excluded from the negotiable matters in the short, middle and long term. Moreover, we must demand and obtain that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights*, the *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women* and the *Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination* prevail over all international trade agreements, that is the FTAA as well as all trade agreements negotiated behind the closed doors of the WTO. The right to health is not negotiable.

### The Labour Forum

The President of the Federation, Jennie Skene, was one of the guest speakers on the opening panel of the Labour Forum.

After having stressed the importance of uniting to build a world where everything would not be considered a commodity, the President of the FIIQ invited the participants to a hold a minute of silence in tribute to the numerous men and women workers who gave their lives for the right to work.

Several aspects of labour were discussed during this forum. Among other questions, participants discussed the effects of economic integration on the exercise of union rights, on the labour market and on demands and strategies. Exchanges took place on the basis of conferences given by guest speakers from Mexico, the United States, Brazil, Canada, Quebec and France.

Like other activists from the three Americas, three FIIQ activists, Michèle Choquette, Denise Manzo and Suzanne Lavoie spoke of their experience as nurses.



To close the Labour Forum, a declaration was read by two young activists: Patricia Lajoie, nurse at the *CHUQ, St-François d'Assise* Pavilion and a Chilean political refugee. This declaration was greeted with enthusiasm by all participants. Here is a short excerpt from the Declaration.

*"Generations of men and women labour activists struggled to have the right to work entrenched in texts. The major international conventions recognize labour rights to be fundamental human rights. Free trade and the globalization of markets should therefore be subject to the respect of these rights.*

*We, the labour organizations of the Americas, demand a form of economic integration that respects the rights of the peoples and contributes to the improvement of living and working conditions. [...]*

*For us, continental integration should mean the multiplication of political, cultural and commercial exchanges between the peoples. However, it must not promote the hegemony of one country, its products and its culture over the others via commercial exchanges.*

*We want to work at tightening the links between men and women that live on this continent. To do this, we draw on the principles of sharing and justice that were at the origin and remain the driving force of the union movement."* [...]



## FIIO activists' address

*"Here, as in the South, the population of peripheral and rural regions move to the big urban centres to find work. In Quebec, we find the same population movements: in the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region, around 40 to 45 people leave the region each week. Among this number, there is a high number of young people of childbearing age. This is how a region is emptied, this is how a region disintegrates.*

*It is clear that the FTAA will reduce even more the power of the States. The power to distribute the wealth, to help outlying regions to develop and to ensure that there is inter-regional equity. The distribution of wealth will be more and more difficult, although our governments today do not assume this responsibility fully.*

*In such a context, how will we be able to defend the right to complete education and health services in a region that is losing its population? Is this the hidden agenda of our governments? Maintaining a certain equilibrium between the regions of Quebec, is certainly not a concern for investors. They are interested by their profits, regardless of the quality of life of the people."*

Michèle Choquette,  
Nurse, President of the SINEQ

*"During the last bargaining round, the concerns raised by nurses were legitimate, our demands were just and our contestation real. The government ruled by passing two laws. He **did not** crush us and he **will not** crush us!*

*The current situation in all types of institutions is the following: shortage, work overload, relocations, frequent and sometimes compulsory overtime, etc. This leads to physical exhaustion and psychological distress.*

*Local administrators are currently negotiating proposals that are in line with union demands rejected during the last bargaining round, in order to attract and retain nursing personnel.*

*Meetings like the People's Summit provide an opportunity to discuss problems we face, of course, but also to exchange on solutions."*

Denise Manzo,  
Nurse, President of the AIM

*"Since the beginning of the Forum, many speakers described situations here and elsewhere, situations that always have the effect of deteriorating the working and living conditions of workers. We must therefore work to develop common strategies.*

*At the national level, we must fight for the equitable distribution of wealth, jobs and investments, regardless of the regions. It is necessary to consolidate national links of solidarity, despite our differences and regardless of our allegiance. We must also establish continuous exchanges with our international partners, target common types of actions and orient our strategies to counter the perverse effects of globalization.*

*In closing, I want to share my dearest wish with you: that today be the beginning of a broad movement of labour mobilization in the North and in the South which will never stop. Is this not the greatest legacy we could leave for future generations?"*

