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# ENACTION

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Special Federal Council  
of May 26 and 27, 2010

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



## THE DELEGATION VISITS BACHAND

Profoundly displeased with the management offers which were presented to them by the Coordination team for the negotiations, the delegates went to the *Centre de commerce mondial de Montréal* in order to visit Raymond Bachand, Minister of Finance.

Rarely has the delegation been seen to be so determined to be heard. Therefore, a crowd of more than 500 activists invaded the office tower where the office of the Minister is located with the purpose of disturbing his work, just like the Liberal government is doing with the care professionals by refusing to give them decent working conditions.

For more than an hour, whistles, flags, bells and hand clapping were used to notify the government of their anger with the contemptuous management offers presently on the table. ■



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## WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

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### THE PUBLIC IS STILL SUPPORTING THE FIQ

Last April, in order to determine the public's perception of the care professionals and their demands, the Federation gave the Léger Marketing firm the mandate to carry out a survey. The results were more than conclusive. Six weeks later, it can be confirmed that this line of thinking continues and that Québécois still support the FIQ by a very large majority.

The data drawn from the most recent survey conducted between May 17 and May 21, 2010, shows the following picture:

- Nearly 80% of the population supports the four day schedule;
- The public has more confidence in the members of the Federation than in the government to present a reliable and true account of reality in the debate surrounding the proposal on the reorganization of work time;
- Three out of four Québécois believe that an improvement in working conditions is needed;
- More than nine out of ten Québécois think that it is urgent that the negotiations with the government be settled now;
- A majority of Québécois think that the members of the Federation should use various pressure tactics if the government refuses to come to a settlement now;
- A great majority of Québécois say they are ready to support the cause of the members if the FIQ asks for the public's participation.



### THE GOVERNMENT IS ABANDONING THE PATIENTS OF QUÉBEC

The temperature is climbing as the summer season approaches. The adoption of essential services, the fight against the private healthcare employment agencies and the public outings throughout Québec are only a few examples of the current activities of the FIQ activists.

The Federation has promised to disturb the government as much as possible, to act like a pebble in its shoe. The FIQ is noticing that the pebble is becoming more and more annoying. At the beginning of the Special Federal Council, the FIQ sincerely believed that this was the right strategy to make the decision-makers see reason, especially since the government is currently interested in embarking on a charm operation, before being reduced to the great escape.

It appeared however, that the Charest government chose another route to polish its image. Indeed, it prefers to confront the Federation to try to convince the population that it is standing up to the sphere of unionism. It is probably hoping to pave the way for a special law as it has already done in the past. By taking this route, the government will surely leave behind the patients of Québec, just like it has dropped the care professionals who struggle in abominable conditions to provide quality care to the population.

The union context includes its share of obstacles, but these are certainly not insurmountable. Pooling of energy and resources, as well as the weight of numbers are, without a doubt, helpful for continuing the fight. The government is irresponsible and the way it treats the care professionals is unacceptable, but the FIQ will never back down. The recognition of care professionals runs hand in hand with the future of the public health network as well as the accessibility and quality of the care provided to the whole population. ■

## IN THE MIDDLE OF MEDIATION

At the start of the Special Federal Council, the FIQ representatives had met with the mediator, Stéphane Giraldeau, twice.

#### MAY 12

From the first discussion a work plan and a schedule of meetings were set and it was not a shock for the Federation to learn that the management party only had five available dates to offer before June 21.

#### MAY 21

At the second meeting, the FIQ explained its decision-making structure to the mediator who said he would be mindful of these structures. The mediator suggested to both parties that the discussions start again from the beginning, but the management party announced instead that they would be making a new global offer including an arrangement of work time project. ■

## GROUNDHOG DAY



On May 26, the management party once again, filed its offers with the goal of reaching a global settlement. Although they are pursuing the same objectives as the Federation, that is to improve working conditions, attract and retain personnel in the health network, reduce the overtime worked and the use of private healthcare employment agencies, the solutions they are proposing are still light years away from those that the members of the FIQ are advocating.

The management party is still demanding that an agreement in principle on arrangement of work time be reached before discussing all the other subjects in dispute in order for the negotiations to continue. It is limiting these subjects to those contained in its offer. All the other demands must remain at the *status quo*. Consequently, the union demands have become so puny that, in this framework, the current working conditions will likely remain the same.

In setting up these conditions for continuing the discussions, it is clear that the management party wants to impose an unrealistic pace to the negotiations. Because of this, the mediation process is ringing more and more false. **CONT'D P. 3**



## GROUNDHOG DAY (CONT'D)

Furthermore, it must be said that these offers contain few structural measures that would quickly make changes in the health network. Over the last few weeks the government has maintained its positions regarding the demands of the Federation having to be self-financed and an increase of certain premiums conditional to additional availability. In its last offers, they were even more audacious in demanding a presence at work during the pay period in order to get the premium.

