

# carnets 46

FALL 2024

ÊTRE  
RE  
HUMAIN

**WE'RE WORKING  
ON IT!**

## IN THIS ISSUE

- ▷ Rethinking French and lit courses without losing the essentials
- ▷ FNEEQ's leadership on the social and environmental fronts
- ▷ Three new unions in the Regroupement Privé
- ▷ Towards an international free education day





PHOTO: YVES LAPOINTE

*Benoît Lacoursière*

Benoît Lacoursière, PRESIDENT

The CAQ and the Legault government have been repeating for years that education is the government’s top priority. To be sure, there has been reinvestment in education and higher education after the years of Liberal austerity. However, it isn’t enough, given the critical needs in the schools. And many of the government’s policies are questionable, to say the least, such as the expansion of kindergarten to 4-year-olds, the abolition of school boards, and the excessive centralization of power in the hands of the Minister of Education. In higher education, the government’s only major move has been the Act respecting academic freedom in the university sector. Educational inequality? Minister Drainville “doesn’t believe it.” Meanwhile, the government has shown unbridled enthusiasm for the use of technology in education. So where do human beings fit into its vision? Without our mobilization and the recommendations of the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation and the Commission d’éthique en science et technologie, would the consultative body on AI even have been created?

As Québec faces an \$11 billion deficit, the government’s true priority becomes clear: pleasing the credit rating agencies, the business community and the most affluent members of our society. In recent months, it’s been one thing after another: budget appropriations that aren’t keeping pace with rising costs in the education system, a new university funding policy without new funding, lower spending on sorely lagging infrastructure maintenance as facilities continue to deteriorate, hiring freezes, caps on paid hours in the schools and CEGEPs. And we’re supposed to believe that education is the government’s top priority? It seems the government is more interested in tax cuts for the wealthy, massive subsidies for companies like Northvolt, and a bridge that most agree is not needed.

I’ve been talking about the schools and higher education, but public services and social programs in general are in dire straits. The needs are critical and the crises are severe, not to mention the climate crisis. Fighting austerity means, first and foremost, fighting for accessible and robust public services that meet citizens’ needs. It means social programs that genuinely address economic and social inequality. And it means public policies that respond to today’s critical issues, such as climate change.

With the rise of the Rassemblement national in France, Trump’s election in the United States and the prospect of a Poilievre government in Ottawa, it would be easy to grow discouraged. But instead, we should look to these developments to find the courage to continue mobilizing, spreading our message, pressing our demands and broadening our activist base. As Marcel Pepin, president of the CSN from 1965 to 1976, used to say, “It’s not enough to be right, you also need to have might.”



The delegates adopted a series of recommendations during the 34<sup>th</sup> FNEEQ Congress, last June in Chicoutimi

## Summary

- 4-5 Bringing our passion to teaching CEGEP French and literature courses
- 6 FNEEQ’s leadership on the social and environmental fronts
- 7 AI: Preserving the human element in the student-teacher relationship
- 8-9 Three new unions in the Regroupement Privé
- 10 COCAL: Towards an international day of struggle
- 11 International action to support education
- 12-15 News from the Regroupements and the Caucus

### FNEEQ-CSN

1601, avenue De Lorimier  
Montréal, (QC) H2K4M5

Telephone : 514 598-2241 / 1 877 312-2241

[fneeq.reception@csn.qc.ca](mailto:fneeq.reception@csn.qc.ca)  
[www.fneeq.qc.ca](http://www.fneeq.qc.ca)



### Coordination

Martin Robert

### Contributors

Nova Doyon, Christine Gauthier, Anne-Louise Goncalves-Fonseca, Benoît Lacoursière, Léandre Lapointe, Caroline Leblond, Yves de Repentigny, Martin Robert, Mario Roy.

