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To improve our services and broaden our action

The President of the Federation, Jennie Skene, welcomed delegates at this first regular Federal Council meeting for the year 2003. She took advantage of the opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent democratic exercise that took place at the Special Federal Council last March on the draft collective agreement. Thus, nurses' draft collective agreement will soon be presented to the management party, at a time deemed timely.



The President briefly presented the main issues on the agenda of the Federal Council. *"When preparing for the Special June Convention on finances, delegates will have the opportunity to discuss the various elements of the financial situation of the Federation and the outlook for the future. The proposals we present to you today are designed to ensure that our organization operates smoothly with enough funds to take on the responsibilities and issues with which you entrust us, including the financial needs that arise out of the FIIQ TOMORROW plan of action."*

"What the Federation now needs are stable revenues in order that together we may improve union life, that together we may establish solid grounds on the eve of another bargaining round, that together we may count on the FIIQ as a collective tool in keeping with our choices and in keeping with the needs we have identified together, and this for many years to come."

"Delegates will also be called upon to take a stand on the FIIQ TOMORROW action plan. After the Convention where delegates had rejected the proposal to affiliate to a central labour body, the FIIQ TOMORROW project took shape. In order that the Federation may better fulfill its mission and push back the limits of its interventions, develop new ways of exercising its power to influence and its bargaining power, and evolve according to the new realities of the 21st century with regard to unionism, the situation of women and globalization, the plan of action tabled in December will be debated and voted on at this Federal Council."

"Moreover, we will follow up on several important issues, in particular, negotiations, pay equity, local nursing workforce planning experiences and the plan of action on violence. During this Federal Council, given the world situation, delegates will examine globalization at greater length in order to better understand the world events and current issues. Although the war in Irak is almost over, violence, suffering and injustice still prevail and we will have to pursue our work to put an end to wars, to give peace a chance and to struggle for a more just world for all."

FIIQ TOMORROW

DELEGATES BELIEVE IN IT

After a tour that took the members of the FIIQ TOMORROW team to every corner of Quebec, the Executive Committee tabled an action plan for debate. Each of its five focuses has very specific objectives, supported by concrete actions. The delegates thus adopted the action plan and the budget estimates to support its implementation. Here is a summary of the key elements.

FOCUS 1:
Education at the core of union practice.

FOCUS 2:
Increased union commitment based on trust and respect.

FOCUS 3:
A strong and expanded local union practice.

FOCUS 4:
Consolidating bargaining power.

FOCUS 5:
Expanding the power to influence.

For over a year, **FIIQ TOMORROW** has been the object of presentations, exchanges and discussions between the members of the team and the local, regional and FIIQ union activists. It was debated yet again at the last Federal Council. The delegates at this meeting adopted the action plan resulting from all of these consultations. The plan will now be implemented so that the FIIQ can exercise its full leadership in Quebec society and the Quebec labour movement. As we wrote in the last issue of **FIIQ En Action**, the FIIQ TOMORROW action plan is meant as a message of solidarity, openness and strength, issued by the FIIQ to the union representatives and members.

Education AT THE CORE OF UNION PRACTICE

Union education enables union reps to acquire practical knowledge, of course, but it should also provide political education. Doing without these two components means denying that an organization like the FIIQ is an agent of social change. To ensure that it fully plays this role, it is essential for union reps to strengthen collective values and develop a union culture and a sense of commitment. The Education-Animation service should review the content of the various sessions in this sense. This will ensure that when union reps come out of a training session, they have assimilated concepts that will enable them not only to perform their duties, but to play their role as activists in an organization representing women, nurses, workers and full citizens.

Increased union commitment BASED ON TRUST AND RESPECT

All of the delegates want to increase the union commitment of members and union reps. However, to achieve this goal, delegates said that they needed information tools to help members understand the issues and explain the FIIQ's positions in simple language. The delegates also suggested that exchange and renewal meetings be held at the regional and Quebec levels. They stipulated that these forums should not become decision-making bodies or result in additional expenses. During the tour of the FIIQ TOMORROW team, participants pointed out that these meetings could be scheduled under the FIIQ's yearly action plan. All the actions voted under this focus seek, as one of their goals, to reduce the gaps between members and union reps, between expectations and results, and between their hopes and the possibilities related to the context.

