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Special Federal Council of April 8 and 9, 2010

# ENACTION

FÉDÉRATION INTERPROFESSIONNELLE DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC | [www.fiqsante.qc.ca](http://www.fiqsante.qc.ca)



## DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE MINISTER'S OFFICE

On April 8, about 500 FIQ delegates gathered in front of the Quebec City office of the Minister of Health and Social Services (MSSS) to let Minister Bolduc know that leaving on vacation right in the middle of a negotiation blitz was a very poor choice.

### THE BACHAND BUDGET: DO MORE WITH LESS

During the tabling of the budget, the government revealed its true colours and its true intentions for the healthcare system. After having robbed the middle class, depriving them for the good of the Quebec Elite Inc., it will now be difficult to charm the public.

Much more than a fiscal reform, the last Bachand budget is nothing more than an outright attack on the Quebec model, against public services and, against the values shared by the majority of the population. This is true in all sectors, particularly in the health sector.

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The nurses, licensed practical nurses, respiratory therapists and perfusionists are more than ever determined to fight for the survival of an accessible public health network, where the conditions for practicing the profession are attractive and satisfying. The delegates also made it known that it is the responsibility of the ministry to find practicable solutions to the chronic problems that are currently plaguing the network, by properly mandating its representatives at the negotiating table. The demonstrators reminded Mr. Bolduc, who stands out by his absence, that they will not let him shed his obligations, because it is a question of the survival of care professionals.

They also denounced the current side-stepping which is aimed at blindly applying a Lean method to the healthcare system, copied from the automobile assembly lines, yet a model criticized by its ineffectiveness. Régine Laurent, President of the FIQ, recalled that the MSSS was once the place where proposed solutions by healthcare workers were discussed, taken into consideration and applied, the same place where the foundations of an accessible and free healthcare system have been thrown out. ■



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**WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT**

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**THE BACHAND BUDGET: DO MORE WITH LESS (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)**

The fundamental principles of the Quebec healthcare system, particularly its universality and free service, are directly threatened by the regressive and unfair measures which are taxes and the health franchise.

This budget remains a business plan destined to increase the possibilities of making a minority richer, to the detriment of the majority, and to ensure a godsend of profit for private healthcare employment agencies, whose growth directly depends on the deterioration of our working conditions.

Moreover, this budget has a direct impact on the negotiations currently being run by the Federation. Suddenly the management offers make sense because they are written, almost word for word, in the budget. It must be understood that the care professionals are not entitled to a classic negotiations, where the management representatives on the other side of the table gradually make compromises in order to reach an agreement. This is definitely not what is happening at the negotiating table.

For the Liberals in general, and for Minister Bolduc in particular, the future of public services moves through the Toyota method: a dehumanization of care where the future of the patients rests on an assembly line timed almost to the second. Moreover, the improvement of the working conditions of the care professionals guarantees an improvement in the quality of services and care for the population. This concept is clearly not understood by Minister Bolduc. ■



**THE DUPLICITY HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH**

*Régine Daurant*

Nothing discussed at the Special Federal Council was cheerful. Indeed, the announced negotiating blitz did not result in the expected outcomes. After so many hours, days and nights of trying, in good faith, to get the management representatives to understand, something which all of Quebec seems to already understand, we unfortunately met with failure.

The population understands that the *status quo* is not conceivable regarding the working conditions of care professionals and that it is more than urgent to propose retention and attraction strategies before the expected catastrophe that will be the massive departures for retirement.

As a labour organization, the FIQ is proposing structural measures in order to put an end, once and for all, to the unacceptable. The FIQ is suggesting solutions worthy of the problems experienced daily by nurses, licensed practical nurses, respiratory therapists and perfusionists.

**In spite of its claims, there is no choice but to admit that the Charest government has no intention of doing anything which could improve the lot of the care professionals and that of the public healthcare system.**

It has become more obvious that the basic principle of the Liberal government resides in the art of duplicity. Thus, on the evening of March 30, the night before the budget, though Ministers Bolduc, Courchesne and Gagnon-Tremblay gave the Common Front representatives a glimpse of good faith, they were applying the art of duplicity.

It can be stated, without being mistaken, that, in the health field, the FIQ and its members have more credibility than the Minister of Health and the employers. Thus, all platforms must be used: it is essential that the pressure be maintained on this government that has already lost much of its sympathy stock and has already lost the confidence of the population.

Everyone must use their energy to show the population that the future of the public healthcare system is directly linked to the outcome of the negotiations for the care professionals: a negotiation that will finally give them the working conditions they deserve.

After months and millions of dollars invested in a propaganda campaign aimed at selling the idea of a crisis in public finances, the government surely hoped to render any increase in the care professionals working conditions unacceptable in the eyes of the population. However, the government would be wise to revise its positions, because duplicity doesn't work. ■

**What the Charest government really wants is to impose its model of society, whose main orientations are contained in its budget.**



NEGOTIATIONS



# A FULL FRONTAL ATTACK



## MARCH 29

At the meeting requested by the Common Front representatives, Ministers Gagnon-Tremblay, Courchesne and Bolduc showed some openness and agreed to withdraw the recuperations stipulated in the offers made at the sectorial negotiating tables. At the request of the Common Front, the negotiations should therefore continue without any recuperations in the present working conditions.

