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The Parental
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Photographer:
Jacques Lavallée*

Health Month

Last year, for the first time in the Federation's history, we celebrated Health Month. This was an opportunity to give recognition to three professions and specify how essential each of them is. We are very happy to celebrate these professions again this year: Nursing Assistants Day on May 5, Nurses Day on May 12, and Respiratory Therapists Day on May 19.

You are 56,500 care professionals who give the health-care network the benefit of your specialty. *FIQ Actualités* hopes that these days give you the opportunity to receive all the recognition you deserve from your colleagues and employers.

Have a good Health Month!



We are currently re-organizing our central data base, following the waves of votes, in order to add all the new members.

During this period, you may receive more than one copy of the *FIQ Actualités*. Please excuse us for this inconvenience.

In contact

Solidarity, determination and commitment

The Charest government is leaving us little breathing space. Since its election in 2003, it has imposed major changes to the union organizations by adopting Bills 25 and 30.

It then pursued its attacks by decreeing the conditions of employment of public sector employees in December 2005.



Since its election, its track record can be summed up as unpopular partisan decisions, all kinds of rate increases, long silences on improving the plight of the most disadvantaged, infringements of democracy, breakthroughs for the privatization of public services, and the latest decision on the list, the highly contested privatization of Mont-Orford Park.

Political battles

Discouraging? No. The Charest government has not succeeded in breaking the unions, despite its barely veiled intentions. Its popularity is not what it expected, because it is constantly declining. Yes, we have struggles to win. Yes, we must increase our power to influence. Yes, we must extend our solidarity.

The Federation has gotten involved with other union, community, student and feminist organizations to watch this government closely and engage in political battles to defend the public health system, protect individual and collective rights, and defend workers' conditions of employment and living conditions.

Even if victories don't always accumulate at the pace we would like, our commitment and involvement are producing results.

However, these political battles are not only played out on the public scene. Nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, perfusionists, child nurses and baby nurses in each health-care institution must also make a commitment to solidarity.

As the local negotiations begin, several employers will try to roll back the rights of health professionals. This is why it is essential to believe in our power to change things.

Yes, gains are possible

Despite the decree, and thanks to the strategy the Federation has adopted, the agreements reached with the government introduce major improvements to the conditions of employment of care professionals.

The pay equity issue will also be settled this year. After all these years, we are

still determined to correct the discrimination from which women have long been victims. Even if victories don't always accumulate at the pace we would prefer, our commitment and involvement are producing results.

I therefore invite every member of the Federation to get involved and express solidarity for the demands you will promote in local collective bargaining.

I am firmly convinced that it is possible to take action on the organization of work and improve our quality of life at work.

The Federation has decided to watch the Charest government closely in order to protect individual and collective rights, and defend the working and living conditions of workers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lina Bonamie".

Lina Bonamie,
president

March 8, 2006 International Women's Day

In past years, women's groups and union organizations have made March 8 a day for concerted action. This year, about 200 women from Collectif 8 mars, of which the Federation is a member, participated in a breakfast at *Chic Resto pop*, in the district of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in Montreal. This is a community restaurant that offers low-priced meals and fights exclusion in all its forms. The President, Lina Bonamie, members of the Executive, employees and union reps attended this meeting.