### Conception and layout

Martin Robert and Marie-Pier Dalpé

### Printing

Imprimerie CSN

### Circulation

100 copies

### Legal Deposit

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec  
Bibliothèque et Archives du Canada

ISBN : 978-2-923606-81-1

CARNETS is published by the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec.

FNEEQ-CSN represents approximately 40 000 members in CEGEPs, private institutions and universities. It is the most representative higher education union federation in Québec.

# Bringing our passion to the teaching of French and literature

By Anne-Louise Goncalves-Fonseca  
MEMBER OF THE FNEEQ LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COMMITTEE

On October 24 and 25, nearly a hundred teachers of French language and literature and French as a second language from across Québec gathered at the Archives nationales in Montréal to talk about French classes. The lively discussion about rethinking French courses without compromising their essence was organized by the FNEEQ-CSN.

The event was the culmination of a wide-ranging consultation conducted by the FNEEQ's Language and Literature Committee, created after the Federal Council adopted a recommendation to that effect in December 2022<sup>1</sup>. The committee gathers input from teachers of French and literature courses and French as a second language on three points: the content and requirements of courses in both disciplines, the appropriateness of the French exit exam in its current form, and the attention paid to the Québec literary canon.

The consultation was part of the committee efforts to defend French and literature within the CEGEP curriculum, subjects that are too often seen as outdated and boring. We wanted to hear from the teachers, who are the experts on their subject and the way it is

taught. Once again, teachers dispelled the stereotypes about their field. They talked about the importance of their subject in developing students' general culture and their analytical and critical thinking skills, which are key elements of the general and civic education the CEGEPs provide. A number of teachers said the revitalization of French and literature courses shouldn't be the responsibility of French teachers alone but should be shared by the entire college community.

## A genuine forum at last!

Time and again, we have criticized the Ministry's consultations for their lack of transparency. We don't know what their real purpose is or who is involved. All too often, those consultations are superficial and perfunctory, allowing the teachers consulted little space or time to articulate their point of view. They seldom do what a consultation should: ensure that the views of the teachers, who are on the front line in the classroom, are really taken into account. The consultation organized by the FNEEQ's Language and Literature Committee was therefore designed to give teachers a place to freely discuss, in a collegial spirit, the situation in their field and possible ways to get back to the essence of French language and literature.

On October 24, teachers of the two subjects gathered in small groups to share their ideas, their practices and ways to dismantle stereotypes about their fields. Many viewed the standardized

French exit exam as a straitjacket; they would like to have more freedom in the types of writing they assign and allow for greater creativity in their courses. Teachers talked about the importance of nurturing a love of reading by introducing students to worlds, stories and characters they can identify with through the study of meaningful texts. Many felt that the joy of reading, which is so key, is lost because classes are too focused on preparing students for the French exit exam. Participants stressed the need to bring classes back to a focus on reading for pleasure and exploring texts that speak of life, the human condition and compelling subjects that broaden students' horizons.



Virginie Gagnon-Carignan from Collège Lionel-Groulx at a workshop



## Celebrating creativity

The first day concluded with a festive evening of artistic and poetic performances. Teachers from the Le Lirel collective read their manifesto in unison. Others took the stage for an open mic, honouring literature, language and the teachers who bring them to life. It was



Christian Bernier from Cégep de l'Outaouais chats with colleagues

a fitting tribute to their profession and an opportunity to showcase the creativity of teachers. Three students also participated in the open mic, sharing moving texts that echoed the passion of their teachers and underscoring the importance of language and literature in their academic and personal lives. .

The final half-day began on Friday morning with a joint workshop for teachers of French and literature and of French as a second language. We wanted to have a forum for sharing ideas and reflecting on subjects common to both subjects, such as the French exit exam, the possibility of developing a shared cultural foundation, and the responsibility of each level of education to teach French. Once again, the discussions were lively, Teachers were brimming with solutions and ideas to bring the focus of their classes back to the French language and literature, while supporting students in their academic success and personal growth.

