carnets 44

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- Defining the perimeters of professional autonomy
- Understanding campus greening as a workplace right





his issue of Carnets is devoted to the question of professional autonomy, an essential aspect of teaching for all of our members, from kindergarten to university. When the FNEQ was created in the late 1960s, the first demands of the secular teachers related precisely to this point: "Teachers...believe that their right to participate in the development of pedagogical, i.e. professional, policies is an undeniable right that should be enshrined in a collective agreement." Fifty-four years later, it's fair to say that the problems have yet to be solved!

The reason the subject is front and centre today is that attacks on professional autonomy have been mounting and authorities in all precincts seem to have a growing thirst for control over teachers. For example, at the primary and secondary levels, the Roberge and Drainville reforms have, one after the other, introduced new restrictions on professional development into the Education Act. In the CEGEPs and universities, academic freedom often seems to be a sham, even though it is written into both collective agreements and the law. Everywhere, we are seeing a centralization of power and heavier use of management rights.

Teachers play an essential role in Québec's education system and their professional autonomy is a key factor in the quality of education. Teachers must be able to bring their judgement and expertise to bear not only on the choice of methods, tools and textbooks, but also on the broader issues of their own social role and the values and objectives of the education and higher education systems.

In solidarity!

Caroline Quesnel PRESIDENT

Caroline Tuesnel



Profs taking a math course at UQAC

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Professional autonomy: Key to quality education

By Ann Comtois, Stéphane Daniau, Sylvain Larose, Ricardo Peñafiel and Isabelle Pontbriand MEMBERS OF THE FNEEQ-CSN SCHOOL AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

Today more than ever, the teaching profession is under pressure from all sides to make drastic changes. For example, there are pressures for a large-scale shift to digital (distance learning, artificial intelligence) and pressures for indiscriminate application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). What room does that leave for teachers' professional autonomy? The FNEEQ's School and Society Committee is currently reflecting on this central issue for the future of the profession.

School Society and Committee's next report, currently being drafted, will focus on the diversity of student profiles¹. It is part 2 of our dossier on the increase in the number of students with disabilities, the diversification of student profiles and the impact on workload, part 1 of which was released in May 2022. What has emerged from our preparatory research is that, while the government and education administrators support some positive measures designed to promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for marginalized groups, things go awry when it comes to targeting the groups for which the measures are intended and, even more so, when administrators want to impose specific pedagogical approaches and restrict the professional autonomy of teaching staff.

Differentiated pedagogical approaches depend on the knowledge and skills of teachers, who are the specialists in the subjects they teach and how to teach them. This holds true from preschool to

university. The professional autonomy of teachers is recognized in section 19 of the Education Act for preschool, elementary and secondary schools; in the FNEEQ collective agreement for CEGEPs, notably in the responsibilities assigned to departments (article 4-1.05) and, since the 2021-2023 agreement, in the appendix on academic freedom. For universities, it is also recognized in the Act respecting academic freedom in the university sector.

However, Minister Drainville's Bill 23 is a major step backwards for teacher autonomy from preschool to high school (Comité école et société FNEEQ-CSN, May 2023). As for CEGEPs and universities, our recent detailed analysis of the Plan d'action pour la réussite en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026 (PARES) and the Plan d'action sur la santé mentale étudiante en enseignement supérieur 2021-2026 (PASME) found that they seek to increase control over teachers by imposing "high-impact pedagogical practices" (PARES) and "inclusive pedagogical practices" or

Universal Design for Learning (PASME), which can be problematic. Pressure to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) into teaching also tends to fragment the job, since our administrators believe that teachers could be "freed" from "tedious" class preparation and grading duties by AI, allowing them to spend their time mainly on working directly with students, particularly "special needs students." Teachers would handle accommodations by adopting so-called "universal" practices. Throw in a bit of asynchronous distance teaching and we can see how this approach will save money on the backs of already over-stretched teachers.

