

EN ACTION

VOL 22 – NO 1 – MARCH 2009

FÉDÉRATION INTERPROFESSIONNELLE DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC

Federal Council March 23, 24 and 25, 2009
Special Federal Council
March 25, 26 and 27, 2009

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS A CHANCE TO REDIRECT SOCIETY'S PRIORITIES



The Federation invited [Éric Pineault](#), Professor in the Sociology department at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and Director at Canada Research Chairs in globalization, citizenship and democracy, to address the delegation so that they may better understand the financial and economic crisis. Mr. Pineault captivated his audience with a clear and simple explanation of the complex issue of the economic crisis.



Éric Pineault

He demonstrated that the root of this current economic crisis is very different from those we have experienced in the past. This one is a crisis of the excessive difference between consumption and credit. The financial field is the one most responsible because it introduced certificates of indebtedness onto the financial markets from non-guaranteed debts such as debts from credit cards.

In the early years, access to credit became more and more easier. The public benefited from this ease by spending even more. The use of the tandem credit/consumption brought about such an increase in the level of indebtedness that many consumers surpassed their ability to pay it back.

The value of the certificates of indebtedness introduced into the financial markets from these "toxic debts" then plummeted. Through a domino effect, this financial crisis degenerated into an economic crisis. The financial institutions having closed the credit valve, businesses found their cash assets and production reduced bringing about a reduction in commercial trade.

Éric Pineault questioned the orientations of the economic follow-up. "Do we want a follow-up that perpetuates financial domination, inequalities and working conditions that do not respect workers? or should we not rather initiate a transformation of our economic system?" In order to see it in another light, he thinks it is possible to propose solutions for an economic recovery in the name of the people. This is what he proposes:

1. It is possible to agree with the politicians to better supervise the activities of the financial communities. Collective savings must also become a social and ecological development tool which promotes the reconciliation of work and personal/family life, the reduction of greenhouse gases, etc.
2. To boost growth and diminish the effects from the crisis, the governments are betting on public infrastructure programmes, which is logical. However, it is possible to demand that the choice of these expenses relies on social and ecological values, such as construction of CPE or CHSLD, the development of public transport, etc.

CONT'D P.2

Negotiation P.3 to P.7

The FIQ will negotiate in a common front

Sectorial priorities: an important change

SISP-Negotiation P.9

Consultation on the intersectorial matters

Organization of work P.11

Organization of work, a priority

Lina Bonamie is leaving the presidency of the FIQ

Lina Bonamie, President, announced during her closing words at the Federal Council, that she is leaving her position in June. After more than 17 years on the Executive Committee of the Federation, Madam Bonamie is taking a well-deserved retirement. "I am leaving with a feeling of accomplishment and I am firmly convinced that all the people working for the Federation will continue the work and will meet the next challenges with gusto." The election of the next president of the Federation will take place at the June 1, 2, and 3 Federal Council.

POSTE-PUBLICATION

Convention 40007983

(adresse de retour)

FIQ – Québec | 1260, boul. Lebourgneuf
Bur. 300, Québec (Québec) G2K 2G2



SOLIDARITY

Recently, members of the Executive Committee and union consultants of the Federation participated in different international solidarity activities. The participants used the Federal Council as an opportunity to report to the delegates.

PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL: 53rd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, NEW YORK

Over 5000 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were registered for this meeting and 61 countries ratified the final statement, which dealt with equal sharing of duties between women and men, including caregiving for HIV/AIDS victims.

Michèle Boisclair, Executive Officer in charge of the Status of Women Sector, accompanied by Martine Éloy and Michelle Poirier, union consultants in this sector, reported on the advances in several countries that have adopted various measures favouring gender equality. However, nothing has been gained, because too often these measures are not applied. Canada is a sad example, with the Harper government's retreat on pay equity.

AMERICAS SOCIAL FORUM, GUATEMALA

Karine Crépeau, union consultant to the Sociopolitical Sector, participated in the Americas Social Forum (ASF), which was held in Guatemala from October 7 to 10, 2008. The agenda included working conditions in the mining industry in Latin America, the status of women in Guatemala and a visit to Maya-Québec, a cooperative sewing workshop. The forum clearly showed that injustice and inequality has many faces and that solidarity with these causes is essential to put an end to these problems.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM, BRAZIL

Michèle Boisclair, 1st Vice-President and Suzanne Lavoie, Secretary of the Executive Committee, participated in this Forum, which was held in the Amazon region in a context of economic, energy, environmental, cultural and political crises. The location chosen for the 9th Forum showed the importance of preserving natural resources severely threatened by the current economic model. Women's groups were very active in the Forum. The conference on the Feminist Dialogues clarified the progress that still has to be made, particularly concerning violence against women in countries that are involved in armed conflict.

For another world to be possible, we must rely on citizen education and especially on solidarity to move from talk to concrete action. ■

(cont'd from cover page)

3. To get out of the vicious circle of the current economic system, one must go further and propose a transformation of society by putting forward solutions aimed at eliminating inequalities and improving the quality of life of citizens by, among others, reducing time at work, increasing salaries, etc.

