



Action

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The countdown has begun!

This June 6 to 10, more than 900 delegates, coming not only from different classes of personnel but from every region of Quebec and all institutions with different missions, are expected in Saint-Hyacinthe for the 7th Convention of the Federation. This will be the opportunity for everyone to get acquainted and establish the foundations of new cooperation.

Projects for Building the Future Together - this is the theme the Federation has chosen to animate the discussions, which will be most varied and, we hope, very stimulating. This is a unifying and very relevant theme in the current context of transformation: the arrival of new members, the expansion of local units, the national and local negotiations which will begin shortly. The Convention is thus an appropriate time to prepare for the future together. In this *Pre-Convention FIIQ en Action*, we give you a foretaste of the issues that will be on the agenda, which will define the contours of a new Federation.

Together toward the future



It is with immense pride that I will open this 7th Convention as President of the Federation. I am even prouder that this will be the first Convention at which we will be united under the same banner – as nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, perfusionists, child nurses, baby nurses and extra-corporal circulation technicians – to exchange ideas and make decisions as we *Build the future together*. This future looks promising, with a renewed vision that not only reflects the image of its new members but a union renewal begun with FIIQ TOMORROW.

After all the turmoil orchestrated by the Charest Government, it's time for all of us to catch our breath, evaluate the gains and losses, gauge our forces, plan the work to be done and keep looking to the horizon. This is a major challenge, you will tell me, but a challenge that is so stimulating, because it not only involves giving life to a new organization but reaffirming the place FIIQ+ occupies in the labour movement and in the field of social struggles. I am convinced that this place will still be the envy of many organizations.

Of course, we are still confronted with serious problems – the staff shortage, workload, the organization of work. All this unfortunately leads to loss of motivation, disillusionment, and even a form of disengagement from union action. The Convention will have to focus its debates and decisions on a perspective in which it must consider this context as an organization, even if these issues are not specifically on the agenda. The Federation has already put tools and actions in place to reduce the negative effects of this context and will continue to work on developing actions and putting forward demands with the ultimate objective of defending its members.

It will thus be up to you delegates and the members of the Federal Executive Committee to discuss our analysis of this situation and choose how, together, we will encourage greater involvement by everyone, how we will develop greater solidarity within our ranks and with others, how we will create intergenerational bonds that promise an innovative and militant new generation of activists, and finally, how we will forge alliances among our members, men and women, that promote respect and equality. All these exchanges will be an opportunity conducive to continue our union and social action as an organization whose members are workers, women and citizens.

As I mentioned, I will open this Convention with great pride, but also with mixed emotions, since I am leaving the presidency of the Federation. As I announced to the delegates at last December's Federal Council, the time has come, after a little more than 11 years at the head of the FIIQ, to make way for a successor.

In this last message, I would like to tell you this: if I have been able to work to obtain recognition of the profession and the value of nurses' work, if I have succeeded in signing agreements which have improved the members' working and living conditions, if I have made the voice of nurses heard on the public scene, if I have been able to argue their point of view in parliamentary committees or in other forums, if I have been able to bear witness to the nurses' struggles, gains and difficulties, it is thanks to every one of you.

Your presence, determination and militancy have given me the energy and the words I needed to assume my responsibilities and continue the struggle. Knowing that you were not only behind me but beside me, just as you stood shoulder to shoulder with the members of the Executive Committee, gave us the necessary confidence to defend you with all the strength of our convictions. When you expressed your opinions and sometimes called us to order, this was a healthy demonstration of democracy and I strongly urge you to maintain this attitude. I would have liked to do more, but I would have needed the power to write the laws.

The future of FIIQ+ is very promising... It is up to you, with a new President, to ensure that our organization continues its progress... In solidarity, I wish each of you farewell.