A "profitable" vision of education

This way of looking at education goes hand-in-hand with the style of governance that has been gradually imposed since the late 1990s: New Public Management (NPM), a results-based management (RBM) approach embraced by the "knowledge"



Marie-Josée Bourget is course lecturer at Université du Québec en Outaouais

economy" that makes teaching a commodity to be sold on the international education market. This managerial model, which originated in the private sector, emphasizes the "performance" of education systems and holds managers accountable for it, calling on them to exercise "pedagogical leadership", a softer way of describing ever-tighter control over teaching. Bill 23, the imposition of "high-impact practices" and UDL all push this logic to an extreme, jeopardizing both the integrity of the teaching profession and the quality of learning for students.

This approach measures teaching quality against standards, which results in aberrations such as what the *Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial* (CEEC) calls "quality assurance." In this vision, the quality of teaching is not assessed in terms of academic rigour but rather in terms of the compliance and performance (RBM)

of a management system governed by strict accountability. So the colleges must set up quality assurance mechanisms, and if these mechanisms enable them to meet their objectives (regardless of what the objectives are and whether they make sense), then they have achieved quality. But quality of what, exactly?

Since teaching involves human interactions that don't fit into assembly line notions of "efficiency," teachers cannot be reduced to functionaries who apply standards. Teachers are professionals who are in constant contact with their students, analyzing their individual situations, adapting to diverse needs using their expertise, and updating their skills to meet those needs. Their professional judgment, both individual and collective (working collegially, in departments, on program committees), is what really guarantees the quality of teaching.

The Premier likes to say he wants to increase Quebecers' pride. It's high time he took pride in Québec's teachers and became a model employer by allowing them the autonomy they need to do their jobs.

A report will be submitted at the next federal council (January 31 to February 2, 2024). This report will mainly present a sufficiently detailed context to enable us to identify promising directions for inclusion that brings social justice.



Recognition of professional autonomy at TÉLUQ: One small paragraph in a policy, a big leap forward for tutors

Nathalie Ebnoether PRESIDENT, SYNDICAT DES TUTEURS ET DES TUTRICES DE LA TÉLÉ-UNIVERSITÉ-CSN

BY MARTIN ROBERT

The push by the Syndicat des tuteurs et des tutrices de la télé-université (STTTU-CSN) came up against some resistance, but recognition of the professional autonomy of tutors is now enshrined in black and white in TÉLUQ's new policy on academic freedom.

e had to argue our point and debunk some preconceived ideas about what tutors do. Several members of the university committee set up to draft the policy required by the new Québec law (Bill 32) balked at the idea, arguing that it didn't apply to the members of STTTU-CSN cas if tutors could have no expectation of academic freedom or professional autonomy and were simply servants of the profs.

"It was a slap in the face," says union president Nathalie Ebnoether. "But their attitude whipped up our troops." Together with the FNEEQ, the issue was brought to a general assembly, which voted unanimously to give the president a mandate to fight for the article on autonomy. "We went on a phone blitz. A squad called every member of the union to urge them to vote in favor of our recommendation, focusing on the importance of the paragraph on professional autonomy. There was a big turnout."

More than academic freedom: Recognition

While professional autonomy is part of academic freedom, the article for which the union fought specifically states that the university "recognizes the professional autonomy of each group of teachers (professors, tutors and supervisors)" (article 5.2). This is a real victory for the TÉLUQ union: "We're setting the tone for a change in organizational culture. It's a big deal for us. Before, at TÉLUQ, only the profs could claim to be teaching."

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To convince the members of the committee, the union president recited a list of situations that demonstrate the absurdity of not recognizing the teaching done by tutors. The tutor has a one-on-one relationship with the student, on screen or on the phone, develops pedagogical examples to illustrate the concepts taught in class, and provides feedback to help students succeed. Recognition of professional autonomy is therefore essential to support the student-tutor relationship and promote student success.

Ebnoether reports that the important recognition contained in the article is reverberating through everything she does as president of her union. "It really protects the tutors' role as teachers."