Suzanne Lavoie,  
Nurse, President of the SPIIQ



## Respect of civil liberties: What's up?

Given the scope of the security measures put in place by our governments in preparation for the Summit of the Americas, and the concern these measures engendered among Quebec City residents and people who intended to demonstrate in Quebec City, the *Ligue des Droits et Libertés*, a Quebec human rights association, announced in February 2001 that it would set up a *civil liberties observation committee*. This committee was composed of around forty people, the majority of whom were lawyers, law professors and human rights advocates, including members of former UN observation missions in Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the Middle East and Latin America... But today, the observation mission was here in Quebec.

The pictures presented live on television, and broadcasted over and over afterwards, did not succeed in capturing the prevailing atmosphere. The vast majority of demonstrators could have been your sister, father, mother, friend, neighbour or work colleague... Thousands of people of all ages, with grey, brown or flashy red hair, from all over, strolling quietly or chatting, having difficulty believing what they were seeing, wanting to express their uneasiness or disapproval by their mere presence. Between six and ten thousand policemen, armed to the teeth, with shields, helmets and visors, parked all over the city. An impressive arsenal. In front of them, at a few spots near the fence, bare-handed demonstrators trained for direct action. To chase them away, repeated tear gas shootings (at some moments, we counted one per minute), some at waist or chest height, covering entire neighbourhoods with a cloud of dense, pungent smoke; plastic bullets, prohibited by the European Community because they can be deadly; and water canons that sweep away everything that lies in their way with their powerful jets.

The observers of the *Comité de surveillance des libertés civiles* were there, hoping that their presence would have a dissuasive effect on those who might have been tempted to act in a way that could have violated fundamental civil liberties. Assuredly, events surrounding the Summit in Quebec City once again demonstrated the importance of the continuous vigilance of each and everyone in a context of globalization that flouts human rights to reach economic objectives.

Martine Éloy, consultant  
Translation Service

N.B. The complete report of the observation committee will be available shortly.

# Second People's Summit



## The People's March: massive participation

**T**he meeting of the Summit of the Americas, with 34 of the 35 heads of state of the Americas had been on the political agenda for at least two years. However, as we approached the third week of April, more and more people in Quebec expressed concern... and rightfully so.

Indeed, many groups questioned the secret nature of these agreements designed to create a free trade area from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Well aware of the economic philosophy guiding our heads of state, citizens wanted to know. They wanted to know what would be negotiated in their name, affecting all spheres of their lives: public services, the environment, etc. At first, Canadian government representatives tirelessly repeated that they were working for our good, that the agreements are complex things and that, consequently, they must be handled by high-ranking

civil servants. Mobilization to demand public access to these texts grew constantly.

The government introduced nuances in its positions. It was willing to make the texts public, but it could not do so without the consent of the 33 other countries. Mass mobilization continued to grow. A few weeks before the Summit, the government argued that it would not be possible to translate these thousands of pages before the Summit. Mobilization reached a climax with the People's March of the Americas where more than 60,000 citizens from the three Americas marched in the streets of Quebec City to say NO to the FTAA, NO to the absolute rights of investors, NO to insecurity, exploitation, exclusion, NO to the commodification of health services and women's rights,

and to say YES, another world is possible, YES to Americas built on absolute and permanent respect of human rights, YES to Americas that eliminate inequalities, YES to Americas that develop in a spirit of respect for the environment, YES to fair trade.

In the face of the growing mobilization of citizens, governments will no longer be able to ignore public opinion, but we will have to remain vigilant to ensure that democracy is not trampled.



# Pension credits: major gains

Thanks to its active involvement in the committee responsible for distributing the surpluses of the SPP fund, the FIIQ has obtained major gains for nurses who contributed to a supplemental pension plan (SPP) before they joined the RREGOP and whose money had been paid to CARRA.

Remember that the last actuarial valuation of the SPP fund showed a surplus of about \$135 million. Given this fact, the government and the unions had agreed to form a committee to identify proposals for using this surplus. The committee was made up of representatives of CARRA, the government, the SFPO, the CSN, management staff associations and the FIIQ.