A strong and expanded

LOCAL UNION PRACTICE

For union reps, the strength of an organization like the FIIQ undeniably depends on the dynamism, solidarity and strength of local union practice. In this sense, the goals and the actions to achieve them are essential to strengthen and augment the FIIQ's bargaining power and power to influence, while increasing its credibility with the public and with decision-makers.

For the delegates, there is no question of the FIIQ taking over the responsibility for maintaining union activity at the local level. On the contrary, the FIIQ's role will be to work with and support the local teams and the local, regional or sectional unions. The FIIQ will therefore equip them properly to deal with the new realities which often require a more thorough analysis of the problems and more creative solutions.



Consolidating

BARGAINING POWER

For the delegates, the current collective bargaining system offers little flexibility to adapt nurses' working and living conditions and give nurses a real say in determining them. This is why delegates favour initiating a process of reflection, both within and outside the FIIQ, on partial decentralization of the negotiations. This would be associated with an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism. All of the delegates consider it very important that the framework and benchmarks for any form of decentralization be determined at the Quebec-wide level.

Another way to increase bargaining power is to give nurses financial support during labour disputes. Several comments were made concerning the creation of a union action fund to support nurses' struggles. Some delegates were very happy to be able to put this issue back on the agenda. Others considered it inappropriate to reconsider this question. However, a strong majority voted to reopen the discussion on providing the FIIQ with such a fund. Beyond the increase in bargaining power, a tool like a union action fund would support all of the FIIQ's member nurses in their struggles, regardless of whether they work in public or private institutions. By voting in favour of such a fund, delegates would eliminate disparities between FIIQ's affiliated unions.



Expanding

THE POWER TO INFLUENCE

Nurses and union activists have always wanted the FIIQ to have greater social and economic influence, and greater influence in the labour movement as a whole. For the Executive Committee, there are other ways to achieve this goal. In particular, priority should be given to another area of representation, based on the fact that 92% of the members are women. Secondly, the Executive Committee proposed that the FIIQ occupy the forums where health-care is influenced at the local and regional levels. Thirdly, the FIIQ should publicize its positions more widely, both internally and externally.

Delegates immediately expressed agreement with two of these three resolutions. Some were surprised and expressed reservations at the proposal to analyze issues or forge an opinion in a feminist perspective. However, after some discussion and explanations by the Executive member responsible for FIIQ TOMORROW, Daniel Gilbert, delegates decided that it was important for the FIIQ to include the feminist dimension among its priorities and concerns when it adopts positions. Its credibility as a union organization, the vast majority of whose members are women, depends on this. After all, we are in a good position to know and understand the impact of certain government decisions on Quebec women in general. In particular, we are thinking of the shift to ambulatory care and the refusal to increase the minimum wage significantly. Delegates therefore decided to put the emphasis on women's issues to ensure that the FIIQ has all possible visibility and influence.

Daniel Gilbert concluded his presentation with a reminder that almost all the union reps the team met on the tour recognized themselves in the action plan. Most of them mentioned that the action plan guarantees greater solidarity, greater trust and greater support for their organization, the FIIQ. According to the union reps, the objectives pursued and the proposed actions are evidence of a real commitment to bring the FIIQ closer to the members. Finally, many of them considered it appropriate for the FIIQ to provide more tools to facilitate the work of local and regional union reps.



Even though the delegates adopted budget estimates to support implementation of the objectives and the actions adopted, an increase in dues will be necessary to move forward. This will be submitted to a vote at the Special Convention. It is unthinkable for the FIIQ to implement such an action plan without adding sufficient financial and human resources. Stay tuned for new developments in June.

The delegates' decisions reveal an exciting and promising vision of the future for the FIIQ and for the nurses it represents. The FIIQ has the leverage it needs to become even more open to local, regional, national and international solidarity and alliances. At the same time, it will guarantee that it has both feet on the ground, based on the realities of its members as nurses, workers and women.



Financial resources

IN KEEPING WITH OUR CHOICES

The Treasurer of the FIIQ, Lise Martel, reminded delegates that, at the last Federal Council, the Executive Committee had convened delegates to a Special Convention on finances to be held next June 4. This calls for thinking and discussion in view of making appropriate decisions regarding the financial health of the Federation and ensuring its capacity to intervene. This debate is important if we are to make decisions together that will ensure the continuity of a federation that works in the best interest of its members. The Treasurer presented an elaborate document to delegates to launch the discussion.