Although TÉLUQ's policy on academic freedom was just adopted, article 5.2 has already proved useful in defending the interests of tutors. For example, on the issue of plagiarism and Al, TÉLUQ has just acquired detection software, which teachers are to use according to their judgement. STTTU-CSN believes that this "judgement" criterion clearly means its members will be able to exercise professional autonomy. The administration or a prof will no longer be able to tell tutors whether or not they should use the software. This is a major gain for the professional autonomy and academic freedom of TÉLUQ tutors.

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Defining the perimeters of professional autonomy at Collège de Montréal

Valérie Baldacchino and Marie-Noël Lanthier VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE SYNDICAT DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU COLLÈGE DE MONTRÉAL-CSN

BY MARTIN ROBERT

Marie-Noël Lanthier and Valérie Baldacchino, respectively President and Vice-President of the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège de Montréal-CSN, smile when they talk about the gains the union has made on professional autonomy since the new collective agreement was signed in June. The scope of teachers' professional autonomy is spelled out in article 1.19.

pedagogical intervention refers to pedagogical tools, including digital tools, to evaluation tools, and to the appropriate approach for preparing and presenting courses and for supporting and evaluating students, in accordance with the programs and laws." – Article 1.19

"This means we are free to choose the evaluation methods we want to use," explains Baldacchino. "We're no longer forced to use the digital tools prescribed for us or teach remotely without being consulted. We won't necessarily have to do the same thing as a colleague who's teaching the same course at the same level." "Also, we can now use our own criteria to determine how to support students and do it at the time that's most strategic for the good of the student," adds Lanthier. "These are important gains."

Don't have to go with the latest trend

A bit of background: before this new provision in the collective agreement, the hundred teachers at the school had to carry out the employer's instructions and had no say in the matter. The employer invoked its management rights and the local policy on the evaluation of learning.

"We were very good at applying the latest fads in education, depending on which way the wind was blowing and which way the administration was blowing," Baldacchino quips. "We were like a weathervane."

For example, there was a crying need to tailor teaching to the needs of individual students but the administration was imposing wall-to-wall solutions. By definition, the flavour of the month doesn't last long. Teachers were therefore yearning for professional autonomy and recognition of their competence, instead of having the latest trend shoved down their throats.

The new provision in the collective agreement has been in force only since June and already its positive effects are being felt. Teamwork has been strengthened because teachers feel free to share their ideas with colleagues, whereas before they were inhibited by the administration's standardized directives. Teachers are supporting each other in developing evaluation strategies and sharing their knowledge to develop new projects. The stronger mutual support is helping teachers adapt to the realities in each classroom.

Marie-Noël Lanthier says the clarity of Article 1.19 is helpful: "The scope of teachers' professional autonomy is more clearly defined. We don't have to keep bickering with the administration about it. As a result, a number of grievances have been settled. It's good for the work climate."

The members of the union had to fight right up to the end of the negotiations for the clause but it's actually a win-win for both parties and benefits the students. The idea was never for teachers to invoke professional autonomy in order to wall themselves off in their corner. On the contrary, a straitjacket has been removed. That's why Lanthier and Baldacchino are smiling.

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The department, last bastion of autonomy

Gabriel Bouchard LITERATURE TEACHER AT CÉGEP GARNEAU

BY MARTIN ROBERT

There was before the 1993 reform ushered in by then-Minister of Higher Education Lucienne Robillard and there is after. Since 1993, the professional autonomy of CEGEP teachers has been eroding fast, according to an analysis by Gabriel Bouchard, a teacher at Cégep Garneau.

he CEGEPs were set up in the 1960s on a democratic footing. Employees were to have a say in decisions. However, since the 1993 reform, the administrations have become more powerful, as the Ministry has transferred some of its powers to them. Bouchard remembers the bygone era when his colleagues had direct access to the *Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (MES): "Before, we had provincial committees for each subject. Teachers would go and talk to the Ministry. Now, the MES calls for applications from people it considers 'specialists.' These people then speak for themselves; they have no mandate to represent their team. So teachers have lost influence."

Teachers have also lost input on the academic council, which has in a way replaced the *Commission pédagogique*, on which teaching staff had more influence. The academic council created by the 1993 reform divides power between the CEGEP's various components (teachers, academic director, program directors, students and professionals). At present, everything is negotiated on a piecemeal basis, locally, in each CEGEP. Although the *Commission pédagogique* still exists on paper in the collective agreement, the original CEGEP model clearly gave teachers more power, according to Bouchard's analysis.

