

Update from the *Regroupements*

Sylvain Marois, Vice-President of the *Regroupement université*



A busy fall!

Established in the wake of the Summit on Higher Education, the task force on university funding co-chaired by Hélène P. Tremblay and Pierre Roy issued a status report in January 2014 and was to release its final report this past June. As surprising as it may be that this report has yet to be made public,

it is all the more astonishing that the government is going ahead with its brutal funding cuts to universities without even waiting until the final report is in!

Speaking of cuts...

The successive slashes to university budgets are putting enormous pressure on the system and making it difficult, if not outright impossible to fulfil the core mission and objectives of higher education, particularly with regard to teaching. As we have seen, these cuts are having very real repercussions: they are slicing into student services, inflating class size, reducing the selection and number of courses offered and impacting on jobs.

Quebec's thousands of course lecturers will not stand idly by and let these unwarranted attacks—which smack more of political ideology

than of financial necessity—go unchecked. These compressions are affecting the diversity and quality of university education and robbing students of the invaluable expertise and services they rightfully deserve.

Bargaining

Negotiating job conditions is obviously an intrinsic part of union life. Course lecturers at *Université du Québec en Outaouais* (UQO) signed an agreement in July, as did tutors at *Téluq* and course lecturers at *Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue* (UQAT) this past October. The bargaining process is already under way for McGill University course lecturers and instructors as well as for teaching assistants at *Université du Québec à Rimouski* (UQAR) and *Université de Montréal* (UdM), whereas it is just getting started at *Université du Québec à Montréal* (UQAM).

Welcome!

Lastly, we salute the decision by course lecturers at *École de technologie supérieure* (ETS-General Education Department) to opt for FNEEQ affiliation. Their list of demands is in the process of being drafted and the gears are already in motion for the negotiation of their first collective agreement. ■

Nicole Lefebvre, acting Vice-President of the *Regroupement cégep*



Promises broken, new promises made!

The *Regroupement* CÉGEP unions have had a busy start to the academic year! With their first meeting of the semester held in parallel with the Peoples' Social Forum (PSF) in Ottawa, *Regroupement* officials were

already hard at work as of August updating the list of sectoral demands for submission to the general assemblies. Union members spent the autumn months deliberating and taking position on these sectoral demands as well as on the list of demands for the central bargaining table.

An historic alliance

It is under the name of *Alliance des syndicats des professeures et professeurs de collèges* (ASPPC)—alliance of college professor

unions—that we will be entering the upcoming round of bargaining talks for our new collective agreement. Through a protocol agreement with the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ)-affiliated *Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep* (FEC), we will be speaking with a unified voice as we negotiate our job conditions. On October 30th, we presented our consolidated list of sectoral demands to the College Management Negotiating Committee (CPNC) in Montréal at the same time as representatives of the Common Front were in Québec City tabling the monetary demands.

Quality assurance

The unions have been continuing their fight to halt implementation of the CEEC's quality assurance audit process, even as a second wave of colleges has now come under its scope. Representations have been made to the office of the Minister of Higher Education and to the federation of CEGEPs requesting abolition of the CEEC.

Caroline Quesnel, Vice-President of the *Regroupement privé*



First of all, note that the interest for unionization shows no sign of tapering off in private institutions! Since 2010, eleven unions have joined our ranks, and this

fall five unions in the private school sector begin negotiations for a first collective agreement.

After negotiating since August 23, 2013, non-teaching personnel at Villa Maria voted 93% in favour of pressure tactics, including a bank of 24 hours of strike action. There is a constant and growing feeling of insecurity among members. The employer's terminations and transfers of personnel simply accentuate this sentiment.

The *Centre d'intégration scolaire* (CIS) is still facing very serious financial problems. The union is fighting for the institution's survival,

taking advantage of all the resources of FNEEQ, the *Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain* and MCE Conseils to support CIS personnel.

The issue of funding

The report from the committee on the funding of teaching institutions chaired by Pauline Champoux-Lesage, former deputy minister of Education, makes a number of recommendations that seem to be well-received by Education Minister Yves Bolduc. First, the cuts to student transportation imposed on institutions have resulted in additional fees for parents. The repercussions are even more serious for institutions in the regions. As well, the report recommends the creation of a professional order and evaluations of teaching. The private schools *Regroupement privé* is of course monitoring how the situation evolves.

The Liberals' austerity policies also have consequences for personnel in private

schools. There are thousands of quality jobs in the private education system held by dedicated, competent and professional staff. Their expertise is important for the education system as a whole. Defending these jobs is crucial and we will wage this struggle together.

Welcome

Finally, mention the very recent affiliation of the *Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de l'École de joaillerie de Montréal* and the teaching personnel at Marianopolis College who have joined the *Regroupement*. ■

Broken promises

A number of events marked the Week of Action Against Broken Promises held from October 20th to 24th. CSN public sector union members took the opportunity to remind the government that several key matters have been left pending for too long, among them the talks on salary

relativity and the pay scale structure for CEGEP professors. We are still waiting to sit down and negotiate an agreement on this subject, preferably before the next round of collective bargaining gets under way, and have clearly expressed this intention to the Treasury Board.

Report on college training

The highly anticipated report from Guy Demers was finally released, amid much fanfare, during a news conference at *Trois-Rivières* CEGEP. All nine of the recommendations contained in the

status report published in January 2014 are featured in this final report, which puts forth close to 100 recommendations in all! It goes without saying that this 180-page report is going to require serious analysis, and the *Regroupement* will be holding in-depth discussions to that end. But what seems clear from the outset is that another battle is on the horizon: that of preserving the provincial diploma and of blocking all attempts being made in the name of so-called flexibility to shift competency-related responsibilities to the colleges and multiply the types of diplomas being issued.

Austerity is not the answer

In short, we must continue waging the fight on all fronts: the attacks may be mounting, but the response is building! ■