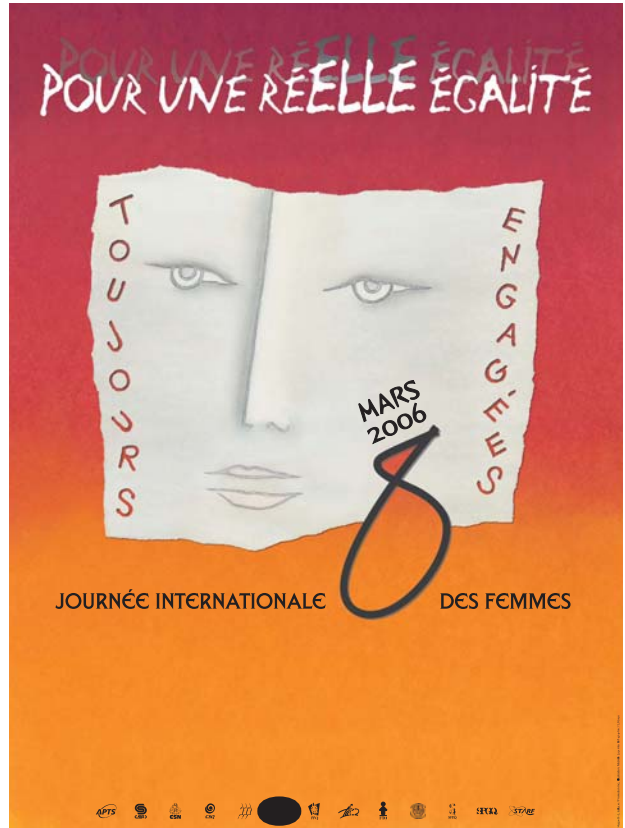


The president of the "Fédération des femmes du Québec", Michèle Asselin, with Lina Bonamie.

"For true equality, always committed!" was the theme chosen to mark this festive day. Despite considerable advances on several levels, women today are still living with inequality.

March 8 thus was an excellent opportunity for concrete action to express the idea that the struggle to obtain equality is far from over.

The pamphlet, distributed by the *Intersyndicale des femmes*, raised several concerns that affect unionized women as women, as invisible working mothers and as citizens in solidarity.



Conception graphique du visuel du 8 mars - Michèle Lapointe

"In fact, despite the important progress and gains won through brave struggles, women and feminists have not gone far enough. Too many inequalities persist and the gains are too fragile for we, valiant women that we are, not to keep our eyes wide open, our heads up, our alliances flexible and, if need be, our placards raised!"



"We experience big and small inequalities every day. First, as workers. When the government uses the right to pay equity as a bargaining chip during negotiations; when a nurse with a Bachelor's degree earns less after five years on the labour market than her male university colleague; when maternity continues to make women poorer while paternity does not hinder a man's career; when the majority of those who file complaints for psychological harassment are women; when part-time, casual and atypical jobs are held mainly by women."



Hôpital Saint-François-d'Assise, Québec



Hôpital du Saint-Sacrement, Québec



Hôpital Charles LeMoyne, Greenfield Park



Hôpital des Monts, Sainte-Anne-des-Monts

The colour orange

A new initiative was proposed this year – to associate the colour orange with the cause of the status of women. The pin sold provided for a space to insert a small orange ribbon. It can thus be reused for other causes such as the commemoration of December 6 (white ribbon) and the fight against AIDS (red ribbon). This initiative seems to have pleased many. Why choose orange? Because it symbolically recalls one of the Quebec demands within the context of the actions conducted in 2005 with the *Women's Global Charter for Humanity*. The colour orange represented the demand related to building a just world. A vast consultation was thus launched throughout the women's movement to evaluate whether or not to maintain this initiative.

We can be proud of the struggles already fought. As for the road ahead to obtain true equality:

"When have we ever been afraid to take on a challenge?"

Sara Lapointe, consultant Communication-Information Service



Nursing specialization

FIIQ+ reacts



This January 16, the Federation was invited to participate in a consultation meeting regarding a proposal of the *Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ)* concerning nursing specialization. After this meeting, a rigorous analysis was produced in view of informing the OIIQ of the Federation's position.

The analysis focused in particular on:

- the nature of the activities that would devolve on specialized nurses holding a specialist certificate;
- the impact of this specialization on the nurses' field of practice and the process to which obtaining such a certificate would be subject;
- the context in which this process would take place;
- the goals and objectives pursued by the OIIQ in its intention of regulating a new specialist title, the specialized nurse.

The Federation agrees with the principle of a nursing specialization that would be specific to the nursing discipline.

Unfortunately, the OIIQ's proposal does not correspond to what the Federation considers to be a nursing specialization vehicle.

In the Federation's opinion, the specialization model proposed by the OIIQ would generate needless and undue fragmentation of the nurses' field of practice. It would open the door to:

- deskilling and deprofessionalization of the work performed by nurses who have the competencies to perform activities involving a risk of harm;
- denial of the capacity of nurses in specialized care to judge their competencies;
- devaluation both of the knowledge acquired through years of professional practice and the knowledge accumulated through continuing education.

Far from being a source of motivation and emulation, the specialization model proposed by the OIIQ is very likely to be a source of division and to cause segmentation, compartmentalization and ghettoization of nursing practice.

According to the Federation, this is a proposal which, in the short and medium term, risks accentuating the nursing shortage prevailing in the network over the past few years. Moreover, since nurses' workload is constantly increasing and the facilitating and stimulating conditions to induce them to specialize remain very rare, the OIIQ's proposal is likely to generate little interest among nurses.