Jeanne Séguin
President

Building
the future
TOGETHER

7th
Convention
June 6-7-8-9-10,
2005



THE REAL FORCE OF
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The standing committees

Evaluation and recommendations

The Federation lives and progresses through the sense of belonging it develops among its members and the commitments of its union reps at every level of the organization. When the FIIQ TOMORROW action plan was adopted in March 2003, it was decided to evaluate the practice (role, mandate, composition) of each of the Federation's committees and, if necessary, establish new participatory mechanisms.

A process of reflection thus began on the standing committees with the aim of making recommendations to the Convention. In the opinion of everyone consulted and the members of the Executive Committee, there was a consensus on the necessity of maintaining them. They are one of the links in the chain of democratic union life, through which the members are connected to everyday realities. The committees that were the focus of this reflection were the Newspaper Committee, the Education-Animation Committee, the Occupational Health and Safety Committee, the Youth Committee, the Status of Women Committee and the Insurance Committee.

The delegates thus will study a document which presents the main findings regarding the importance of these committees, their roles and their functioning, and an evaluation of each. The document then takes a look at their future, proposing solutions to the problems identified, some of which are the object of recommendations.

One recommendation specifies the general role of the committees:

- Integrate the reality of care professionals into different spheres of activity.
- Influence the debates at different levels of the organization.
- Support the FIIQ in its achievements.
- Report to the Convention on their activities.

Other recommendations propose the formation of six standing committees:

- **Status of Women Committee:** 6 members, 1 Responsible Executive Officer and 1 consultant.
- **Youth Committee:** 5 members age 30 or under (at the time of election), 1 Responsible Executive Officer and 1 consultant.
- **Occupational Health and Safety Committee:** 6 members, 1 Responsible Executive Officer and 1 consultant.
- **Education-Animation Committee:** 6 members, including 4 permanent members and 2 members chosen, as needed, from among the members of the other committees according to their expertise, 1 Responsible Executive Officer and 1 consultant.
- Replacement of the Journal Committee with a **Publications Review Committee:** union representatives chosen from among the members of the FIIQ standing committees (two members per committee), 1 Responsible Executive Officer and 1 consultant.
- Abolition of the Insurance Committee and, when needed, formation of an **ad hoc committee**.

In addition, the Executive Committee will recommend that all the members of the FIIQ standing committees be fraternal delegates to the Federation's regular decision-making bodies, Federal Councils and Conventions, and that the union leaves be assumed by the Federation.

Building the future TOGETHER

A call for commitment

One of the strengths the labour movement requires – commitment – is back on the agenda. In the context of the current reforms, which are designed to weaken the unions, it is important that the situation be transformed into an experience of union power, allowing all activists to develop the conviction that they can exercise a determining influence in their institutions. Leadership, motivation and mobilization are the three key words of this power of collective union action, to which the members must adhere so that they can influence decisions and support their demands.

The Federation has been built and continues to develop by the leadership of its union representatives and by the power to act of the members it brings together. Today, the union leaders face a neoliberal government and employers always seeking to save money. Today, local union organizations are taking on new forms. Tomorrow, they will derive their support from a broader membership, composed of interprofessional and inter-mission groups which will give union practice a new coloration.

Committee work – A rewarding experience!

In the opinion of the members serving on the Youth Committee, the Status of Women Committee, the Occupational Health and Safety Committee or the Education-Animation Committee, their involvement has allowed them to develop a greater sense of belonging to the organization, acquire new knowledge, develop hitherto unsuspected skills and create solidarity with other activists, both within and outside the FIIQ. In short, there is a strong consensus on the many positive effects of involvement in committee work.

For the Federation, the committees have always been an essential forum for participation, allowing members to get involved in their union organization's militant action. They are also a democratic tool which the Federation has always advocated.

Especially this year, joining a FIIQ committee is an action that builds the future and shows commitment to your union organization. It is also a responsible gesture that will allow the Federation to continue offering all its members issues strongly rooted in the everyday reality of health care, issues that reflect our concerns and bring us together.