It was essential for the FIIQ to enhance pension credits for nurses who contributed to a SPP before joining the RREGOP by improving retirement benefits, because these nurses were only entitled to a small pension credit. For active members of the plan as of December 31, 1999, the FIIQ favoured reducing from 6% to 4% the actuarial penalty prescribed when the pension credit is paid before age 65, 50% reversibility of the pension credit to the surviving spouse, and indexing of these SPP credits to the full Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Moreover, for people retired as of December 31, 1999, the FIIQ convinced the other committee members of the importance of granting pension credit indexing to the full CPI as of January 1, 2000 with an adjustment for indexing not obtained since January 1, 1990 or since retirement, as well as 50%

reversibility of the pension credit to the surviving spouse.

Here is a tabular summary of the improvements to the pension credits, which will be granted retroactively to January 1, 2000.

These new provisions will come into force in autumn

2001, retroactive to January 1, 2000. Some nurses who are age 55 or over and still active will receive information on CARRA soon. Others, including retired nurses, will receive information from CARRA in autumn 2001.



*Line Lanseigne, consultant  
Social Security Sector*

## Active participants in the RREGOP as of December 31, 1999

Before January 1, 2000	As of January 1, 2000
<b>INDEXING</b>	
No indexing	Indexing to CPI
<b>ACTUARIAL REDUCTION</b>	
6% per year of anticipation if paid before age 65	4% per year of anticipation if paid before age 60 or 35 years of service
<b>SPOUSAL REVERSIBILITY</b>	
The amount paid to acquire the pension credit will be repaid to the spouse with interest minus the pension credit already paid, as the case may be	50% reversibility of the pension credit to the surviving spouse
<b>INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF THE PENSION CREDIT</b>	
Not applicable	Increase in the amount of the pension credit, which can reach up to 45%, but which cannot exceed the value of a RREGOP regular year, or 2% per year before age 65 and 2% - 0.7% per year after age 65

## Inactive participants in the RREGOP as of December 31, 1999

Before January 1, 2000	As of January 1, 2000
<b>INDEXING</b>	
No indexing	Indexing to the CPI effective from the year 2000 with adjustment for indexing not obtained since January 1, 1990 or since the date of retirement
<b>SPOUSAL REVERSIBILITY</b>	
The amount paid to acquire the pension credit will be repaid to the spouse with interest minus the pension credit already paid, as the case may be	50% reversibility of the pension credit to the surviving spouse
<b>INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF THE PENSION CREDIT</b>	
Not applicable	Increase in the amount of the pension credit, which can reach up to 45%, but which cannot exceed the value of an RREGOP regular year, or 2% per year before age 65 and 2% - 0.7% per year after age 65

# Nursing externs... a positive experience!

## Interesting pilot projects for new nurses

In a context of a severe nursing shortage in the health-care network, nursing extern pilot projects in nursing were conducted in several Quebec institutions in summer 2000. Allowing nursing students who had successfully completed their second year of studies to work in some of the network's institutions (CH and CHSLD) turned out to be an excellent idea both for the students and for the nurses on the job.



## The key to success: strict supervision

A health-care institution that sets up an extern program must comply with the decree under the *Professional Code* governing these pilot projects: a three-week orientation period is mandatory; the Director of Nursing is responsible for the extern program in the institution and must designate a resource person available to the extern and responsible for the latter's acts. The nurse responsible for the patient must be capable of supervising the extern adequately while ensuring the care that the patient requires. By all indications, the extern must be added to the nurses already on the care unit and not replace a nurse of the basic team. Thus, clearly defined professional acts can be performed by the extern under the supervision of a nurse on site.

## A positive experience

At the CHUQ\*, because the supervisory conditions necessary for such a project's success were fulfilled, 40 externs, always in addition to the basic team, lent a hand to CHUQ nurses in summer 2000. Nurse instructors, receiving the premium attached to this function, ensured the orientation and supervision of the selected students. The experiment was repeated in 2001 with no hesitation. Both for the students and for the network's regular staff, such a project proves to have many advantages.