The Federation could not endorse the OIIQ's proposal, due to the conditions specified to obtain a specialized nursing certificate regulated by the OIIQ, the scope of such certification and the apprehended consequences.

Another solution proposed

In this context, to ensure the quality of care, the safety of the patients and protection of the public, the FIIQ has proposed a solution other than nursing specialization as presented by the OIIQ.

This solution consists of favouring a systemic approach in the analysis of the factors likely to endanger patients' safety. In the FIIQ's opinion, such an approach

appears to be more conducive to the emergence of appropriate measures to guarantee the protection of the public.

Several of these measures are the object of consensus in most studies to assure the protection of the public:

- incumbency of positions;
- stability in the centres of activities;
- development, recognition and valuing of experience and expertise;
- design and implementation of a personnel development plan in each health-care institution.

In short, taking action on the organization of work and the organization of care is an unavoidable ethical obligation to assure the acquisition, maintenance and development of the competencies of all the care professionals in the health-care network, including nurses working in specialized fields.

The quality of care, the safety of the patients and the protection of the public will only be better assured.

*Sara Lapointe, consultant
Communication-Information
Service*

The Parental Insurance Plan and the provisions of the collective agreement

The Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), which came into force on January 1, 2006, provides for the payment of financial benefits to employees who take leave upon the birth or adoption of a child. For Quebec residents, it replaces the benefits that were previously paid by the federal employment insurance (EI) plan.

For employees who are members of the FIIQ, the *Act respecting the conditions of employment in the public sector* (Bill 142 – the Decree) contains provisions intended to coordinate the benefits payable under the collective agreements and the QPIP.

In addition, even though there has been no negotiated agreement on this matter, the *Conseil du trésor* has integrated the numerous amendments to the various Quebec laws into the Quebec collective agreement. It even considered it appropriate to harmonize these changes for employees who will continue to be covered by the *Employment Insurance Act*.

The new parental rights established by the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan are presented based on the latest texts decreed and subject to other amendments.

ACT RESPECTING PARENTAL INSURANCE

History

Union and community organizations have called for this new plan for many years. In 1990 they formed the coalition known as *Le Regroupement pour un régime québécois d'assurance parentale*, which included the FIIQ. The main objective was to correct the deficiencies of the parental leave plan compensated by the Employment Insurance Fund. After representations to the various authorities, including three briefs submitted to three parliamentary committees, the Coalition proposed numerous amendments to the legislation.

Brief comparison of the QPIP and the employment insurance plan

	FEDERAL PLAN	QUEBEC PLAN
Beneficiaries	Employees eligible for EI	Any worker, including self-employed
Criteria of eligibility	600 hours of work	\$2,000
Waiting period	2 weeks	None
Maximum insurable earnings	\$39,000	\$57,000
Choice of plan	No choice	Basic plan or special plan

Conditions of eligibility

To be eligible for the QPIP, a person must meet the following conditions:

- 1 be a parent of a child born or adopted after January 1, 2006;
- 2 be a resident of Quebec;
- 3 have an insurable income of at least \$2,000.

Qualifying period

The qualifying period is 52 weeks preceding the application for benefits. If an employee had successive pregnancies, she could extend her qualifying period up to 104 weeks. On request, the employee's qualifying period is the same as the one that entitled her to benefits during a previous leave, if her number of weeks with insurable earnings is less than 15.



Benefit period

The benefit period is the period within which benefits may be paid. With certain exceptions, it cannot exceed the 52nd week following the week of delivery.

Maternity: (15 or 18 weeks)	Between 16 weeks before delivery and 18 weeks after; an employee who receives CSST benefits for a protective reassignment that began after January 1, 2006 will have to begin her maternity leave 4 weeks before the expected date of delivery. The <i>Conseil du trésor</i> is seeking to impose the same rule for an employee who receives salary insurance benefits.
Paternity: (3 or 5 weeks)	Between the week of birth and the end of the benefit period.
Parental: (25 or 32 weeks)	Between the week of birth and the end of the benefit period.
Adoption: (28 or 37 weeks)	Between the week of the child's arrival (or, in the case of adoption outside Quebec, 2 weeks before) and the end of the benefit period.

The parental and adoption benefits may be shared between spouses simultaneously or consecutively.