Participants left the meeting with a feeling of general satisfaction with the exchange of ideas and the hope that this type of event can be held again. Some said they would like high school teachers to join and the different levels

of education to start working together. It is now up to us to make this happen and continue the work of revitalizing French language and literature within our educational institutions.

1. The recommendation was adopted in the wake of the report [L'avenir du français au Québec dans un contexte de mise en concurrence linguistique entre les établissements d'enseignement](#), produced by the FNEEQ-CSN School and Society Committee.

## Education summit for climate and social transition

# FNEEQ's leadership on the social and environmental fronts

By Nova Doyon  
MEMBER OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**The Education Summit for Climate and Social Transition will be held in January 2026. It is being organized jointly by the FNEEQ and Travailleuses et travailleurs pour la justice climatique (TJC), in partnership with various organizations including teachers' unions, student federations and associations, research bodies, and civil society groups.**

In keeping with the strong environmental stance the FNEEQ adopted in 2019, the FNEEQ Convention in June 2024 adopted Proposition BF3, which called for it to endorse the Plaidoyer pour une éducation environnementale cohérente, a declaration in favour of environmental education.

Having supported the climate and social strikes of 2019 and 2022, and having begun to propose standard clauses on the environment for inclusion in collective agreements, the FNEEQ has, since the adoption of Proposition BF3, started organizing a major summit focused specifically on education as it relates to the social and ecological transition. It will span all subjects and all levels of education.

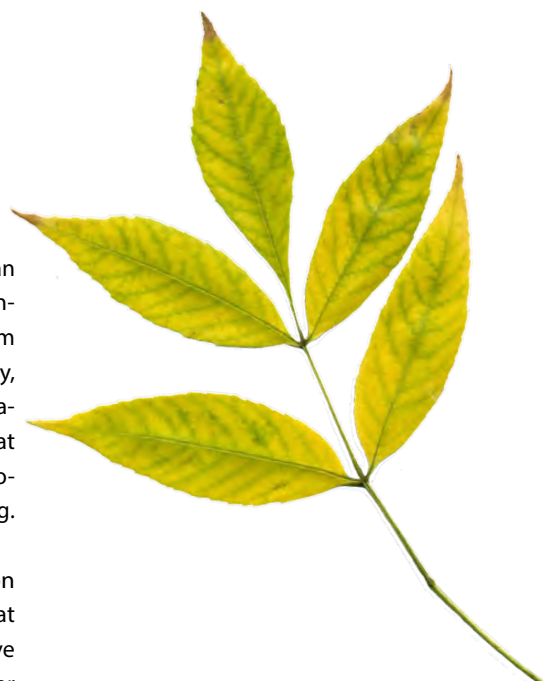
The Summit is part of an ambitious plan to more deeply integrate environmental awareness into the curriculum, from elementary school through university, by developing and implementing strategies and educational resources that support the integration of social, ecological and transition issues into teaching.

As detailed in the grant application submitted this fall to the Action-Climat Québec program, the project will have four phases. Some will be on a smaller scale in two target regions, Estrie and Montréal, and will serve to assess the environmental education needs of teachers and students in advance of the Summit. Training and resources created on the basis of the consultation held at the Summit will then be introduced at participating colleges and universities.

### **Environment Committee is hard at work**

An activist has been given partial leave to work with the Environment Committee on developing the Summit's structure, liaising with TJC's education sector team, which initiated the project and is currently developing pre-Summit workshops, and coordinating the work of the various organizing committees.

By co-organizing the Summit in order to bring educators and students together around a shared educational project,



the FNEEQ is demonstrating strong leadership and a commitment to building a collaborative educational network to support a sustainable future.

The Summit reflects the FNEEQ's clear commitment to intergenerational justice by underscoring the vital role of education in addressing the climate and environmental crises. Equipping teachers to deal with ecological transition issues will enable them to guide students in a rapidly changing world. We can be proud of what we are about to accomplish together.

