



Why an entire edition of *Carnet collégial* devoted to the nursing question?

The reasons are many. The call by the Quebec Order of Nurses (OIIQ) to make the baccalaureate the entry-level diploma into nursing will result in a fundamental overhaul of the profession as we know it, effectively stripping the college diploma (DEC) of its value by eliminating it as a means of accessing the field.

FNEEQ is staunchly opposed to this call by the OIIQ. It is our conviction, as you will read in the following pages, that the proposed changes will do nothing to improve the health care system in Quebec; in fact, quite to the contrary, they are likely to exacerbate the existing nursing shortage problem and generate exorbitant costs that are wholly unnecessary and unjustified.

While nearly 70% of Quebec nurses today are trained through the college system, employers in the health care sector have never once questioned or raised the slightest complaint about the competency of these graduates. We fully understand, of course, that training needs to be updated and enhanced to keep pace with evolving knowledge and technology. Yet this is already being done in our CEGEPs, which have an established system in place for regularly reviewing and adjusting skill requirements, as needed. In nursing, as in any other program, trying to elevate the skill set by simply shifting the acquisition of these skills to

the high school and university levels, or by removing technical training from the college system, will have the opposite effect: the abolished technician jobs will be filled by vocational diploma (DEP) holders and the overall level of training of work teams will actually go down!

Our CEGEP system is a good one. It gives young people in every region of Quebec the skills they need to enter the workforce or go on to university. But as the only higher-education model of its kind in North America, it is also vulnerable to outside pressures. It will take more than lip service from the Premier that CEGEPs are here to stay to ensure the long-term survival of the public system: it will take concrete action by the Ministry and a concerted effort by all of us to resist its erosion, program by program, from one negotiation to the next.

The CEGEP system has proven itself.

Let's make sure it continues enriching Quebec.

Micheline Thibodeau
Vice-president

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