Average weekly earnings

The average weekly earnings are established according to the average insurable earnings for the last 26 weeks of the qualifying period. If the number of weeks with insurable earnings is less than 26, you divide by this number of weeks, subject to the restriction that the divisor may not be less than 16.

Options

Employees may choose to receive their benefits for more weeks with lower weekly earnings (basic plan) or for less weeks with higher weekly earnings (optional plan). In the case of a FIIQ employees who receives a complementary benefit equivalent to 93%, it is generally more advantageous to choose the basic plan. However, it is up to each employee to evaluate her situation depending on her own financial needs.

The choice of plan is determined by the first of the two

parents who receives benefits. It cannot be modified and applied to all types of benefits for the same event.

How to apply for benefits?

You can apply for benefits in two ways, either by using the QPIP's online services at www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca or by phoning the Customer Service Centre at 1 888 610-7727.



THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

The *Act respecting parental insurance and the Employment Insurance Act* provide for the right to payment of benefits but not the right to be absent from work to benefit from them. To be absent, an employee must take advantage of the leaves provided for in the collective agreement, subject to the *Act respecting labour standards*.

Maternity leave

Because of the amendments made to the collective agreement by the Decree, the duration of the maternity leave of an employee eligible for the QPIP is 21 weeks from now on. For an employee eligible for EI or not eligible for any plan, the leave is 20 weeks.

During maternity leave, an employee who has accumulated 20 weeks of service usually receives a benefit equal to 93% of the basic salary. From now on this benefit will be paid only during weeks when the employee receives QPIP benefits. To avoid losing benefits, the employee thus will have to apply for parental benefits at the end of her 18 weeks of maternity benefits under the API.

For an employee ineligible for the QPIP and eligible for EI, the employer alone will assume the 93% benefits during the 2-week EI waiting period. Subsequently, the supplemental benefit will be paid by the employer only if the employee receives EI benefits. To avoid losing rights, this employee must apply for her parental benefits at the end of her 15 weeks of maternity benefits.

An employee who is not eligible for the QPIP or for EI is entitled to a benefit fully paid by the employer for 12 of the 20 weeks of maternity leave. We should point out that previously the employer alone assumed the 93% benefit during the 2-week EI waiting period and during the last 3 weeks of maternity leave.

Paternity leave

From now on the father will receive 5 days of leave paid at 100% by the employer upon the birth of a child. He will also be entitled to 5 weeks of paternity leave without pay. If he is eligible for the QPIP, he may be compensated at 70% for 5 weeks or 75% for 3 of the 5 weeks, if the mother has opted for the special plan.

Adoption leave

Under the collective agreement, the employee is entitled to a 10-week adoption leave during which she will receive 100% of her basic weekly earnings. As in the case of maternity leave, the benefits are paid by the employer only during the weeks when the employee receives benefits from the QPIP or EI, provided that she is eligible for one of these plans.

For an employee who is not eligible for benefits under these plans, the employer

pays 100% of the basic weekly earnings for 10 weeks.

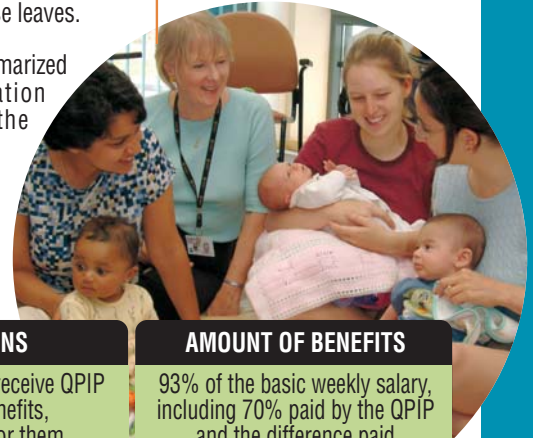
Leave without pay

Following a maternity, paternity or adoption leave, the employee may benefit from an extension by a leave without pay. As we pointed out at the beginning of this article, the various laws grant the right to additional adoption benefits or parental benefits for part of these leaves.

We have summarized the information concerning the

various benefits in tabular form. We have produced a separate table depending on whether the employee eligible for the QPIP opts for the basic plan or the special plan. There is also a table for employees ineligible for the QPIP but eligible for EI.