The risks of "back-door autonomy"

With professional autonomy eroding and academic directors hiring more and more assistants to control teaching and offer teachers "friendly support," the departments have become a bulwark. As Bouchard points out, "we are the ones who have the expertise in the subject matter and in teaching it. So, at the department level, it's hard for an assistant academic director to impose their views on the people who are the experts in their field. But we still have to be vigilant and keep a cool head if we want to keep control of our teaching."

Should college administrations fail to respect the professional autonomy of the departments, pitfalls await. First, there could be widespread loss of motivation among teachers, whose profession is already under attack and not highly valued in society. At a time when there is a shortage of teachers, experienced teachers and new teachers alike could choose to work in private schools to have more autonomy.

There is also a real danger that teachers will sneak things in through the back door because the methods they are being asked to use are inapplicable. For example, we're seeing stricter prescriptions on the details a lesson plan should contain in order to eliminate any element of surprise and avoid causing students anxiety. However, planning everything down to a tee can also cause anxiety and can be harmful to group dynamics. "I prefer open discussion with the administration to the 'back-door autonomy' described by sociologist Philippe Perrenoud," says Bouchard.

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Historic strike votes in the public sector

By Yves de Repentigny
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT CEGEP



nsurprisingly, given the situation, the public-sector bargaining talks have claimed much of the Regroupement Cégep's attention since the start of the school year in August.

While the pace of negotiations has picked up somewhat recently,

there has been no significant progress at the bargaining table and the government is attaching little importance to union concerns. As a result, all the components of the Front commun (Confédération des syndicats nationaux, Centrale des syndicats du Québec, Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux) now have a strike mandate, up to an including an all-out indefinite strike, to be preceded by shorter strategic strikes. The general assemblies voted for it by an historic 95% margin. At the time of writing, only one work stoppage has been publicly announced, for November 6.

To make it possible to wrap up the negotiations at the sectoral table by the holiday season, the *Alliance des syndicats de professeures et professeurs de cégep* (ASPPC), which includes teachers in the public college network affiliated with the FNEEQ and the *Fédération de l'enseignement collégial* (FECCSQ), prioritized its demands once again, after consulting the membership at general assemblies.

The CEGEP employers' bargaining committee, the *Comité patronal de négociation des collèges* (CPNC), also pared its demands down to a handful, as did all the other employer bargaining committees, in response to instructions from Treasury Board President Sonia LeBel, who clearly wanted the unions to do likewise. Asynchronous distance learning is not explicitly mentioned in the CPNC's new offer, although it was at the top of their list of priorities until recently. But let us not be fooled: CEGEP administrations intend to continue moving in this direction. They know full well that when the collective agreement says nothing about a matter, management rights apply.

Other issues

The Regroupement Cégep continues to closely monitor the progress of two projects launched under the 2021-2026 Action Plan for Success in Higher Education. First, concerning French proficiency, the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur (MES) has so far announced only that it intends to give priority to 3 of the 35 recommendations in the report submitted by three experts in January 2022 (but not made public until winter 2023): improve the availability of French courses for teaching staff, review upgrading courses to better target the needs of the student population, and include more points related to language proficiency in success plans. Secondly, concerning "challenge" courses (first courses in philosophy and French language and literature), the report that was to have been submitted by a committee (made up in part of teachers from the subjects concerned) to the MES by June 30, 2023 has yet to be made available.

The review of the DECs in Inhalation Therapy and Nursing also remains a matter of concern to the Regroupement. With regard to the Nursing program, Sonia LeBel has placed the *Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec* under close watch for its dubious handling of the disastrous results on the nurses' entrance exam. In early October, the FNEEQ called for the Order to be placed under trusteeship.