In conclusion, he stressed that with the negotiations currently being prepared in the public and parapublic sectors, it is a good opportunity to make proposals in this regard.

Visit **Éric Pineault's blog for more information:**

<http://cafca-uqam.blogspot.com>.

STRIKE BY UQAM PROFESSORS

Mr. Pineault, who is in charge of picketing, took a moment to explain to the delegates about the labour conflict between UQAM and the professors' union. They have been without a collective agreement for 22 months now and the management party has still not made any serious offers. The FIQ delegation passed a motion of support for their demands. ■



The FIQ Youth Committee proudly launched the brochure to support the local and regional union teams seeking to create a forum for young union members to meet and express themselves. The purpose of this tool is to promote the emergence of a strong and stimulating network for young activists.

ELECTION

Pascal Beaulieu from **CHA universitaire de Québec (SPSICR du CHA)** has been elected to the Internal Audit Committee.

MAY 1, 2009

The delegates are invited to demonstrate on International Workers' Day on May 1, 2009. In Montreal, the meeting point will be at the Préfontaine metro station at 6 p.m. The march will begin at 7 p.m. and reach Marché Maisonneuve around 8 p.m. In Quebec City, contact the Social Forum network for information on the activities. In the other regions, ask the May 1 coalitions or contact your local team.



Rassemblement
Vendredi 1^{er} mai 2009 à 18 h 30
au Parc Préfontaine
coin de Hochelaga et Moreau
Métro Préfontaine

Fête à 20h
à l'école
Chomedey-de-Maisonneuve
1860, rue Morgan

THE FIQ WILL NEGOTIATE IN A COMMON FRONT

President Lina Bonamie expressed optimism as she announced to all the members that the FIQ, in alliance with the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (SISP), will negotiate in a Common Front alongside the CSN and the FTQ.



The vast majority of the delegates voted to negotiate in a Common Front - CSN, FTQ and SISP - on salaries, retirement, parental leave and regional disparities. Considering that the labour movement must recapture its right to negotiate, that the labour organizations must increase their bargaining power with the government and that it is imperative to defend public services with one voice, the delegates did not hesitate to make this choice.

“Over the past 30 years, the negotiations in the public and parapublic sectors, between the government and unionized employees, too often have led to confrontations and conflicts. The adoption of many special laws to put an end to negotiations and the decrees imposing working conditions are impelling the labour organizations to review their strategies and stop this vicious circle. Above all, they do not want the next round of negotiations to reserve the same fate for government employees. They must reinvigorate their bargaining power and adopt the means to overcome pitfalls. Everything indicates that the labour movement must form an alliance, and this is the path the FIQ is taking to conduct the next negotiations.

The CSN, the FTQ and the SISP all have the same goal: to improve their members' working conditions and salaries. The creation of this Common Front is a first in Quebec. Such an alliance has never been created in the past. For the first time, the labour organizations will negotiate together, within a defined structure. With the objective of maximum bargaining power, the Common Front's member organizations will share the same strategic negotiating framework and a common timeline. Negotiation, mobilization and communications will be coordinated among all Common Front organizations.

THE NEXT NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiating at the same table as other labour organizations changes the usual way the FIQ negotiates the working conditions of the Federation's members. Four matters - salaries, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities - will be discussed at the CSN- FTQ -SISP intersectorial table and will concern all public and parapublic sector employees. All the other matters specifically

concerning the reality of the work environment of FIQ members will be discussed at the sectorial table. Despite this change in the Federation's methods, the decisions will be made in accordance with the structures adopted by the FIQ.

The collective agreements, or the decrees in lieu of them, expire on March 31, 2010. The SISP wants to begin the discussions for their renewal as soon as possible, with the goal of tabling its demands at the end of October 2009. The current consultation of the Federation's members is based on this timeline.

Remember that the existing working conditions were imposed, for the most part, in December 2005, for a period of over six years (2003 to 2010), and included a salary freeze for over two years. Despite the difficult context, it is important not to sink into defeatism and not to conclude that nothing can be done. Public services and the people who provide them must not bear the costs of this crisis.

At the beginning of any round of negotiations, the government, no matter what party is in power, carries out operations to influence public opinion regarding the precariousness of public finances and the high costs of the working conditions of public and parapublic sector employees. The same thing will happen in the upcoming round. Jean Charest's Liberal government will surely use the climate created by the global economic situation to try to go even farther than usual in its attacks on public services and the working conditions of government employees. In this context, the labour organizations must show realism, determination and solidarity.

THE ISSUES

An inevitable issue of the next round of negotiations very certainly is the defence and promotion of quality public services. While this is

a permanent goal for all the SISP's member organizations, the collective bargaining period is an ideal time to put forward concrete solutions and induce the government to make the appropriate budget choices.

In a labour shortage context, attracting and retaining personnel is a major issue. Remuneration is a fundamental factor in attraction and retention; the salary lag observed between public and parapublic sector employees and other employees in Quebec is a major obstacle to this goal. Beyond the salary component, this attraction and retention issue plays out differently from one sector to another, and from one class of personnel to another. Solutions adapted to each sector or class of personnel thus can be put forward in the sectoral demands related to working conditions and the conditions of practice.