*Ginette Raymond,
consultant
Research Service*



EMPLOYEE ELIGIBLE FOR THE QPIP BASIC PLAN

TYPE OF BENEFITS	DURATION OF BENEFITS	CONDITIONS	AMOUNT OF BENEFITS
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 1 to 18 18 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP maternity benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 70% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 19 to 21 3 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP parental benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 70% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
BIRTH (the father)	5 days	Between the delivery and 15 days after the mother or the child returns home	100% of the salary paid by the employer
PATERNITY (the father)	5 weeks	Within 52 weeks after the delivery	70% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
PARENTAL (after maternity leave) (father or mother)	Weeks 22 to 25 4 weeks	None	70% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
PARENTAL (after maternity leave) (father or mother)	Weeks 26 to 50 25 weeks	None	55% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 1 to 10 10 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP adoption benefits, if she applied for them	100% of the basic weekly salary, including 70% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 11 and 12 2 weeks	None	70% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 13 to 37 25 weeks	None	55% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP

EMPLOYEE ELIGIBLE FOR THE QPIP SPECIAL PLAN

TYPE OF BENEFITS	DURATION OF BENEFITS	CONDITIONS	AMOUNT OF BENEFITS
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 1 to 15 15 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP maternity benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 75% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 16 to 21 6 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP parental benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 75% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
BIRTH (the father)	5 days	Between the delivery and 15 days after the mother or the child returns home	100% of the salary paid by the employer
PATERNITY (the father)	3 weeks	Within 52 weeks after the delivery	75% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
PARENTAL (after maternity leave) (father or mother)	Weeks 22 to 40 19 weeks	None	75% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 1 to 10 10 weeks	Receives or would receive QPIP adoption benefits, if she applied for them	100% of the basic weekly salary, including 75% paid by the QPIP and the difference paid by the employer
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 11 to 28 18 weeks	None	75% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by the QPIP

EMPLOYEE ELIGIBLE FOR EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI) EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

TYPE OF BENEFITS	DURATION OF BENEFITS	CONDITIONS	AMOUNT OF BENEFITS
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 1 and 2 2 weeks	EI waiting period	93% of the basic weekly salary paid by the employer
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 3 to 17 15 weeks	Receives or would receive EI maternity benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 55% paid by EI and the difference paid by the employer
MATERNITY (the mother)	Weeks 18 to 20 3 weeks	Receives or would receive EI parental benefits, if she applied for them	93% of the basic weekly salary, including 55% paid by EI and the difference paid by the employer
BIRTH (the father)	5 days	Between the delivery and 15 days after the mother or the child returns home	100% of the salary paid by the employer
PATERNITY (the father)	5 weeks	Within 52 weeks after the delivery	None
PARENTAL (after maternity leave) (father or mother)	Weeks 21 to 52 32 weeks	None	55% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by EI
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 1 to 10 10 weeks	Receives or would receive EI parental benefits, if she applied for them	100% of the basic weekly salary, including 55% paid by EI and the difference paid by the employer
ADOPTION (father or mother)	Weeks 11 to 25 15 weeks	None	55% of the maximum insurable earnings paid by EI

Occupational Health and Safety Amendment to protective reassignment of pregnant workers

Now that the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan has come into force, a new provision of the *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS), section 42.1, has become applicable to protective reassignment of pregnant workers. According to this provision, a worker who exercises the right to protective reassignment and who is compensated under sections 40 to 42 of the AOHS will no longer receive this indemnity "from the fourth week preceding the expected date of delivery (...) if she is eligible for benefits under the *Act respecting parental insurance*".

However, section 42.1 does not apply to a worker who is compensated under the AOHS "from a date prior to January 1, 2006, regardless of the expected date of delivery*". In this case, the worker is entitled to this indemnity up to the date of her delivery. Ask your union team.

Impact of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan on the right to protective reassignment under sections 40 to 42 of the AOHS

Before January 1, 2006	Since January 1, 2006 (coming into force of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan)
A worker who exercised the right to protective reassignment and who stopped working was then compensated under sections 40 to 42 of the AOHS up to the date of her delivery.	<p>A worker who exercises the right to protective reassignment and who is compensated under sections 40 to 42 of the AOHS will no longer receive this indemnity from the fourth week preceding the expected date of delivery if she is eligible for the benefits payable under the <i>Act respecting parental insurance</i>.</p> <p>Transitional provision (section 148 of the <i>Act respecting parental insurance</i>): A worker who exercises the right to protective reassignment and who is compensated under sections 40 to 42 of the AOHS from a date prior to January 1, 2006, regardless of the expected date of delivery, is entitled to receive this indemnity up to the date of her delivery.</p>

Hélène Caron, consultant, Occupational Health and Safety Sector

* Transitional provision, i.e. section 148 of the Act respecting parental insurance (R.S.Q., c. A-29.011).