From the start, Lise Martel stated that it is always very touchy to discuss the financial needs of an organization when its only source of revenue are the dues paid by the members it represents and defends. This touchy but nevertheless very important question must be addressed very seriously. To this effect, the Executive Committee closely examined all the items of the Federation's budget. Since 1998, every effort was made to redress the financial situation in order to attain financial balance. Today, the work on the issue of FIIQ TOMORROW reveal that major elements must be taken into consideration in order for the nurses' federation to be shaped to meet the needs of its members and activists.

However, the exercise which consists of reviewing and changing ways of doing things internally in order to maximize the use of resources was already done on many occasions, and it is essential that the debate now explore other avenues.

A FEDERATION IN KEEPING WITH ITS ORIENTATIONS, THE NEEDS OF ITS MEMBERS AND ITS FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The defence and improvement of nurses' working and living conditions as well as the development of a quality health-care network are at the heart of the Federation's concerns. In view of this, the treasurer reminded delegates that the Federation has had to add resources on a regular basis, especially in the Labour Relations Sector to respond to members' forever growing needs.

More complex labour relations, the political context, the nursing shortage, nursing workforce planning, the work on pay equity as well as the debates on the FIIQ's capacity as an organization to continue to better represent and better support the nurses it represents called for greater, more sustained involvement on the part of employees, and required — and will continue to require — even greater financial resources. Efforts were made to analyze priorities and question the importance and pertinence of the Federation's interventions, but the needs expressed by union representatives and members are forever rising. As an example, since 1998, the number of occupational health and safety cases tripled and the annual expense for medical opinions has risen from \$145,000 to \$321,000.

Besides the services offered, we have to consider:

- certain adjustments that need to be made to the system of equalization in order that support to union life be fairer for all members, and modifications in the application of the expense policy for decision-making meetings and training activities;
- the 2003 budget shows a deficit, while maintaining current interventions and the services offered;
- the adoption of the FIIQ TOMORROW plan of action and its financial impacts;
- the FIIQ's mandatory responsibility towards its employees with regard to pay equity and the renewal of their collective agreement;
- the precarious nature of the negotiation reserve fund.

A brief analysis of the situation for each of the items mentioned above as well as the related costs were discussed along with the Executive Committee's recommendation to raise the annual dues paid to the Federation by \$101.81, from the current \$384.85 to \$486.66. This amount is equivalent to \$2.00 per week per dues-paying member. It is up to each union to decide how it intends to finance this raise. Delegates have until the Special Convention to be held in June to continue reflecting and discussing this question with members locally. If you need more extensive information, do not hesitate to communicate with your local union representatives. They have the answers to your questions.

EXPENSE POLICY FOR DECISION-MAKING MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

At the December Federal Council meeting, delegates asked that certain elements of the expense policy, regarding the reimbursement of expenses for Federal Council and Convention meetings and training sessions, be reviewed. Proposals were tabled then to be discussed at this Federal Council. The Executive Committee therefore presented modifications, with the related costs, to the delegation for adoption.

The recommendations adopted by delegates concern mainly travel expenses which will be slightly increased, to be set at 80 % of the rate allotted by the Conseil du trésor. Other recommendations adopted are aimed at regulating travel and accommodations in certain situations while ensuring that expenses are controlled.

During the presentation of these recommendations, the Treasurer of the FIIQ, Lise Martel, reminded delegates that the last Federal Council meeting decided that, in the event that changes regarding costs were adopted, we would have to wait for the outcome of the Special Convention on finances in June before putting them into effect.

Elections for two committees

Elections were held to fill vacant positions until the next regular FIIQ convention in 2004; a position on the Election Committee and a position on the Internal Audit Committee.

Was elected to the Election Committee:
MARIE-CHRISTINE GRAS
CLSC Parc Extension

Was elected to the Internal Audit Committee:
SUZANNE LAVOIE
President of SPIIQ

In the last issue of *FIIQ en Action*, an error slipped by. We unfortunately forgot to name:

Was elected to the Education-Animation Committee:
JOSIANNE OUELLETTE
CH Saint-Eustache

Congratulations to all for their appointment !