## Artificial intelligence in education

# Preserving the human element in the student-teacher relationship

By Benoît Lacoursière  
PRESIDENT OF THE FNEEQ-CSN

**The 34<sup>th</sup> FNEEQ Convention, held in Chicoutimi in June 2024, firmly established the fight against the dehumanization of education and higher education as a priority. It adopted Proposition BF1, which sets out the principles that will guide the FNEEQ-CSN over the next three years in dealing with excessive use of technology in education and higher education.**

Artificial intelligence remains a major concern for the Federation. Following the [report from the School and Society Committee](#), the FNEEQ's three Sections set up working committees on AI. On August 13, the Minister of Higher Education [announced](#) the creation of a consultative body on AI in higher education. The FNEEQ has been invited to participate and will use the opportunity to advocate for its positions. The creation of this body was one of the recommendations of the [joint report](#) by the Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation and the Commission d'éthique en science et technologie. At the time of writing, two meetings have been held and four more are scheduled between now and mid-March 2025. The

purpose of this body is to set guiding principles for the use of AI in higher education, without replacing existing decision-making authorities or infringing on academic freedom. Regular reports will be made to the Federation's governing bodies, which will also be consulted.

### **Putting human beings at the centre of the education system**

Every level of education and every job category we represent is affected by distance education, digital platforms and AI. It is crucial to preserve the human element in the student-teacher relationship and to keep people at the heart of the educational system. Excessive reliance on technology carries risks, including impacts on the mental health of both teachers and students. We are also concerned about the impact of technology on the casualization of work, program offerings, social and educational inequalities and the environment.

These are not entirely new concerns for the FNEEQ. At the Federal Council meetings held in spring 2019 and 2023, wide-ranging proposals on distance education and artificial intelligence were adopted. The FNEEQ, its Sections and its affiliated unions are already hard at work defending these democratically adopted positions.

Since the start of the school year, the FNEEQ has taken part, along with the CSN and FEESP, in the work of the special parliamentary commission on the impact of screens and social media on young people's health and development by submitting a brief and testifying before the commission. We defended our positions, advocating for clear guidelines to ensure the appropriate use of technology and digital devices in educational settings.

In the coming weeks, we will also release a research report on the transformation of post-secondary teaching after the pandemic, produced jointly by the FNEEQ, the CSN, FP-CSN and UQAM's community service unit.

The FNEEQ-CSN is fully engaged and on the frontlines!



Jean-Sébastien Verreault,  
President of the Syndicat  
des enseignantes et  
enseignants du Collège  
Saint-Charles-Garnier-CSN

## Looking for support and advice

By Martin Robert

The President of the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège Saint-Charles-Garnier-CSN, which represents almost 50 teachers, greeted us with a smile in a park near the Québec City school. Jean-Sébastien Verreault explained why the local union, which was founded in the 1970s, decided at a general assembly to mandate its executive committee to explore affiliation with a labour federation: “The assembly saw that the executive’s hands were tied and it needed resources. We had a president who had union leave and three people working voluntarily. And legal costs are rising exponentially, far outpacing our members’ salaries.”

It was the package of services provided by the CSN and the FNEEQ-CSN that convinced the union to join the CSN in June. “Now, if I want to send an email or make a call, I don’t have to ask myself how much it will cost my union in legal fees. It rebalances the power dynamics for our union. So far, it’s going well!”

Joining has also broadened the union’s perspective on the teaching profession. The union wanted to get expert advice and to be able to compare Saint-Charles-Garnier with other private schools in Québec as workloads increase in a rapidly changing field. “The basic idea is to provide quality instruction. But there are only so many hours in a week.” With the advent of artificial intelligence and the implementation of new technologies, a broader discussion that looks beyond the walls of a single institution is essential. Which works out well: that’s precisely what the FNEEQ’s Regroupement privé does!