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University lecturers: An upswell of interunion solidarity

By Christine Gauthier VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT UNIVERSITÉ



Members of th Regroupement université gathered in Rouyn-Noranda to celebrate the forty years of SCCCUQAT-CSN (November 16, 2023).

he year 2023 ends as it began for the Regroupement université: with interunion solidarity! Union delegates and the FNEEQ team turned out in large numbers in Rouyn-Noranda to support the Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (SCCCUQAT-CSN) in its negotiations and, at the same time, to help its members celebrate the union's 40th birthday. This unwavering solidarity is the foundation on which we can continue to improve the working conditions of lecturers across Ouébec.

Self-sacrifice and free work

For the 2023 edition of National Lecturers' Day, we held a conference on the need for self-sacrifice and unpaid work by lecturers and tutors who want to gain recognition. Because they are always on contract and can be dismissed at any time, lecturers and tutors must always exercise extreme caution, hone their protective reflexes and go the extra mile. To get and keep a job at the university - and maybe hope for a less precarious position - we must always do more: doublecheck every paper we grade to avoid complaints, show our wholehearted support for the university's mission and our boundless love of knowledge on a volunteer basis, and accept without flinching whatever courses and schedules we are offered. Naturally, the imperative to work to exhaustion that pervades the culture of academe is felt by lecturers too. We must live up to the standards of performance and endless dedication demanded by the lofty life of the mind and the noble pursuit knowledge.

The conference was held online on November 22. The speakers were Charles Bosvieux-Onyekwelu and Marie-Pierre Boucher, both of whom now have tenure but still bear the scars of the precariousness they experienced as sessional lecturers.

University funding: All eyes on Minister Déry

After June's consultations on the review of university funding, we're eager to see what Minister of Higher Education Pascale Déry comes up with next, after her dubious move to raise tuition fees for out-of-province and international students. After years of government underfunding and tuition deregulation that have led to profound inequities in university funding in Québec, expectations are high for the government to rectify the situation. However, in no conceivable scenario does it make sense to significantly increase tuition fees to make up for the government's abdication of its responsibilities.

Private education unions support public sector bargaining

By Léandre Lapointe
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ



t a meeting in Québec City on October 13, the 46 unions in the Regroupement de l'enseignement privé unanimously adopted a recommendation expressing their support for the public sector unions in their bargaining talks. The statement underscores the unprecedented determination of

the Front commun.

The entire Regroupement recognizes the importance of the public sector negotiations and the issues they raise for all education workers, including those in the private sector. The members of the Regroupement privé are therefore encouraged to take part in the various mobilization actions. The unions in the Regroupement are determined to contribute to the collective effort to defend the rights and working conditions of public sector workers.

Welcome Syndicat des artisanes et artisans de Céramique-Poterie Bonsecours-CSN

An important milestone has been reached in the history of this young union representing a dozen employees at the Centre de céramique Bonsecours, a workshop school operating in partnership with Cégep du Vieux Montréal. On October 17, at the union's first general assembly, the members elected their first bargaining committee. The creation of the union sprang from the aspirations of the workers, who chose to unionize for a number of important reasons. The school's survival was one core issue. As the Centre de Céramique Bonsecours plans a major restructuring, the workers wanted to have a seat at the table to ensure they are part of the decision-making process and have a voice in shaping the school's future.

Historic strike at Collège Regina Assumpta



Second strike day at Collège Regina Assumpta (October 24, 2023)

For the first time in the school's nearly 70-year history, teachers at Collège Regina Assumpta voted to go on strike in response to the hard line taken by the administration at the bargaining table. Despite some 15 bargaining sessions, including 3 conciliation sessions, the administration has made no satisfactory offer in response to the union members' important and legitimate demands.

The teachers' main demands include a reduction in the maximum number of students per class in the lower grades, a larger bank of sick days, clearly defined rules for distance

learning and technological changes negotiated with the union, and a dedicated room for students with special needs. At the time of writing, after nearly three days on strike, the union's members have voted for another strike mandate for an additional 5 dayscby a 94% margin, at a general assembly attended by over 90% of members. The administration cannot fail to hear this strong message.

Solidarity!