This question of the shortage must be addressed according to a comprehensive, long-term approach, with the goal of making work in the public sector in general more attractive, as opposed to the employer strategy, which is shortsighted, compartmentalized and, most of the time, a source of unfairness.

The entire labour movement must unite to restore its right to negotiate and confront an increasingly intransigent government. For this alliance to work and for the FIQ to achieve the ultimate goal of signing a collective agreement satisfactory to nursing and cardiorespiratory care professionals, all unionized government employees must mobilize.” ■

Lina Bonamie

THE SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE NEXT NEGOTIATIONS



Jean Charest

Jean Charest, full professor at the *École de relations industrielles* and researcher at the Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT) was invited by the Federation to speak to the delegates on the context in which the public and parapublic sector negotiations will take place. He proposed, as elements of reflection, four dimensions of this context: public finances, the speeches on public services, the job market and lastly, union strategy.

PUBLIC FINANCES

Several factors influence the settlements of collective agreements, and in the public and parapublic sectors, public finances plays an important role. The difficult economic situation will certainly have a major impact on public finances. Labour organizations must take this into consideration when developing their demands and in their negotiation strategy. The issue, in this respect, is the development of a credible approach towards finances. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that governments, prior to each negotiation with government employees, overly stress the precariousness of public finances.

THE THINKING ON PUBLIC SERVICES

Neoliberal policies have gained considerable ground over the last years. Privatization of public services is more and more on the agenda, especially in the health-care network, since Jean Charest's Liberal government has been in power. Under the pretext that the public network can no longer meet the demand, the government has been encouraging the development of private services and has attempted to install a fee structure for some services.

Moreover, questioning this privatization is growing and is not only limited to labour organizations or left-wing political parties. In addition, the Quebec population has always expressed its attachment to quality, accessible public services. The issue for labour organizations

is to demonstrate, through their demands, that they propose a long-term vision which guarantees the long-term survival of public services.

THE JOB MARKET

Over the next decade, the number of people likely to be working between the ages of 20 and 64 will be stagnant. This trend will require that employers make real efforts to keep their labour force. In a context of possible competition between the private and public sectors, the working conditions will be the determining factor in attracting and retaining employees. At the present time, there is a salary lag between the public and parapublic sector employees and other employees in Quebec. The issue of attraction and retention is therefore critical for meeting the labour needs in public services.

UNION STRATEGY

Labour organizations must propose a global vision of the challenges that the labour shortage poses, working conditions do not encourage either attraction or retention of government employees as well as the disastrous consequences of the privatization of public services. They must also propose realistic solutions for all the issues and be united in their actions in order to point out their demands.

In ending, Mr. Charest stressed the importance of being as credible as possible throughout the negotiations both to the members of the organizations and to the public. ■

THE CHALLENGE OF PROMOTING AWARENESS IN PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion plays a major role in the decisions that a government takes. The political decision-makers use the media strategically to influence the public. Labour organizations also use this strategy. This use of the media is particularly critical in a period of negotiations. Public support of union demands puts pressure on the government and invariably influences its decisions. ■

SECTORIAL PRIORITIES

AN IMPORTANT CHANGE



From left to right : Francine Savard, Gino Pouliot, Sylvie Savard and Serge Prévost

The adoption of the sectorial priorities for negotiations marks the opening salvo in the renewal of the next collective agreement. At the Special Federal Council, Sylvie Savard, Executive Officer in charge of negotiations, accompanied by the those responsible for the coordination of the negotiations, Gino Pouliot, Serge Prévost and Francine Savard, presented the sectorial priorities to the delegates. Many delegates came to the microphones to state that these priorities meet the concerns of their members and the delegates adopted these priorities with a unanimous vote. All the members will be called upon to vote on these priorities at local general assemblies to be held in April.

AN INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE

In a context of a growing manpower scarcity, the government cannot and must not ignore this situation and endanger the services and care given to the public as well as destabilize the network. It is imperative that the government recognize the manpower shortage and the especially the disastrous effects that it has on care professionals: burnout, shortness of breadth, general dissatisfaction with working conditions, etc.

The next round of negotiations will take place in a context of significant economic crisis. However, this context must not prevent coming up with innovative solutions to counteract the major problems of a labour shortage, whether qualitative or quantitative, in order to improve working conditions that render the environment attractive, retain young nurses and to support the care professionals who have been the backbone of the health-care network for many years and to find the means to keep those who are more experienced at work.

These measures must not be considered a privilege, but as a right to practice in healthy conditions and an assurance of real quality of life. Changes are necessary in order to offer a work environment where organization of work is efficient and gives care professionals the opportunity to adequately perform their work.

It is urgent that solutions be found which enable the FIQ members to practice their profession in a setting which matches their expectations and competencies, with the goal of maintaining quality care as well as access to services for the

public. A big challenge which surely represents an investment for the coming years.