Gilles-Philippe Pronovost,  
Vice-President of the  
Syndicat des enseignantes  
et enseignants du Collège  
Saint-Alexandre de la  
Gatineau

## Stop feeling powerless

“We’re teachers, not labour relations professionals.” Gilles-Philippe Pronovost, Vice-President of the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège Saint-Alexandre de la Gatineau, frankly acknowledges the union’s limited expertise in labour law. It was the main reason why they started exploring union affiliation after the last bargaining round in 2023.

“In the last round of bargaining, we realized that we were ill-equipped. Comparing collective agreements is time-consuming! When we’re negotiating, it can be hard to check the employer’s assertions quickly. They have information from the Fédération des établissements d’enseignement privé (FÉEP), for example, and we needed additional expertise too.”

As the employers talk to each other and exchange information, it made sense for this group of 50 teachers in the Outaouais to find similar support within the union movement. The CSN and FNEEQ already had a strong presence in the region, so that also weighed in the balance. Ensuring continuity over time was another factor in joining the FNEEQ. “The union’s acquired expertise must not be stored in the heads of one or two members of the executive. We needed the means to preserve and share institutional memory with the newcomers who will conduct the next round of bargaining in 2028.”

The union is already looking ahead and gearing up to defend its gains and tackle the remaining problems. It is happy to be able to learn from the experiences of the other unions in the Regroupement privé.



Alexandre Demouilliez,  
Treasurer Syndicat du  
personnel enseignant  
au DEP du Campus  
Notre-Dame-de-Foy

## If it’s working, why look elsewhere?

The FNEEQ-CSN is proud to welcome a small group with big needs: negotiating its first collective agreement. The eight members of the Syndicat du personnel enseignant au DEP du Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy-CSN have been working under individual contracts and, according to union treasurer Alexandre Demouilliez, talks with the administration have been stalled for months.

“We need help and more clout and support to draft a first collective agreement. We need a standard, a starting point from which to move forward.” Currently, the firefighting instructors are burned out. “We’re exhausted! We have a lot of teaching

hours. And our contracts don’t count prep time, grading, meetings with students, support. Those hours aren’t paid. These essential parts of the job are basically volunteer work. The employer fills up all our paid hours with direct teaching.”

With communication with the administration becoming strained, pursuing job satisfaction and enjoyment has also become more challenging. Going with the FNEEQ-CSN was a no-brainer. “Our colleagues at the CEGEP are affiliated with the FNEEQ and they just reached an agreement with the same employer. Why go elsewhere? We know it works! The FNEEQ-CSN is a well-oiled machine. We’re not venturing into the unknown.”

We welcome these three new unions to the ranks of the FNEEQ’s Regroupement privé and thank them for their trust!

FNEEQ members

Get free roadside assistance when you bundle your home and car insurance

That’s right! It’s free!

Get a quote and discover your exclusive advantages at [beneva.ca/en/fneeq](https://beneva.ca/en/fneeq) or by calling 1 855 441-6016.

Mention your group number: 10041

**beneva**



Property and casualty insurance is underwritten by Beneva Insurance Company, and distributed by Beneva Inc., Damage Insurance Agency and its authorized partners. At all times, terms and conditions pertaining to coverage are governed solely by the insurance contract. Some conditions and exclusions apply. © Beneva Inc. 2024 TM The Beneva name and logo are registered trademarks used under licence.



COCAL 2024 Conference

## Towards an international day of struggle

By the School and Society Committee

### For free, egalitarian and pluriversal education

The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL) held its 15<sup>th</sup> Conference at Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) on August 8 and 9. A hundred delegates from 40 unions across North America agreed to organize an International Day of Struggle over the coming months in order to defend democratic education against the onslaught of casualization through the managerialization and commodification of knowledge.

They took their cue from the [Education Summit](#) and the Knowledge Economy Octopus produced by the FNEEQ's School and Society Committee, which sums up that process. Local events will be held in the run-up to the International Day of Struggle for Democratic Education to discuss the main themes of the manifesto, improve it and take ownership of it.