About thirty positions are open, so regardless of your age or your region, don't hesitate to submit your nomination. Go to your union office. Your union reps have all the necessary blank forms in hand!

Three projects

During these five days of discussion and debate, the delegates will have the opportunity to focus on a formula that will allow them to work collectively over the next few Federal Councils and Conventions, on analyzing the major union issues at stake in order to propose action strategies and formulate recommendations. These stakes will be presented to the delegates in the form of discussion projects. *Why projects?* Because they combine consensus-building around major problems with the development and implementation of new strategies.

Solidarity Project

This project's urgency is due to the crisis of solidarity provoked by the advocates of neoliberalism, for whom "every man for himself" is the golden rule. There is no doubt that the transformations under way in the Federation as a whole, and more broadly in the health-care network, will have definite impacts on the members and the sense of solidarity and belonging that unites them. In this perspective, this means adopting the means to develop stronger solidarity extending beyond the boundaries of the labour movement and the health and social services sector. The challenge will be to induce all members, who differ because of their professions and who come from different and often remote sites, to perceive each other as complementary and have the conviction that they belong to a community of unions joined together in a Federation based on solidarity.

Solidarity is defined on more than one level, and the Federation must reaffirm its social solidarity. The objectives pursued by this project will be, among others, to reflect on the revitalization of social solidarity, develop the solidarity of union reps with the struggles and mobilizations of their community, and root the FIIQ's involvement in national and international solidarity. This project will also have to quickly develop a process of reflection on the conditions to be established so that this solidarity becomes a reality among members, particularly by the creation of a Union Action Fund.

Alliances for Gender Equality Project

The question of gender equality is at the core of this project, because 92% of the Federation's members are women. As long as women's rights are not fully recognized and equality has not found its full expression in every aspect of everyday life, all the members of the Federation will continue to be disadvantaged by the mere fact that they are women.

Isn't equality an established fact? Unfortunately not! Even when there is legal equality, de facto equality is still an unmet objective. The challenge will be to entrench a culture of equality even more deeply in union practice, a culture that respects the specific forums already established by the Federation while proposing a new forum for collaboration among members, both women and men, on common issues. This is a bold and demanding approach.

The objectives pursued by this project will be to lay the foundations of an alliance between the women and men of our organization in order to work together to promote gender equality within the perspective of union solidarity, and to explore and concretize these alliances based on the following two themes: sexual and sexist stereotypes, and reconciliation of work and family.

Dynamic leadership

To meet the impending challenges, FIIQ+ union reps will have to exercise leadership which will no longer be based essentially on proximity, in an organizational context where the bonds of unity with co-workers will be more difficult to establish. Renewing leadership in the image of FIIQ+ and its members is necessary because the successful mobilization of members to defend their living and working conditions depends on it.

This leadership to be reinvented will also have to extend beyond the union field and be deployed in the work environment. As privileged witnesses, health professionals will become leaders in nursing and cardiorespiratory care, speaking out and organizing to make their voices heard. The issue at this Convention will thus be to renew the practice of leadership by all union officers and union representatives to give reinvigorate the organization.

New Generation of Activists Project

Recruiting and training a new generation of activists are among the unavoidable strategies of union organizations to ensure the sustainability of their union vision, and to continue to defend the workers' rights and working conditions. Given the absence of young members from the representative bodies and local teams, possibly demotivated or involved in other priorities, it is necessary to understand this phenomenon in order to identify the solutions required to remedy this apparent non-involvement of the under-thirty generation.

The challenge will be to initiate a dialogue between the generations to better discern the actions required to recruit and train a new generation of union activists. This will certainly involve questioning the relevance of calling on these young women and young men to show involvement and activism identical to those of older generations. It will be necessary to reflect on the needs and interests specific to each generation so that they work together and so that the Federation commits itself in solidarity to the field of collective action.