It is with taking into account all these considerations that four priorities have been determined, recognition of inconveniences, recognition of responsibilities, recognition of additional training and the arrangement of work time. The Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 1

“That the sectorial priorities for negotiations be:

- the recognition of inconveniences;
- the recognition of responsibilities;
- the recognition of additional training;
- the arrangement of work time.”

RECOGNITION OF INCONVENIENCES

■ **Evening and night premiums**
Working evening and night shifts represents a major inconvenience for care professionals. These shifts impose a major family constraint, add difficulty to reconciliation of work and family life and affect social life. The delegates believe that the monetary compensation associated with working the evening or night shift is insufficient and unattractive. In order to be able to fill these positions easier, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 2

“That the evening and night premiums be increased.”

■ **Weekend premium**

Weekend work is also an unavoidable inconvenience that has an impact on the personal and social life of care professionals as well as on the career choice of new recruits who see it as a constraint throughout their professional lives. The premium attached to the weekend shift is equivalent to 4% of the basic hourly wage, a low percentage compared to all the inconveniences and annoyances caused by the obligation to work weekends. The Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 3

“That the weekend premium be increased.”

■ **Overtime for an employee with a job title requiring a university degree**

The current provisions in the Decree in lieu of a collective agreement concerning overtime hours for these employees dates back to 1989 and no longer corresponds to reality. The lack of latitude in management of the care professionals' schedule means that recovery as time off is generally impossible, which inevitably results in payment of overtime at straight time. This provision is the cause of many irritants and adds a notion of unfairness between employees of the same centre of activities. The employees covered by this clause



feel a sense of injustice, particularly when they have to work overtime like other employees.

In the current labour shortage context, nurses with a job title requiring a university degree, particularly nurse clinicians, must work overtime, on the same basis as all the other care professionals. Depending on the centre of activities where they work, they are subject to the same inconveniences and the same constraints. They also have to deal with fatigue, stress and the increased risk of committing professional errors when they work beyond the regular workday or workweek. In addition, some employers go beyond the provisions of the collective agreement by agreeing to pay overtime at time-and-a-half after the regular workday or the regular workweek. Thus, by recruiting personnel more easily to the detriment of neighbouring institutions, these employers favour unhealthy competition and create a sense of injustice and unfairness between employees in the same region. In order for this clause to reflect today's reality, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 4

“That the payment of overtime work in addition to the regular workday or the regular workweek for employees holding a university degree, on the same basis as the other Class 1 care professionals be introduced into the collective agreement.”

■ **Statutory holidays**

During the last negotiations, obtaining compensation for work performed on the Christmas and New Year Day holidays, so that these days are paid at time-and-a-half, was a major gain for the FIQ. This has had positive effects on the work environment by maintaining presence at work when this period requires a greater demand for resources. Nonetheless, working on a statutory holiday represents a major constraint and adds to the list of adverse consequences for reconciliation of work and

personal/family life. The renewal of the next collective agreement thus is the opportune time to make other corrections or extend the demands to compensate other statutory holidays adequately. The summer period being a time of year when resources are more limited, to correct this situation, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 5

“That the Quebec provisions cover two statutory holidays in addition to Christmas and New Year’s Day, namely the Quebec National Holiday and Canada Day.”

RECOMMENDATION 6

“That the pay for the Christmas, New Year’s Day, Quebec National Holiday and Canada Day statutory holidays be increased.”

■ **Introduction of a scarcity premium**

The health-care network, is experiencing a worrying labour scarcity, particularly for care professionals. Rapid solutions must be found so that, in the short term, there is sufficient recruiting of the workforce the network needs. The introduction of a scarcity premium is one of the solutions to be put in place. Such a premium will compensate for the inconvenience of working in an environment where working conditions are difficult and demanding due to a labour shortage. The delegates found this an interesting solution to counteract the labour shortage. Therefore, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 7

“That a scarcity premium be introduced for any every job title in short supply.”

RECOGNITION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

■ **From intensive care to critical care**

The intensive care premium was introduced in the 1960s. At the time, critically-ill patients were located in a special unit and the care and supervision of this type of clientele by the nurses required much more responsibility compared to an institution's other clienteles. However, the work environments have changed greatly since that time and the clientele previously confined to this type of “special” unit are now distributed among other sectors of activities. The responsibility that had to be assumed by certain employees in intensive care has been extended to other clientele who are on other units rather than the traditional intensive care units in the institutions. The delegates adopted recommendations to review the definition of intensive care as well as the associated premium by updating it to today's reality and adequately compensating care professionals for the responsibilities they incur. Thus, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 8

“That the notion of critical care be introduced into the collective agreement”.

RECOMMENDATION 9

“That the intensive care premium be increased and that it be applied to the notion of critical care.”

■ **From institutional psychiatric care to mental health care in the community**

Over the years, several reorganizations of the mental health-care network have followed in succession and the reality of care professionals has changed, while there has been little evolution of the collective agreement clauses, which are still patterned on the institutional network. The situations in which care is delivered to this type of clientele, even if they are no longer institutionalized, increase the risk of violence, assault and psychological stress. In order that

the provisions of the collective agreement reflect the changes concerning the organization of work, the responsibilities of care professionals and the working conditions in which they operate the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 10

“That the conditions specific to the employees of psychiatric institutions, wings or units apply to all employees who work in mental health.”