Delegates discussed the various forms of casualization of teaching that have taken hold in higher education during four decades of neoliberalism and the impacts on working and teaching conditions.

### Privatization of education

COCAL 2024 showed us that the challenges we face here are much the same as elsewhere in North America. The core issue is education funding—or, more accurately, chronic underfunding driven by political agendas. The fight against the neo liberal model of education must be waged at the national and international levels. It's not enough to negotiate better working conditions with our direct employers. We must pressure national and international decision-makers for more robust public funding of education.

### We have to fight

In the discussions about the various forms of job insecurity that we experience, it was argued that we must become the political and historical agents of essential social—or at least academic—change. As a “pedagogical-political actor” ([Lechuga and Ramos](#), 2024, p. 62), we would rally the academic community across North America and beyond to fight the casualization of higher education as a whole and advocate for true democratization of education.

The idea of organizing a joint international action breaks new ground. While past COCAL conferences have been very useful in analyzing job insecurity across borders and sharing fightback strategies, this is the first time we have talked about organizing international action.

### Higher education professionals united!

International alliances are crucial to confront the neoliberal agenda that is corroding our universities and to support contingent academic workers in their fight for unconstrained, independent, tuition-free and pluriversal education. By uniting precarious higher education workers across North America, COCAL is forging a new force in the struggle against the ravages of international capitalism in education.



## International action to support education

By Caroline Leblond and Christine Gauthier

COORDINATOR OF THE FNEEQ-CSN'S REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE FNEEQ

A FNEEQ delegation travelled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July to attend two international conferences. Their mission was to advocate with one voice for quality education for all, everywhere in the world and at all levels of schooling.

### Education International Congress: Education to support democracy

The President of Education International pointed to the many threats facing our democracies. Around the world, authoritarian leaders are being elected and are undermining public trust. In this environment, educators have an essential role to play, particularly in countering the spread of misinformation.

But according to the UN, there is a worldwide shortage of 44 million teachers due to factors such as challenging and inequitable working conditions, inadequate resources to support teaching, and workplace violence.

At the congress, over 1,300 delegates studied and debated the recommendations of the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession. They discussed the future of the profession, considering the impact of intrusive new technologies, often implemented without union input. Restrictions on academic freedom and mental health challenges were also prominent topics.

Although there are many challenges, the motivation to act collectively was strong, and many resolutions were adopted. The delegates supported calls for peace in places such as Gaza, Haiti and Ukraine, underlining the devastating effects of these conflicts on children's education and well-being.

### CSFEF Congress: Education to support the Francophonie

The Comité syndical francophone sur l'éducation et la formation (CSFEF) is a forum for discussion and decision-making where French-speaking unions affiliated with Education International (EI) debate issues impacting education and the French-speaking world.

In the women's caucus, we discussed the critical importance of [strengthening female union leadership](#).

The CSFEF adopted 18 strategic priorities for 2024-2028, including:

1) Promote and protect the French language in francophone countries, support the teaching of French, and establish it as the common language

for union action to foster exchanges and solidarity in francophone countries and beyond;

2) Continue the fight against the privatization and commodification of education;

3) Advocate for governments to invest in quality public education to achieve the goals set by the Sustainable Development Observatory;

4) Combat gender stereotypes, harassment, sexual violence, and barriers to girls' education by providing facilities such as restrooms, cafeterias and health services for students;

5) Promote women's involvement in unionism.

## AUSTERITY IS BACK

Yves de Repentigny  
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT CÉGEP



**O**n July 31, in the middle of summer and while they were on vacation, CEGEP directors received a letter from Minister of Higher Education Pascale Déry beginning with “I am pleased to inform you.” And what was the announcement

delivered with such enthusiasm? It was a cap on spending for infrastructure, furniture, equipment, tools and library resources far lower than the budgets approved by the CEGEPs’ boards in the spring. The severe impact of this decision on educational quality is easy to imagine.