Moreover, ninety students participated in the extern project conducted in summer 2000 at the MUHC\*\*. Although some nurses initially considered that this project would risk increasing their workload due to the needs related to supervision, the experiment clearly turned out to be worth it. In some institutions, employers allowed externs to work on specialized units and supervision was not possible all the time. Even so, at the end of the summer, the vast majority of nurses gave the experiment a positive assessment. In 2001, 97 students were hired to participate in the nursing extern project.

## A beneficial project

The extern project provides nurses with everyday assistance that slightly reduces their workload. Externs can perform many professional acts without supervision. Whether in reading vital

signs during respiratory exercises, monitoring neurological signs when administering various drugs, checking blood sugar during urinary catheterization or in other cases, they can provide the everyday help that many have been demanding for a long time.

While ensuring that new nurses will come to the profession, this project facilitates recruitment and increases the graduation rate because the externs are integrated into a specific work environment at the end of their second year of studies. Students are thus very likely to return to the same work environment after completing their nursing course. In addition to putting nursing students in contact with the work environment, which by all indications promotes their integration, this allows them to acquire invaluable professional experience and reduces the third year dropout or failure risk. At the CHUQ, out of 40 students who participated in the extern project in summer 2000, 38 were hired when they completed their course and at the CUSM, out of the 90 externs, 57 are now employed. In the current context, this gives cause for some institutional administrators to be jealous.

## More projects for summer 2001

For example, on the North Shore, both at *CHR de Baie-Comeau* and *CHR de Sept-Îles*, there will be a first experiment with nursing externs in summer 2001. In all, 19 students will support the North Shore nurses.

The same goes for the Saguenay where, with financial support from the regional board, *Carrefour de santé de Jonquière* and *Complexe hospitalier de la Sagamie* have proceeded to hire 20 nursing externs. The regional board is covering the students' salaries for the three weeks of orientation. The regional board will also pay the \$500 requested by the OIIQ to study the file of each student authorized to participate in a pilot project.

Several other projects will thus be implemented in health-care institutions to provide a solution, no matter how small, to the nursing shortage and the resulting work overload. It is important to act prudently in implementing these projects and to never put students and nurses of the institution in problematic situations that may be dangerous. It has already been determined that units such as intensive care, emergency or perinatal care, to name only a few, are inappropriate for this type of project. If the necessary support is provided for the integration of students, who are always in addition to the basic team, if supervision is well organized, and if the authorized professional acts are clearly defined, there is good reason to believe that extern pilot projects will be increasingly numerous in Quebec and that they will continue to support nurses in the network while helping to prepare relief.

*Michelle Choquette,*  
nurse

\* Centre hospitalier universitaire de Québec

\*\* McGill University Health Centre

# May 12 – International Nurses' Day



*Solid in solidarity* is a good representation of what nurses are about. **Solid** because they are still there despite often difficult conditions of professional practice, and **in solidarity** as reflected by their struggles and the bonds they have built with others.

This year like other years, *International Nurses' Day* was the occasion for festivities to mark our pride in being nurses and in practicing this profession for the public good. Several unions took advantage of the few days around this event to organize various activities: luncheon lectures, discussion workshops, meetings that allowed nurses to look at their everyday lives and reflect on the profession's current challenges. The members of the FIQ Executive attended several activities organized by local teams. Brochures, posters, postcards and bookmarks were distributed to nurses.

This year, the activities surrounding *International Nurses' Day* took place a few weeks before the FIQ's 6<sup>th</sup> Convention. This June's Convention will be an ideal time for FIQ nurses to ask themselves questions and take positions on the best collective ways to improve nurses' everyday lives and envisage the future of the organization they have built, so that they can meet the many challenges they are facing today and those they will face tomorrow.



Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont



Montreal Children's Hospital

# Job evaluation process: stepping up the pace

To step up the pace of job evaluation and facilitate coordination of the work of the various unions, the FIIQ has given its assent to the creation of an interunion table on the issue. In addition to the FIIQ, representatives of the CSN, FTQ, CSQ and SFPQ will participate.