■ **Prosthetic unit**

Over the past few years, prosthetic units have been increasingly established, especially in residential and long-term care centres. The prosthetic unit is a living environment in which the philosophy, care programmes and intervention plans are specifically adapted for a clientele with disturbing behaviour associated with dementia. The care professionals who work with this clientele must show a great ability to accept behaviours that do not conform to the established standards in society. In the 2000-2002 collective agreement, a letter of understanding stipulated that the parties had 90 days after this agreement came into force to agree on special conditions applicable to these employees. In December 2001, the CPNSSS refused to provide for any special conditions, despite its commitment.



Thus, with the goal of a struggle to be continued, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 11

“That recognition of the notion of prosthetic unit be obtained, with agreement on special conditions applicable to these employees.”

RECOGNITION OF ADDITIONAL TRAINING

■ **Clauses to be revisited**

The recognition of additional training, subject to the criteria of requirement, is compensated by advancement in the salary scale, or by “uncapping” beyond the twelfth echelon. However, for attraction and retention purposes, some employers automatically recognize additional training without imposing requirements. However, for attraction and retention purposes, some employers automatically recognize additional training without imposing requirements. To develop mechanisms for increasing the motivation and satisfaction of care professionals, recognition of additional training without the criterion of requirements is an interesting solution to favour retraction and attention. The appendices of the Decree in lieu of a collective agreement must be reviewed and updated with the aim of recognizing all additional training and correcting certain difficulties of

application. The delegates believe that there is still more to do in order that the value of additional training is recognized in the context of a labour shortage. Therefore, the Federal Council recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 12

“That the additional training of care professionals be automatically recognized.”

RECOMMENDATION 13

“That some of the appendices concerning postgraduate training be reviewed and up dated.”

ARRANGEMENT OF WORK TIME

The deterioration in the workplaces that prevailed during the last negotiations, particularly concerning the work overloads, the increase in tasks, overtime hours and the burnout of resources has grown. Added to this context is the administrative re-organizations and restructuring that has brought about, among others, a reduction in the regular teams and an increase in mobility. In the current state of the health and social services network, working full-time is less attractive and many employees who hold full-time positions of 5 days

**DECENTRALIZATION,
A MAJOR ISSUE**

Sylvie Savard, Executive Officer in charge of negotiations, explained to the delegates the importance of making the review of the decentralization an issue prior to negotiations. Because it is presently impossible to complete the work on the reform of the system of negotiations, within which the matters to be negotiated locally need to be looked at again, some conditions concerning these matters need to be discussed at the sectorial table. The problems encountered during the local negotiations and the numerous disparities in the different local provisions negotiated or imposed by an arbitrator require that some corrections be made to certain texts in order to specify or establish the Quebec and local provisions. It is a battle to fight in the interest of the members, so the delegates gave the FIQ the mandate to undertake, as quickly as possible, discussions with the *Comité patronal de négociation du secteur de la santé et des services sociaux* (CPNSSS) in order to make some corrections to the decentralization. ■



a week are opting to reduce their work time by asking for part-time leaves of absence. Unfortunately, these request are frequently refused. Failing to reduce their time at work, many take part-time positions in spite of the reduction in salary.

During the last negotiations, the FIQ led the way in order to stabilize the care teams. On the one hand, the aggressive approach targeted a reduction in the work time of full-time employees and, on the other hand, giving a permanent position to all employees. Unfortunately, the Decree in lieu of a collective agreement only retained the second measure.

The incumbency of employees on the availability list is a significant step forward. However, without a reduction of work hours for full-time employees, this measure does not have the desired effects. The employers, afraid of not having enough flexibility with the employees on the availability list, kept themselves a sufficient margin of maneuverability by creating part-time positions.

The health-care network is plagued with a serious lack of workers and cannot continue to be managed according to the availability that

part-time employees give. While more attractive positions could be granted to these employees, the employers continue to use private nursing agencies in order to fill replacements. This practice generates significant costs and the use of these resources does not stabilize the workplaces.

These situations where full-time employees want to reduce their work time, part-time employees complete their workweek on call and the private agency personnel who offer institutions in the network an availability that suits them, is due for a big change. All care professionals should hold full-time positions. In order for them to adhere to this change, it is unavoidable that the full-time workweek be reduced. The delegates agreed that the renewal of the next collective agreement was the opportune time to start this change. Thus, the Federal Council recommends that:

RECOMMENDATION 14

“That all care professionals hold full-time positions.”

RECOMMENDATION 15

“That the number of work days required for a position to be full-time be reduced to 4 days a week.”

A DRAFT OF AVANT-GARDE PRIORITIES

This project of priorities is avant-garde and is aimed at acting on the labour shortage, the workload, the stabilization of care teams, the quality of life at work, the reconciliation of work and personal/family life, the quality of care and finally the recognition of health-care professionals. It is a determining change which offers the best solution to the current problems.