The Federation participates in the World Congress of the SIDIIEF

Representatives of two sectors of the Federation will make presentations at parallel sessions of the 3rd World Congress of the *Secrétariat international des infirmières et infirmiers de l'espace francophone* (SIDIIEF), which will be held on May 14 to 18 at the *Centre des congrès de Québec*.

Occupational Health and Safety Sector Éline Trottier, 6th Vice-President (Respiratory Therapist) and Executive Officer responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Sector, accompanied by the consultant for that sector, Hélène Caron, will give a presentation entitled *Globalization, Nosocomial Infections and Prevention*. This is an opportunity to present the *Infection Control Handbook*, a reference tool developed by the FIIQ OHS Committee as part of its 2004-2005 OHS activities (*Danger! Barbarian infections! Each gesture counts*).

Task and Organization of Work Sector Daniel Gilbert, 2nd Vice-President (Nurse) and interim Executive Officer responsible for the Task and Organization of Work Sector, accompanied by the consultant for that sector, Thérèse Laforest, will give a presentation entitled *Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity and Labour Unity*. The presentation will focus on the various legislation adopted by the Government of Quebec to reorganize the health-care network. Far from generating conflicts, the combination of health professionals in the same union may lead to new interprofessional collaboration, facilitating a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach.

For more information: <www.sidiief.org/intro.htm>

Parental and retirement rights

A major gain for FIIQ+

Seeking to denounce the fact that the CARRA excludes periods of absence related to a maternity leave from the period of previous service* that can be bought back, the Federation submitted this situation to arbitration.

According to the CARRA, these periods did not constitute paid service. In the Federation's view, the CARRA's application of the *Act respecting the Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan* was discriminatory because it has the effect of depriving women of pension benefits because of their pregnancy.

While the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* seeks to protect women from the disadvantages they may suffer due to maternity, the CARRA's restrictive application of the Act reinforced the economic inequalities to which the female workforce is subjected.

Fortunately, the Federation's approaches have produced results. From now on it is possible to buy back the period of maternity leave that occurred within the period of service prior to joining the Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan (RREGOP).

If you are affected by such a situation, you must file a buyback application with the CARRA.

Line Lanseigne, consultant
Social Security Sector
Sécurité sociale

* This concerns the period of service before joining the RREGOP, with a public body covered by the RREGOP or which would have been covered by it if it had not ceased to exist.

Buyback of years of service

You can expect an increase in costs

The cost of buyback of periods of absence or service as a casual employee is currently being revalued and could be increased. The last actuarial valuation, which, you will remember, had resulted in an increase in the contribution rate, also obliges the Retirement Committee to review the cost charged for a buyback so that it represents the amount necessary to fund the pension fund adequately. The work is not yet completed, so the Federation cannot provide any more details regarding the apprehended percentage increase or when this increase could be applied. However, we believe that this information may be useful for those members who are considering a buyback of years of service. Be well informed and spread the word!

It should be noted that this revaluation does not concern buybacks within six months after the end of the period of absence. The amount required to pay for this buyback continues to be the contributions that should have been paid by the employee and the employer, as the case may be, if the employee had not been absent.

*Line Lanseigne, consultant
Social Security Sector*

CARRA

A brief reminder

When your buyback application is sent to the CARRA more than six months after the end of the period of absence or if it concerns the buyback of service as a casual employee, the cost of this buyback corresponds to a percentage of your eligible earnings. This percentage varies according to your age at the time of the buyback, the indexing rate for the year bought back and the type of buyback (service as a casual employee, absence without pay and maternity leave without pay). Consequently, it will cost you more to buy back a year if you are 55 years of age at the time of the buyback or if you buy back a year that will be fully indexed when you retire. These percentages can be found in the tables on pages 13 and 14 of the document "Buy back yesterday, for tomorrow?", produced by the Federation. They are also available on the CARRA Web site: <www.carra.gouv.qc.ca>.



A SPRINGBOARD TO YOUR RETIREMENT WITH EVERY PAYCHEQUE

Contributing to the Fund RRSP is easy, practical and almost effortless. One small deduction from your regular paycheque and an additional tax credit: a great way to put more spring into your savings.