The objectives pursued by this project will be, among others, to identify the cultural, professional, socioeconomic and union particularities of the under-thirty generation, understand how the commitment of the younger members is actualized, and develop strategies that account for the proposals already made by the Youth Committee to promote their union and activist integration while cultivating solidarity between generations.

A renewed unionism, a stronger FIIQ

The projects will essentially serve for common deliberations, consensus building, and preparation for broader debates. As forums for learning, debate and mastering the cultures specific to certain professions, certain health and social service missions and innovative union practices, the three proposed projects will be fertile soil to grow the roots of a renewed FIIQ.

Four very full years

At every Convention, the Federation provides delegates with a report on the activities of its different sectors and services. At the June Convention, they will have the opportunity to evaluate the activities accomplished and look back at the progress made over the past four years. A lot of work has been done. From the exploratory affiliation process to the development of the FIIQ TOMORROW project and to the upheavals triggered by the election of the Charest Government, the FIIQ's actions and interventions have been carried out in a context increasingly hostile to workers and increasingly open to neoliberal policies and to treating public services as commodities.

Since the last Convention, the Federation, by its actions or activities, has practiced democratic unionism, based on solidarity and committed to its members, within union and community coalitions, women's groups and civil society. To accomplish this, it has been able to rely on the efforts, time, energy and work of more than 150 employees in 12 sectors and services. In the years ahead, new challenges loom on the horizon to defend health professionals. The Convention will be an opportunity for the delegates to reinvigorate their organization and build the future together.

Support for MOBILIZATION

Within the context of the FIIQ TOMORROW process, several recommended orientations were adopted by the delegates, including the promotion and support for union practice based on local and regional collective action. In line with this, at the December 2003 Federal Council, delegates voted in favour of a recommendation to create a 350-day FIIQ union leave bank on a shared-cost basis.

This decision was made after discussion of the current context, strongly influenced by neoliberal policies, which threaten workers' rights are, as well as the rights of citizens and the population as a whole. In such a context, union and militant action must extend beyond the work environment. The nature of the struggles to be waged in the years ahead also requires that we develop the broadest possible union and social solidarity at every level, within each region, each locality and each institution.

Community, feminist and citizen action groups exist throughout Quebec. In their own way, these groups work along the same lines as the orientations adopted by the Federation. They are fighting for greater social justice, maintenance and improvement of the quality of the environment, respect for the rights of the most disadvantaged members of our society and the rights of women.

For the Federation, it is important to adopt the means to ensure support for activists who want to get involved in sociopolitical issues at the local or regional level. This also allows it to improve its power to influence. The Executive Committee will thus recommend that the delegates vote for the creation of a FIIQ union leave bank on a shared-cost basis with the unions, divided among Quebec's different health and social services regions, depending on their size. Members can thus support structured groups or organizations which are pursuing a mission, which have adopted known participatory mechanisms and which are managed democratically and transparently.

Proposed amendments

The Convention delegates will debate the proposed amendments tabled at the last Federal Council in view of amending the Constitution and Bylaws of the Federation and the Bylaws of the Union Defence Fund. The main purpose of the proposals is to ensure that all the professionals which the FIIQ now represents have a forum where members, can express their opinions, by way of their delegates, within a democratic union organization.

New amendments to the Union Defence Fund Bylaws will also be proposed by the Executive Committee for debate. Why? Because several questions have been raised by delegates regarding the financial support provided by the Federation in the local collective bargaining process and the entire question of finances cannot be debated before spring 2006.

The Executive Committee thus believes it is preferable, and even essential, to propose other amendments to the Union Defence Fund to support local mobilization, if necessary, during the negotiation of the collective agreement. The current Union Defence Fund Bylaws provide for financial support to members and the unions only in case of a strike,

The Executive Committee considers that, by adopting these amendments, the delegates will enable all FIIQ unions, regardless of their size, to give their members the same opportunity to participate and actively follow the process of negotiation of their first collective agreement.



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