Now, it is up to the local members to discuss these priorities and to adopt them. Once all the local general assemblies have decided, a compilation will be done, from which a draft collective agreement will be drawn up and presented to the May Special Federal Council. ■

THE NEXT STEPS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS

APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consultation on the sectorial priorities and the intersectorial demands with the local general assemblies. ■ Results of the consultation and compilation of the results.
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presentation of the draft collective agreement at the Special Negotiation Federal Council on May 19, 20 and 21. ■ Start of the consultation of the local general assemblies on the draft collective agreement.
END OF JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Results of the consultation and compilation of the demands.
SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presentation and adoption of the draft sectorial collective agreement to the Special Negotiation Federal Council on September 29, 30 and October 1 and 2.
END OF OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Filing of the draft collective agreement at the sectorial and intersectorial tables.

Turn out in great numbers at the local general assemblies. It is your chance to have a say on the priorities for the next negotiations.



CONSULTATION ON THE INTERSECTORIAL MATTERS

The time has arrived to officially set off the process of consulting the members on the intersectorial matters for the next round of negotiations. Following the decision taken at this Federal Council, salaries, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities will be negotiated in a common front consisting of the CSN, the FTQ and the SISP. The FIQ care professionals are therefore being asked to decide on the intersectorial demands at their local general assemblies.



The protection of public services inevitably goes through the improvement of the working and salary conditions of the employees who provide these services. Whether it is health care, education, civil service or the various parapublic organizations, the problems of attraction and retention of personnel are huge, as a result of a lack of recognition of the value of this manpower.

Remuneration is a fundamental element in attracting and retaining a labour force; the lagging salary noted between the employees of the public and parapublic sectors and other employees in Quebec is a big impediment to this objective. Besides the salary aspect, this attraction and retention issue is different from one sector to another, from one job category to another, and it is within the sectorial demands concerning working conditions and professional performance that solutions adapted to each sector or job category can be established (see the article on the sectorial priorities).

THE SUBJECTS IN CONSULTATION

SALARIES

The Pay Equity Act forces the employer to maintain pay equity once it is achieved. During a negotiation or a renewal of a collective agreement, the employer and the union must both ensure that pay equity is maintained.

■ Protection of purchasing power

The demand for the protection of purchasing power, the rates and salary scales are at the heart of the salary demands. Full indexation of salaries to the cost of living, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) must be sought.

■ Catch-up pay

According to the *Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ)*, in 2008, public sector employees lagged behind other Quebec employees by an estimated 7.7%. The SISP-N believes that it is essential to make up for at least a part of this gap.

■ Participation in collective enrichment

When the economy grows, it is normal that, in the spirit of social justice, that the population as a whole can benefit from the spin-offs of this growth. Since the employees contribute to creating this wealth through their work, it is also normal that they receive their share of this collective enrichment (GDP). According to many observers, the period covered by the next collective agreement will coincide with the start of an economic recovery. While considering the current economic situation, the SISP-N believes that it will be able to benefit from this recovery.

■ The form of the demand

The SISP-N proposes to put forward a salary demand combining these factors in the form of a percentage of salary and in the form of a fixed amount (or an equal amount for everyone) built into the pay rates or scales. The demand then would have a mixed form.

The experts are increasingly convinced that the economic recovery will more surely occur in 2011 rather than at the end of 2010. Moreover, Common Front discussions have been held and all the labour organizations agree that the salary demand should be 11.25% for the term of the collective agreement but that it should be distributed differently over the three years. Thus the increase for the first year could be lower than the projected increase for the second year, while the second-year increase could be lower than the third. The percentage increase thus would be applied progressively

RECOMMENDATION 1

“For each of the three years covered by the agreement,

- 1) Protection of purchasing power: 2%, associated with an adjustment clause that would be applied if the CPI exceeds 2% to cover the increase in the CPI completely;
- 2) Catch-up: an average of 1.75% (a fixed amount of \$850);
- 3) Participation in enrichment:

the commitment by the government to resume the discussions to agree on the amount to be granted for enrichment in the event that GDP growth exceeds 3.75%.

On the average, for the duration of the agreement: 11.25% based on a CPI increase of 2% or less and a GDP growth rate less than 3.75%.

Thus, for each year:

an average of 3.75% (if the CPI increases by 2% and GDP growth is less than 3.75%), so that each employee's salary would be increased by 2% plus \$850 (to be indexed).”



RETIREMENT

Work began some time ago to stabilize the RREGOP contribution rate and ensure the plan's security as much as possible. The most recent results of the *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec* confirm the relevance of this work and the necessity of reviewing the plan's funding mode to protect it from excessive increases or variations in the contribution rate.

■ Funding of the plan

Two main goals are pursued in the plan's funding approach: ensure the security of benefits and maintain the most stable possible contribution rate.