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Cégep Saint-Laurent

Understanding campus greening as a basic workplace health right

By Katherine Collin

TEACHER AT VANIER COLLEGE, MEMBER OF THE FNEEQ ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

any of our campuses are actively working to become greener and more environmentally friendly, driven by a sense of urgency to mitigate the current climate crisis. Teachers are working tirelessly (and creatively) to incorporate climate awareness into curricula, and some of our institutions have pledged to become carbon-neutral, calculating their carbon footprints and encouraging students to become ecologically responsible with all of our futures in mind.

What if we started to understand this movement to green our campuses (UNESCO, 2017) not only as an ethical, responsible, proactive response to looming ecological collapse – in other words a necessity for the workplaces of tomorrow – but also, perhaps more

immediately, a basic health right of the workplaces of today? What if we demanded our campuses engage in ecologically responsible practices with our own self-interest for health in mind?

Ensuring our access to nature: Appreciating the health benefits of campus greenspace

At a simple and literal level, greening our campuses means valuing our campus greenspaces, however minimal they may be, with direct benefits to health. A compelling body of research points to the correlation between the basic access to greenspace and improved health. We know that nature exposure has direct benefits to general health, cardiovascular health, mental health, and even eyesight (van

den Bosch et al, 2017; Dadvand et al, 2017). But more specifically, access to greenspace at work has been shown to reduce work-related stress and increase attentional capacity (Gritzka et al, 2020; Korpela et al, 2015, 2017).

Such access to nature at work, or "nature-based interventions," can come in a variety of forms on campus: physical activity in a natural setting outdoors, campus horticulture, or simple observation of nature, with instances of "nature-savouring activities," such as 15 to 20 minute nature-appreciation breaks, offering the most statistically significant reductions in anxiety (Gritzka et al, 2020; Largo-Wight et al, 2017).

Recognizing that 120 minutes of nature exposure is considered the weekly minimum to see health benefits (White et al, 2019), our campus greenspaces offer a convenient, direct means to improve our mental and physical wellbeing. With this in mind, administrations should prioritize our campus greenspaces as a proactive health resource for employees, ensuring that campus greenspaces are managed as accessible and enriched sites for "nature breaks," and providing the time necessary for employees to engage in such activities.

Managing campus grounds and greenspace to promote healthful practices

The layout and design of our campus grounds can furthermore inform our behaviour and reflect our campus priorities for health. A good number of our campus grounds today are dominated by large parking lots that privilege solo driving over active and public transport.

Studies are clear, if to some unpalatable: excessive driving is quite simply bad for our health. The more we drive, the greater our odds of smoking, insufficient physical activity, short sleep, obesity, and worse physical and mental health (Ding et al, 2014). The effects of insufficient physical activity in particular are widely known to be a leading risk factor for disease and premature death (Katzmarzyk, 2022). Conversely, we know that greener spaces promote more physical activity, particularly in urban environments (J. F. Sallis et al, 2016; Zhang et al, 2019; Vich et al, 2019).

Analogously to the ways in which institutions have spatially implemented proactive health measures, such as by limiting smoking to set distances from entranceways, campuses could reconsider their tacit promotion of solo driving with health considerations in mind. In this light, reducing parking in favour of increased greenspace can be understood not only as a means of reducing institutional carbon footprints, but also,

quite directly, a vital way to protect our health.

Larger health effects of greening our campuses

We know that extreme heat is a significant health issue in Canada and that the "urban heat-island effect is [a] factor known to magnify health impacts during extreme heat events," with many parts of Canada projected to experience a doubling in the yearly number of very hot days due to climate change (Casati et al, cited in Tam 2020).

In the end, the pressure we place on our employers to green our campuses should not be driven by a distant sense of our perceived future wellbeing, but rather by our immediate rights to a healthy and safe workplace, one that proactively improves, rather than diminishes, our mental and physical health in the here and now.

Contest

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Details and contest rules available at gagnez beneva.ca/en/fneeq. The contest ends on January 10, 2024. The prize to be drawn is one of four (4) cheques for \$10,000. No purchase required. The winner must answer a mathematical skill-testing question. © Beneva Inc. 2023 The Beneva name and logo are registered trademarks used under licence.