VOTE NO TO THE DRAFT FTAA AGREEMENT

Cap-Monde, of which the FIIQ is a member, stands opposed to the FTAA (Free trade Area of the Americas). Like many community groups, religious groups, unions, and students throughout the Americas, Cap-Monde calls on all the members of civil society to participate in the People's Consultation and to take a stand against the draft FTAA.

Ten years after the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the disastrous effects of free trade are now well-known and documented. Yet, the draft FTAA (34 countries of the Americas) represents an even greater threat.

Each local team of the Federation will encourage nurses, throughout the month of May, to express their disagreement with the draft FTAA, by inviting them to sign a petition and by distributing voting ballots. The votes collected will then be given to the Canadian government.



The Government of Canada is currently negotiating **FREE TRADE**

DO YOU AGREE
with a
Free Trade Area
of the Americas
(FTAA)
that could:

- privatize public health and education services...
- expand exploitation of women and children...
- increase pollution and its effects on local populations...
- master the commons (e.g. water and forests) solely to the benefit of the wealthy...
- put the interests of investors ahead of human rights...
- subject governments to the interests of the financial markets for the benefit of the multinationals.

YES: NO:

April 2003



Nursing Workforce Planning STILL ON THE AGENDA

In order to follow up on the work of the *Forum national sur la planification de la main-d'œuvre infirmière* and the projects conducted in certain FIIQ-affiliated unions, Daniel Gilbert presented a complete report on the situation to delegates on the last day of the Federal Council meeting. Moreover, Daniel invited union representatives from two institutions to speak to delegates about the nursing workforce planning experience at the local level. Four union representatives, two from *Hôtel-Dieu de Roberval* and two from *Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal, Albert-Prévost pavilion*, presented the nursing workforce planning exercise they conducted locally with the support of a consultant from the FIIQ Nursing Workforce Planning team..

The Forum national

The March 26 meeting was aimed at updating the situation by way of the evaluation of the various measures implemented, and to decide what actions should be taken.

Daniel Gilbert first reported on the number of students admitted to the various nursing programmes. In 1998, 2154 students were admitted to CEGEP programmes and, in 2002, there were 4241. For the same period, universities admitted 250 and 735 nursing students. Moreover, around 200 people participated, in the past three years, in special training programmes: refresher programmes, nursing assistant retraining, condensed training programme. Finally, in order to ensure a better success rate, the OIIQ has decided to produce a preparatory assistance manual for the examination. Concerning the recruitment programme in France, it has made it possible to date to recruit around 400 nurses, of which around 50% have chosen to settle in Quebec.

Despite the efforts made to admit more students in CEGEPS and universities, the ministry predicts an accumulated deficit in five years of 9,400 nurses, in 10 years of 17,300 and, in 15 years, the deficit will be 26,300 nurses. It therefore becomes important to promote actions which will have effects in the short and middle term. The actions proposed include:

- increasing the number of graduates available;
- reducing the provincial ratio of nurses on salary insurance;
- improving the retention rate for all nursing cohorts;
- stabilizing work teams;
- introducing measures to delay retirement;
- recruiting nurses abroad.

The impact of these measures, if they are applied, would be considerable since the deficit in five years would be 679 nurses instead of 9400 and, in 15 years, it would be 7,131 nurses instead of 26,300.

Organization of work projects

The ministry decided to renew the organization of work projects for another year and allotted two million dollars for the period 2003-2004. Projects are planned in 145 CHPs; 56 CHSLDs and 19 CLSCs, which brings to 220 the number of projects planned. The Federation believes it is crucial that institutions take part in these projects and it will provide the material and support necessary to enable union representatives to take action on the organization of work. Training sessions will be offered and meetings will be held with the union representatives of the health-care institutions concerned.

First-hand account of nursing workforce planning experiences

The members of two local teams presented the results of their nursing workforce plans. Both indicated that, although this required a lot of time, it was well worth their while since it is an consolidating experience for members, but especially since it opens the way to solutions. Once completed, the exercise points to solutions to remedy certain situations that cause problems of workforce attraction and retention. This exercise enables the employer to plan ahead for movements of nursing personnel. The four union representatives encouraged delegates to engage in such a project. The Federation provides all the needed support and employers quickly realize that it is in their interest to make workforce planning a priority too.

Many thanks to Diane Gaze and Maude Lanctôt, from *Albert-Prévost pavilion*, and Louise Ménard and Régine Simard, from *Hôtel-Dieu de Roberval*, for their presentation.



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