■ Indexation

The goal is to change the indexation formula (CPI - 3%) applicable for the contribution years between July 1, 1982 and December 31, 1999 to bring it into line with the formula applied since January 1, 2000 (CPI - 3% with a minimum of 50% of the CPI). This demand is not new and is worth putting back on the table, because it affects a great many contributors and retired employees.

However, this demand is only viable if the actuarial valuation method is changed. Moreover, this change would only occur when the pension fund has reached a surplus level that would allow its complete funding. Thus, its implementation would not have an impact on the contribution rate and would not require a contribution from contributors which would not be the case if the current method used was retained.

■ The contribution formula

Ever since the RREGOP has existed, the contribution formula has always been the same: Contribution rate X (salary - 35% of MPE). The MPE is the maximum pensionable earnings for the Quebec Pension Plan and varies every year. When the RREGOP was created, it was \$5,900. Today it is \$46,300.

When the plan was established, given that the QPP existed, the decision to apply this formula meant that the members did not contribute based on their full salary. Thus, the actual percentage contribution is lower than the rate of the plan and the impact of the exemption equivalent to 35% of the MPE is greater for the lowest-paid than for the highest-paid employees. Thus, there was a bias in favour of the lowest-paid employees when the plan was created. It has become

accentuated over the years. The SISP-N believes that it is necessary to go ahead so that the contribution is equitable for all pay levels. To meet this objective without calling for a greater contribution by the lowest-paid employees, the government must be asked to cover this increase, as it had proposed to do in 2005.

■ Uncapping the plan

This would restore a provision that existed in the early 1990s, which would allow contribution beyond 35 years of service for calculation purposes. The return of this measure would make it possible for people who choose to work longer to have a pension greater than 70%. This measure does not generate any costs for the plan and is consistent with the workforce retention objective.

RECOMMENDATION 2

“The continuation of the work regarding funding of the plan, the indexation applicable for the contribution years between 1982 and 1999, the contribution formula and uncapping of the plan to arrive at solutions as soon as possible.”

PARENTAL RIGHTS

The last negotiations made it necessary to rewrite part of the chapter on parental rights, essentially to coordinate the benefits of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) better with the benefits provided until then. The question of reconciliation of work and family life is often raised when parental rights are discussed. In this regard, apart from the demands related to the organization of work, which may be the object of sectorial demands, the SISP-N believes that its member organizations could request that the government adopt legislation establishing reconciliation of work and family life measures accessible to all Quebec workers.

RECOMMENDATION 3

“The establishment of a technical table with the mandate to review the provisions of this chapter in relation to the Act respecting labour standards (ALS) and the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP) and to make recommendations to the parties, as the case may be.”

RECOMMENDATION 4

“The adoption by the Quebec government of framework legislation favouring reconciliation of work and family life in the work environments.”

REGIONAL DISPARITIES

In all the negotiations since the mid-1980s, the government has always tried to globally reduce the benefits granted for this purpose by correcting the situation of some employees to the detriment of others. In the current context, the SISP believes that strong action will be needed to protect acquired rights.

RECOMMENDATION 5

“That no other demand be put forward in this matter.”

The members of each of the SISP-N organizations will be consulted on these recommendations. First, the demands will be aligned with those of the other SISP-N organizations, and secondly with those of the CSN and the FTQ. Lastly, the delegates at a future Federal Council will adopt the draft collective agreement on these four intersectorial matters which will be tabled with the government at the end of October 2009. ■

ORGANIZATION OF WORK, A PRIORITY

Carole Grant and Daniel Gilbert, Executive Officers in charge of the Organization of Work and the Labour Relations Sectors, reminded the delegates that the organization of work was a priority of the Federation this year and reported to them on the follow-up of the action plan.



Réjean Hébert

REVIEW OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF BILL 90 AND THE TNP

The results of this assessment, carried out at the beginning of the year in the network's institutions, brought to light that there is a significant delay in providing the training required for the nurses to respect this obligation of drawing up a therapeutic nursing plan by April 1, 2009. The FIQ met with the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ) to find out its intentions regarding this troubling situation. Since the obligation to train nurses is the employers' responsibility and there is no exemption, the OIIQ will hold a meeting in April with the Association québécoise d'établissements de santé et de services sociaux (AQESSS) so that the latter will pressure its members to speed up delivery of training. The FIQ will continue to follow this issue closely and suggests that the members and the local teams denounce recalcitrant employers directly to the OIIQ.

INTERVENTION IN ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A substantial part of the action plan is based on the capacity of the local teams to take adequate action on the organization of work. Since January, the FIQ has started a major training program intended for the local teams. The goal of this training is to provide a definition and a common vision of the organization of work and the components of the environment that influence it and to equip the local teams in their interventions on the organization of work. The Federation also wants to update the local teams' knowledge of the organization of work as quickly as possible.

THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE AND SERVICES

Two speakers were invited to the Federal Council to share their vision of the future of health care and services in Quebec with the

delegates. Here is a brief summary of their remarks.