Washrooms and rights

By Yves de Repentigny
OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND GENDER
PLURALITY COMMITTEE

The rights of sexual and gender minorities have been making headlines recently. For example, on September 12, Québec's Minister of Education, Bernard Drainville, saw fit to speak out against a project to convert gendered washrooms to mixedgender washrooms in an Abitibi secondary school, for reasons that had nothing to do with the experiences of LGBT+ people.

eanwhile, the "1 Million March 4 Children" group has held demonstrations in several Canadian cities against the teaching of "gender ideology" in elementary school, betraying a lack of understanding of sex education curricula in schools. And let's not forget the ridiculous controversy around drag queen story hours in public libraries.

Now seems like a good time for the FNEEQ Sexual Diversity and Gender Plurality Committee to issue a general reminder that there are guidebooks available for people who want to know more about recommended best practices in schools and higher education establishments. These guides were created by the *Table nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie dans les réseaux de l'éducation*, a group with representatives of multiple unions (including the FNEEQ), employer and student organizations, and the Québec government's ministries of education and higher education and its anti-homophobia and transphobia bureau (part of the status of women secretariat):

Support and inclusion measures for trans and non binary individuals in the work environment – Guide for employers ans unions

Measures for openness to and support for trans and nonbinary students – A guide for educational institutions



The second guide recommends "allowing trans and non-binary students to use the washrooms, locker rooms and residences in which they feel most comfortable, regardless of their assigned sex at birth." It also states: One simple gesture that can be carried out in the short term is to change existing single-stall washrooms in the school into gender-neutral washrooms.

Likewise, in 2021 Québec's education ministry published a guide for schools, <u>Improved Understanding and Practices</u> for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools, whose content closely resembles the second document listed above. On the question of washrooms, the guide recommends creating "gender-neutral private spaces (e.g. bathrooms or locker rooms) so that students and staff can freely choose which to use."

These are all excellent guides. We recommend them to Mr. Drainville if he is interested in learning more about his own ministry's positions on gender issues!

12th El Conference on Post-Secondary Education, Higher Education and Research

By Benoît Lacoursière and Caroline Quesnel GENERAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER AND PRESIDENT OF FNEEO-CSN

Since 2000, the FNEEQ has been a member of Education International (EI), a federation of nearly 400 teachers' unions representing 32 million members in 178 countries and territories.

ur federation takes a particular interest in El's work on higher education. For this reason, Caroline Quesnel, our President, and Benoît Lacoursière, General Secretary and Treasurer, attended the 12th El Research Conference in Mexico City from October 24 to 26, under the theme "Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good."

The conference spurred constructive, stimulating dialogue on a number of subjects, including public funding, strategies for strengthening union action, academic freedom and access to knowledge. Caroline Quesnel presented the FNEEQ's work on artificial intelligence at a panel on academic work in the digital age.

The delegates adopted a concise and unifying <u>declaration</u> entitled "Go Public! Advancing Further and Higher Education and Research for the Common Good." It lists three principles defended by El-affiliated unions: 1) access to higher education is a human right, and the State's responsibility; 2) public funding is necessary to fight inequalities in access and 3) the quality of education rests on decent terms of employment and working conditions.

The declaration also stresses that the role of higher education goes beyond preparing people for the labour market. It states that tuition fees are a major obstacle to access to higher education, particularly for groups that face discrimination and economic marginalization. It also denounces the



Benoît Lacoursière and Caroline Quesnel with David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International (October 25, 2023)

growing trend towards the privatization and commodification of higher education, particularly through infiltration by the tech industry in ways that threaten large numbers of jobs. Delegates also expressed concern about attacks on academic freedom and increasing workloads. The ongoing fight against job insecurity is also mentioned in the final declaration.

The text of the final declaration was drafted primarily in three workshops, organized by language (English, Spanish and French). The FNEEQ delegation contributed to the inclusion of a call for "predictable, recurrent and unconditional" public funding in the declaration. The declaration calls on organizations to take action at the international, national and local levels.



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NATIONAL COURSE LECTURERS DAY NOVEMBER 22, 2023