EXAMPLES OF PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS WITH IMMEDIATE TAX SAVINGS					
2006 TAXATION YEAR (26 pay periods)					
TAXABLE INCOME FROM	CONTRIBUTION PER PAY	TAX SAVINGS (APPROX.) CREDITS + RRSP		NET PAY REDUCTION (APPROX.)	TOTAL INVESTED PER YEAR
\$28,711 to \$36,378	\$40.00	\$12.00	\$13.00	\$15.00	\$1,040
	\$100.00	\$30.00	\$32.50	\$37.50	\$2,600
	\$192.31	\$57.70	\$62.50	\$72.12	\$5,000
\$36,379 to \$57,430	\$40.00	\$12.00	\$15.36	\$12.64	\$1,040
	\$100.00	\$30.00	\$38.40	\$31.60	\$2,600
	\$192.31	\$57.70	\$73.85	\$60.77	\$5,000
\$57,431 to \$72,756	\$40.00	\$12.00	\$16.96	\$11.04	\$1,040
	\$100.00	\$30.00	\$42.40	\$27.60	\$2,600
	\$192.31	\$57.70	\$81.54	\$53.07	\$5,000

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Avian flu pandemic

Quebec gets ready

The *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* (MSSS) met on March 3 with the health-care network's union organizations to report on its efforts in case of an avian flu pandemic and establish the conditions of collaboration, primarily in the mobilization of human resources.

Two representatives of the Federation, Daniel Gilbert, 2nd Vice-President, and Hélène Caron, consultant with the Occupational Health and Safety Sector, attended this meeting.

The Quebec Plan

The MSSS has based its response plan on the hypothesis of a 35% rate of attack affecting the population, spread over an eight-week period. This means 2.6 million people would be affected by avian flu.

Deployment of the Plan involves five major components: public health, physical health, psychosocial intervention, communication and maintenance of services.

The central strategy for control of a flu pandemic is vaccination. Health-care workers are at the top of the list of the priority groups to



be vaccinated. Antiviral medication is the only specific strategy in the absence of a vaccine. The antiviral reserves are currently being increased so that everyone can benefit from them.

Infection prevention also remains very important. The application of basic practices and additional precautions is indispensable, particularly hand washing and wearing a mask. General public health measures will be implemented, if applicable, to curb the pandemic.

In addition, a top-down structure for organizing and coordinating responses has been developed by the MSSS so that information circulates as quickly and accurately as possible among the MSSS, the agencies, the institutions and the network personnel.

Finally, all possible actions will have to be implemented to ensure the maintenance of services and activities within the institution and mass vaccination. Mobilization of human resources will be essential. Alternative resources will also be necessary to respond to a pandemic.

Lists of persons outside the network will be developed for each institution. These persons will benefit from appropriate conditions of practice and employment.

Resource persons for each union

The MSSS has asked each union organization to designate a representative and a person responsible for communications to ensure the

circulation of information. For the Federation, the designated representative is Hélène Caron, consultant with the Occupational Health and Safety Sector. Sandra Gagné, consultant with the Communication-Information Service, is the point of contact for communications.

The *Québec Pandemic Influenza Plan – Health Mission* can be consulted at the following address: <www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/pandemie>

You can also consult the WHO Web site: <www.who.int/en>

Sara Lapointe, consultant Communication-Information Service

The current situation

Over 30 countries have discovered the presence of the avian flu virus (H5N1) in avian fauna, but the Asian countries have been the most affected, with an epidemic outbreak of the virus in birds since January 2004. On March 10, 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 176 cases of avian infection transmitted from birds to humans in Asia, including 97 deaths. At present, there are no cases of avian flu in Quebec, but this is only a matter of time because migrating birds play a major role in transmission of the virus.

To speak of a pandemic, the following four conditions must be fulfilled:

- presence of a new virus capable of infecting humans (this is the case of the H5N1 virus discovered in 1997);
- transmission of the virus from person to person;
- high morbidity and mortality rate;
- propagation of the virus all over the world (within a continent and between continents).

For the time being no confirmed case of transmission of the virus from person to person has been reported. However, this is a possibility that worries the OMH, which is why it has issued a worldwide alert. It is impossible to predict when and where the virus will be transmitted from human to human or how many people will be affected. One thing is certain – it is essential to be adequately prepared.

Note: This text is based on the MSSS presentation document provided at the meeting of March 3, 2006.