The organization of health services in Quebec: necessary changes

According to Réjean Hébert, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of the Université de Sherbrooke, where he is a full professor and researcher, several factors will require changes to the organization of the Quebec health-care system. First, population aging is generating an increased need for home care and first-line care, which are currently underfunded. In addition, the professional staff shortage does not allow delivery of all the long-term care required by the increase in the number of chronic patients. Finally, the privatization of health-care funding only accentuates this shortage.

A change of approach is necessary, not only to deliver care but to ensure a better quality of life for seniors, whose longevity is constantly growing. It is essential to bank on empowerment of individuals regarding their health and offer them quality services accessible where they live. This inevitably depends on a major investment in home care and first-line care and a complete integration of services to ensure their continuity and avoid their duplication and fragmentation. The emerging clinical projects are the key to integration of services.

It is also essential to mitigate the labour shortage by offering better working conditions and enhancing the public health system to attract and retain care professionals.

A redefinition of the division of competencies and an improvement of interprofessional collaboration are unavoidable. The government inevitably must review its approach and reinvest in the public network.

The future in the health-care field

Based on the analysis of the same factors observed by Dr. Hébert, Clémence Dallaire, Associate Professor with the Faculty of Nursing of Université Laval, explained that the difficulties of Western health-care systems in organizing their efforts to respond coherently and efficiently to the population's needs depend on the coexistence of four logics: professional, technocratic, market and democratic. These create conflicts and negotiations, with the result that some of the ideals presented do not materialize. Ms. Dallaire set out the issues and challenges of these logics and invited the delegates to question the logic and the reorganizations of work that will prevail in Quebec.

The professional logic is driven by an ideal of service and values expertise and specialization. It is dominated by physicians and focused on disease and hospitals. This is a logic of another era, which divides work according to a dominant concept, that of disease. The technocratic logic is based on a lot of rules, structures and protocols. It is geared to the performance and efficiency of service. The market logic conceives of health care as a business, in which insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies and equipment manufacturers predominate. Finally, the democratic logic is dominated by the public system, which must arbitrate among a range of interests and in which collaboration, confrontation and negotiation make any modification of the system complex.

Without having answers regarding the logic that will prevail, Ms. Dallaire said that it is essential to work on meeting the public's health-care needs. This is the formula to be proposed to improve the Quebec health-care system. ■



Gilles Dussault

A DETERMINED UNION FORCE

Within the scope of the member labour organizations of the *Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics* (SISP) participating in each others' decision-making bodies, Gilles Dussault, President of the *Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec* (SPGQ), accompanied by Lina Bonamie, President, addressed the delegates.

With passion, candor and honesty, Mr. Dussault presented the SPGQ, a union which, following the FIQ's example, wants to improve the working conditions of its members, but finds itself faced with an antiunion government that refuses to negotiate and has made privatization its favorite topic.

Faced with a government who will use the economic crisis during the next negotiations, Mr. Dussault asked the following question: "Must we throw in the towel and surrender because of the prevalence of the spiels and the political force of the Charest government?" The SPGQ

president feels that joining the SISP has been an opportunity to emerge from individualism and to change culture. The adoption of a strategic framework for negotiations is a SISP political initiative to make the negotiation process of the intersectorial matters more efficient, fair and quick.

All the member unions, since the creation of the SISP, have demonstrated great openness and commitment to working together in a united and integral way. Mr. Dussault reinforced the importance of this union force as a political opposition against the attacks from

a neoliberal government. According to him, an historical movement in the public sector is taking place in Quebec and as many members as possible must be encouraged to join it.

He ended his presentation with the following: "The best demands are not those that best meet our individual desires. The best demands are those behind which the greatest number assemble. This force is a case of openness, hope and commitment, the three pillars of political cohesion." ■

APPEAL TO THE SUPERIOR COURT

The FIQ gave itself a priority to fight against privatization in 2009. Among the targeted actions, an appeal was filed in Superior Court on March 9, 2009 by the *Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics* (SISP), of which the FIQ is a member, to contest the Regulation respecting surgeries performed outside a hospital. The CSN and the FTQ filed the same appeal at the beginning of December 2008.

The goal is to prevent the government from giving a monopoly on hip, knee and other surgeries requiring more than 24 hours of hospitalization to medical clinics whose physicians are not in medicare. This legal action is aimed at blocking the creation of completely private hospitals.

FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATIZATION PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP- CSSS CHAMPLAIN

The Federation is greatly preoccupied with the CSSS Champlain project. The new CHSLD which will be built as a PPP within the territory of the CSSS Champlain is the first in a bigger trend that the *Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Montérégie* (Montérégie Health and Social Services Agency) seems to want to take. The government is pushing its boldness further and further in its PPP projects and the case of this new CHSLD is a perfect example. This institution will not become the property of the public network at the end of the contract and the care will be provided by the private sector. It is therefore, pure and simple privatization which allows private enterprise to fill its pockets, even with Quebec taxpayers' money.

The delegates to the Federal Council meeting in Saint-Hyacinthe, made the trip to Longueuil in order to demonstrate against the CHSLD PPP projects. They demanded that the government back peddle in all these PPP projects including those for CHSLD's. The Federation intends to object to it and to use all the forums at its disposal in order to be heard. ■