## MARCH 30

The FIQ returned to the negotiating table, consistent with an exploratory process with the objective of arriving at an agreement. Now, during that negotiating meeting, the FIQ learned that only 3 of the recuperation demands had been withdrawn and that nearly 40 of the management offers are still on the table. The management party, for its part, demands that the FIQ limit itself to 9 demands!

It is important to remember that the process deemed exploratory, enables the parties to establish their mutual priorities and to move towards a satisfactory agreement in principle. Failing an agreement, the original demands of both parties remain on the table.

## FROM APRIL 1 TO 5

After 4 negotiating meetings, the management party still refusing to withdraw the recuperations demanded, the Federation decides to give its delegation a update of the progress at the Special Federal Council of April 8 and 9.



Francine Savard, Coordination team for the negotiations

Following the presentation of the management offers of March 26 and April 5, the delegates strongly reacted and demonstrated great anger with the management offers which dangerously put the care professionals' working conditions in jeopardy, without putting forth any solutions to attract and retain the labour force. The union representatives accused the government of a full frontal attack against the unions, of creating the conditions needed for a breakup of the health-care system and of opening the door wide open for the private sector.

The FIQ is demanding that the inconveniences and responsibilities linked to the work, as well as additional training be recognized, and is also proposing the setting up of structural measures to stabilize the work teams by granting full-time positions and by re-evaluating work time. On their side, the management party is advocating part-time positions, but is suggesting some additional benefits, such as an increase in the evening and night premium, on the condition that the part-time employees agree to increase their availability to meet the needs of the employer.

The employer is also demanding versatility and flexibility according to the needs, and demands the setting up of atypical positions with variable hours. The employees who would obtain these positions would be forced to work on more than one shift, sometimes more than forty hours a week without being able to claim overtime, or to work 12-hour shifts. For the part-time employee, overtime hours worked after the regular workday would no longer be considered overtime, but only after the workweek, and only if the employee has worked more than 36.25 hours.

As for critical care (emergency, intensive care, neonatal units, major burn units and coronary care units), the management party is proposing to increase the premium only for nurses, but only if they offer additional availability.

For some delegates, the management offers indicate contempt for care professionals. Some even accuse the government of wanting to spoil the work climate and provoke disorder. Many among them denounce the Charest government's incoherent position

and who is demanding the maintaining of many employees in a precarious job status, while they offer superior benefits only to those who will work practically full-time on call. Everyone clearly understood that this is a major issue, because this negotiation is being carried out within a neoliberal context where the government wants to eliminate the restrictions contained in the collective agreements, to weaken the unions and to set up all the elements likely to allow a shift towards the private sector.

The Federation and the other labour organizations in the health field have asked for a meeting with Minister Bolduc in order that he initiate real negotiations and that the management offers become offers from which the negotiations can finally start. Moreover, if there is no progress at the negotiating table by April 20, a request for mediation will be made to the Minister of Labour. ■



# A MONTH OF APRIL UNDER THE SIGN OF MOBILIZATION

Sylvie Savard, 4<sup>th</sup> Vice-President of the FIQ was beside Mélanie Parent, Josée Renaud and Michel Mailhot from the Info-Support team to present the mobilization plan unanimously adopted by the delegates.



In the current context of the negotiations, involvement and mobilization of the local teams spring into focus and are at the heart of the strategy on visibility. The members are situated front and centre for attesting to the failures of the healthcare system, because every day they suffer the perverse effects of the deficiencies of the network. It is for this reason that they continue from all platforms to let everyone know that they are sick and tired of it all.

It boggles the mind what the employers will do to acquire the flexibility and mobility that they could not get through the local negotiations. It is specifically to counteract this recourse to disloyal measures that the delegates agreed with the application of visibility methods at the local, regional and FIQ level during the month. The demonstration organized in front of the Minister's office is only a taste of what the FIQ members intend for the government of Minister Bolduc for as long as the negotiations continue to be a mockery. The delegates agreed to apply the following methods:

## AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Refuse to sign a local agreement on arrangement of work time, whatever the type;
- Systematic demand for time worked and refusal to participate in meetings solicited by the employer when they are deemed unnecessary for as long as there are no true negotiations;
- Always wear the bracelet, the armband and the transfer;
- Wear a black T-shirt on Wednesdays, to symbolize a profession in mourning, a next generation of care professionals that are committed and passionate, a free and accessible network and the providing of quality care to the Quebec population;
- Also wear jeans of various colours;
- Refuse to wear the ID badge until a collective agreement is signed;

- Send a letter to the administration of the institution to denounce the management offers of April 5;
- Sensitize the student associations to the working conditions of care professionals.

## AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- Organization of watches (vigils) in the week of April 26.

## AT THE FIQ LEVEL

- A televised publicity campaign at the appropriate time;
- Publication and distribution of a tool to the Quebec population, explaining the consequences of the measures applied by the government on the services and the care that they will receive;
- Organization of a watch (vigil) at a time deemed appropriate. ■

As of the week of April 12, adopt the essential services policy and negotiate essential services during general assemblies. A Guide on development of essential services was given to the delegation for this purpose. A visibility event will be combined with an activity when the union's essential services list is filed with the employer.



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