Interview

World Social Forum

Two Executive Committee members, Michèle Boisclair, 1st Vice-President, and Lise Martel, Treasurer, attended the 6th World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela. *FIIQ Actualités* asked them a few questions to find out more about their participation in this event.

The World Social Forum is said to be a very special event. What was the salient feature of this year's Forum?

LM: The Social Forum is a special event in itself. Since it first began, it has usually been held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This year, however, it was polycentric, meaning that it was held in three stages, with one edition in Africa, one in the Americas and one in Asia. As a result, several hundred thousand people were able to participate in the Forum and share their points of view. In Caracas alone, over 80,000 people of every origin showed up, contributing their collective energy and common values. It was extraordinary.

There are a multitude of workshops and activities. Which ones did you attend?

LM: Among other things, Michèle and I participated in a mission organized by a Quebec group to learn about Venezuela from different angles. In particular, we visited a shantytown. It was a real shock to see thousands of people living on a mountainside in improvised shelters with the bare minimum for survival... However, we found that with the support of the government, which provides them with the means to become owners of their little piece of land, these communities are organizing, taking control of their lives and hoping to get out of their situation.

We also attended some workshops where union issues were on the agenda. We found that union organizations have some very interesting prospects available to them. To all indications, a very strong majority is developing in the Venezuelan labour movement to fight the trade agreements.



MB: I have had the pleasure to hear in a panel discussion some well-known speakers like Michèle Asselin, President of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* who made a presentation on the impacts of militarization on women and children. There was also panel on hegemony and social movements, in which Francoise David, one of the guest speakers, demonstrated the importance of solidarity and if not tacitly accepting situations imposed upon us.

The last workshop which I attended concerned the *Women's International Tribunal*. Women came to share their experiences and the injustices to which they are subjected in their own countries. In Brazil, for example, they are calling for an end to the treatment of women as commodities, militarization and domestic violence. In Argentina, a women's association emerged as a result of an economic crisis. Women banded together and took over a textile company. These accounts were touching and filled with hope, conviction and militancy.



What is the situation in Venezuela and how can an activity like the Forum change things?

LM: This country is very rich in natural resources but poverty is everywhere. 48% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day! But with the arrival of President Hugo Chavez at the head of a socialist government, people tell us that a wind of change is blowing across the country. The government, despite numerous cases of resistance, is working actively to implement major changes. It is also intensively involved in the reduction of poverty and exclusion.



MB: I observed myself that going on vacation in Venezuela on Margarita Island has nothing to do with what I saw and experienced in Caracas! I had participated in the march for the Peoples' Summit, but this was the first time I attended workshops. It was an experience rich in encounters, information, exchanges and sharing. It is true that some of the conferences were things we had heard or read, but hearing the same things told by those who suffered these situations was quite different. It helped us go further with our thinking about what we want for our planet tomorrow.



You have had many opportunities to exchange and participate in conferences. What do you retain from this experience?

MB: The battle for equality and justice for women is far from over. For example, in Peru, one of women's fundamental rights is being violated, the right to bear children. On the pretext of reducing poverty, the Peruvian government has made women infertile in massive numbers, without their knowledge. Doctors argued the necessity of a vaccination or took advantage of surgery to give women tubal ligations without their consent. Over 300,000 women have been sterilized: in fact, according to the lawyer, this is a sort of genocide.

With what I heard and saw, I am convinced that places like these forums help increase awareness and undoubtedly contribute to change things. I am also persuaded that motivated people, who ask themselves questions, get informed and mobilize around issues that have a negative impact on values as important as justice, peace and equality, have the power to change things.

LM: When we left for Caracas, the Canadian federal election campaign was in full swing. According to the polls, the Conservatives were solidly in the lead. And on January 23, a right-wing minority government was elected. What questions we were asked! People in the South are trying to liberate themselves from totalitarian or extreme right-wing governments by electing leftist governments, so they find it surprising, and even incomprehensible, that we in the North have chosen to put right-wing governments into power. It's surprising and almost paradoxical to observe how things are experienced in totally opposite ways from one end of the Americas to the other.

In conclusion, there are rumours about a first Quebec Social Forum. Is this true?

LM: In fact, students at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* have been working actively for the past year to set up a Quebec Social Forum. Last fall, I participated in a meeting at which we received a report on the preparations for this Quebec Social Forum. Currently the activity is scheduled for June 2007. Union representatives on local teams will be advised when the Federation has all the information.





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