### THIS MORE THAN DISAPPOINTING OFFER INCLUDES, IN PARTICULAR:

**An arrangement of work time scenario** that the parties can agree to implement at the local level, on an individual and voluntary basis, at no cost, with no deficit in resources, with no increase in the use of personnel from private healthcare employment agencies and in overtime hours. Failing to respect these conditions, the employer may unilaterally end the agreement. This fact results in the following:

- No arrangement of work time for employees on the day shift. Only employees on the evening and night shifts can have access to it after agreement with the employer and on an individual and voluntary basis;
- To have access to it, employees working full-time would be responsible for identifying the part-time employees who would agree to work the shifts that they would be freeing up;
- The schedule for employees on the evening shift would be 9 evenings (7.25 hours) per 14 evenings. The 10<sup>th</sup> day not worked would be paid by the conversion

of 10 days of annual vacation, 12 days of statutory holidays and 3 days of sick leave;

- The schedule for employees on the night shift would be 8 nights (7.25 hours) per 14 nights. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> days not worked would be paid by the conversion of 10 days of annual vacation, 12 statutory holidays, 3 days of sick leave as well as the night premium.

It would be implemented progressively, over three years, starting with critical care the first year, long term care the second year and, lastly, in the whole institution the third year. An evaluation would be done at the end of each year before continuing with the implementation. The measure would only apply in the third year for those institutions that do not have critical care or long term care.

The increase in **evening and night premiums** would be conditional to an additional availability. However, the employee may not be absent (except for certain specific reasons) during the pay period (14 days) when she would work this or these shifts, nor during the subsequent pay period. In addition, the increase in these premiums would mean the withdrawal of the summer measures put in place by the MSSS as of 2011.

As for **critical care**, just like for the evening and night shifts, the premium would be increased conditional to an additional availability and a mandatory presence at work during the pay period and the subsequent pay period (except for certain specific reasons). The introduction of these premiums would also mean the withdrawal of the administrative measures of 7% and 10% put in place by the MSSS for critical care.

**An initiation and training premium**, equivalent to 2% of the basic salary is proposed, but only for nurses in outpost clinics, contrary to the union demand which covers all job titles. This percentage represents an amount that is less than that already demanded by certain employees who, at the employer's request, take on this task and receive an amount of \$61.17 per week.

In its offers, the management party is sticking to its guns about rotation positions (day-evening, day-night) and is proposing that the employee receive 50% of the evening or night premium, as the case may be, for the hours worked on the day shift. They are even making it clear that, within the framework of the current negotiations, it is one of their big priorities.

Another proposal concerns **atypical schedules**. Thus, the local parties may implement a schedule that allows workdays varying from 7.25 hours to 12 hours: an original and insidious way to allow more flexibility according to the needs of the employer.

After analyzing these offers, the FIQ concluded that once again, the government is showing a profound lack of respect for the care professionals and towards the population, because it shows there is no willingness to settle the problems in the health network. What a disappointment that all the offers for increases in premiums are conditional to additional availability and a mandatory presence at work and that the arrangement of work time is also subject to several parameters. Again irreverent offers for those who hold up the healthcare system, and again, unacceptable offers which endanger the health network. It is truly groundhog day! ■





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# EN ACTION

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## THERE IS NO PRICE ON DIGNITY



Strong through its multiple actions and considerable visibility, the Federation is enjoying unprecedented support from the Quebec population. A population that is ready to spend \$385 million to improve the working conditions of care professionals, in spite of the effects of the economic crisis and the propaganda on the supposed precariousness of public finances

It is necessary that everyone realize the significance of this vote of confidence. Thus, care professionals cannot abandon or refuse to continue their fight. They must give themselves the means for their ambitions, the means for their own survival, the means to rekindle their dignity. And dignity has no price! Therefore, the battle must be waged to the end, because it is about the future of the professions in the health sector and the public network.

During the local negotiations, the care professionals made the choice to work twice as hard in order to be successful. This success would never have been possible if all the necessary resources had not been devoted to it. Today, the issues is just as important, if not more important.

Despite the pitfalls and deceptions, the care professionals must never lose sight of their willingness to improve their lot,

that of their colleagues, that of their friends. This challenge is attainable. They must therefore, not undermine their capacity for action, nor their capacity to influence.

### PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

All the struggles led by the Federation since its creation, have shown great solidarity among its members. We need only think of the 1989 and 1999 strikes which were difficult financially, but which brought about significant gains. Thus, during the Special Convention, the delegates discussed the importance of providing for the impacts of such situations, of the need to give themselves the means to prepare for the future. Is it not reassuring to know that if the care professionals choose to resort to stronger pressure tactics, they will be paid an allowance at the same time that the action takes place. They therefore decided to bail out the Negotiation Reserve with \$5 million

through an additional assessment, in order to maintain the pace of activities and, in the event of a positive referendum vote on carrying out strong pressure tactics, to collect a sum of \$9 million to reimburse the benefits linked to the hours of strike.

Members with the same goal, even if their perceptions are different, make up the strength of a community. The strength of a community is also measured by their capacity to come to mutual aid. The Federation shows true great strength because, in spite of the differences between the members' workplaces, it has always managed to put the improvement of their working conditions at the core of its priorities.

The strength of the FIQ is truly the strength of the solidarity of the members that it represents! ■



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