On April 9, the *Conseil du trésor* tabled a new proposal with the Interunion table involving changes to the job evaluation plan used previously in the public and parapublic sectors. Some of the proposed changes partially meet the FIIQ's demands to eliminate the sexist biases of the evaluation plan. These changes also consider certain recommendations emanating from the *Commission des droits de la personne*, which proposed adjustments to account for the characteristics of predominantly female jobs.

In the objective of complying with the *Commission de l'équité salariale's* recent decision, the *Conseil du trésor* also tabled a working document stating its position on the method of estimating salary gaps. This will primarily serve to evaluate and then to correct the salary gaps between predominantly female job categories and predominantly male job categories.

To carry out all of this work, the Interunion table agreed with the *Conseil du trésor* representatives to set up two committees, one on the evaluation plan and the other on the method of estimating salary gaps. A schedule of meetings was also determined by the parties.

This work is of crucial importance. The FIIQ will invest all its energy to ensure that the characteristics of the work of nurses and women in general are taken into account and evaluated at their fair value under this exercise.

*Sophie Fontaine, consultant  
Negotiation Sector*

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# News from nurses in other provinces

Across Canada, the nursing shortage is an unavoidable reality, making the conditions of practice of the nursing profession very difficult. In this context, Alberta nurses recently signed a collective agreement making them the best paid nurses in Canada, while Ontario and British Columbia nurses engaged in pressure tactics to obtain a new collective agreement. The nurses are all demanding conditions that will keep nurses in the profession and attract new ones

## In Alberta: substantial gains

The new collective agreement of the nurses of this province provides improvements on several levels: benefits, working conditions, professional improvement and salaries. Indeed, nurses will obtain a 17% to 20% salary raise by April 2002, depending on their position in the salary scale. Funds have also been allocated to reduce the number of part-time positions, increase evening and night shift premiums and to increase the number of professional improvement days for each nurse. In addition, nurses also obtained a zero tolerance policy against harassment and violence at work.

## In British Columbia and Ontario: keeping up the pressure

In Ontario, for the first time in their history, thousands of nurses decided to participate together in pressure tactics such as voluntary refusal to work overtime and a work-to-rule on breaks and meals. Ontario nurses took the opportunity of Nurses' Week from May 7 to 13 to launch a major awareness-raising campaign to obtain support from the Ontario public for their demands.

British Columbia nurses also decided to refuse to work overtime and to perform any tasks not within a nurse's responsibility. They also orchestrated an extensive information campaign during the provincial elections. B.C. nurses will be called upon to vote on the latest management offers on June 5. The union leadership has recommended that nurses massively reject the latest management proposal.

Nurses in Ontario and British Columbia are fed up with working conditions that prevent them from offering the quality of care that patients are entitled to receive. They want a settlement that will enable them to attract new nurses to the profession, bring back those who have left and keep those who are exhausted by their workload.

*Micheline Poulin, consultant  
Communication-Information  
Service*



*fiiq*  
An  
exploratory  
process  
in view  
of affiliation:  
WHY?



The members of the FIIQ Executive Committee are presently on a round of visits to local general assemblies to explain why an exploratory process in view of affiliation. These meetings will give nurses the opportunity to discuss this important question. After 13 years, it is normal to take stock of past actions and to envisage the future. It is normal to look at the avenues that are open to the FIIQ in order to better defend nurses' interests.

In union democracy, it is the responsibility of leaders to propose, but it is the responsibility of members or their representatives, the delegates, to decide. To do this well, as members, it is therefore important to take the time to understand, analyze and reflect in order to make informed decisions.

The members of the Executive Committee count on the presence of many nurses in these meetings, on the one hand, to help nurses to better understand the issues at stake in the process and, on the other, to hear their comments and opinions on the matter.

The majority of the information meetings began on May 14 and continued through to June 1, 2001. A booklet was produced by the Federation to convey the information to as many nurses as possible.

If you do not have a copy of this booklet, you can pick one up at the local union office or you can download it from our web site ([www.fiiq.qc.ca](http://www.fiiq.qc.ca)).



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**solid in solidarity**

**6<sup>th</sup> Convention of the FIIQ  
on June 12, 13 and 14 and  
September 26, 27 and 28  
2001**



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