That wasn’t the only piece of bad news. At around the same time, the colleges learned that the regional funding envelope for continuing education was being reduced in favour of the government’s priorities. This meant the cancellation of cohorts set to enter programs leading to an Attestation of College Studies (AEC) or Diploma of College Studies (DEC), programs that were working well and meeting important social needs.

In response to the cuts that the government is making (without calling them that), which clearly signal a return to austerity, the FNEEQ’s CEGEP Section passed a resolution at its meeting on September 12 and 13 condemning the situation and urging its unions to gather information and mobilize. At its October 10-11 meeting, it adopted an action plan that includes contacting MNAs and forming human chains. It mandated its coordinating committee to invite other unions representing CEGEP staff and the student federations to join the initiative.

### Implementing the new collective agreement

The new collective agreement for CEGEP teachers came into effect on June 9 but our work’s not done. We have to make sure the employer applies the new contract as it should, which

hasn’t happened so far. For example, the pay adjustments were supposed to have been made when the collective agreement was signed.

The unions also need to familiarize themselves with the new clauses. Training on the new provisions was provided at the Regroupement’s September and October meetings, along with various tools.

Finally, when the bargaining is over the post-mortem begins. The post-mortem committee for the 2023 bargaining round was formed in May, submitted its work plan to the Regroupement in September, and got down to work. It organized workshops at the October meeting to get input.

### Other issues

The Regroupement CÉGEP continues working on the issue of “challenge” courses. The report *Regards croisés sur les conditions de réussite éducative des premières cours de littérature et de philosophie au cégep* was released on June 14, almost a year after it was submitted to Minister Déry. It is quite thick (230 pages) and ambitious (54 recommendations).

Artificial intelligence (AI) is another area of concern for the Regroupement CÉGEP. After holding a workshop on the topic at its May meeting, the Regroupement established an *ad hoc* committee in October to explore the issue further. This ties in with the recommendation on the fight against the dehumanization of education and higher learning adopted by the FNEEQ Convention in June.

## MASSIVE AI INTRUSION AND UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Christine Gauthier  
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT UNIVERSITÉ



**A** new coordination team for the Regroupement Université was elected at the June 2024 convention. I’m pleased to welcome Pierre-David Desjardins, a dedicated member of the *Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l’Université*

de Montréal, as the new coordinator, succeeding Ghyslaine Lévesque, who has taken a well-deserved retirement after two terms in that position.

To chart a course and determine the thrust of the Regroupement’s actions for the next three years, delegates gathered for a strategic retreat in September and discussed key questions: What issues will drive the Regroupement’s agenda for the next three years? What are the political and media priorities? What’s our game plan for the upcoming round of coordinated bargaining and mobilization?

An AI committee was created and began intensive work in summer 2024, focusing on protecting the human element in the student-teacher relationship and safeguarding our jobs against the growing use of AI tools in universities. We will be ready to support four unions in their bargaining talks in 2025, including the *Syndicat des tuteurs et tutrices de la TÉLUQ*, which is confronting the use of chatbots in some courses. The committee is analyzing AI’s potential effects on the workload and work organization of precarious university teaching staff and considering governance challenges and possible legal avenues that could be taken to regulate the use of AI and strengthen protections for lecturers.

### University funding: Is austerity looming?

Recent decisions on university funding suggest the government is disinvesting from higher education and all the unions will have to be on guard.

First, the long-awaited university funding policy tabled by Minister Pascale Déry in June fell short of the mark. It did nothing about chronic underfunding; no new funding was added to the overall envelope. We will monitor the impact of this policy on the finances of each institution and assess whether these new measures have any negative effects, at a time when increased funding is what is urgently needed.

Then in the summer the CAQ government imposed budget restrictions on infrastructure and real estate spending, which could have an impact on students’ learning conditions and the work of teachers. We are keeping a close eye on the repercussions. Finally, the recent federal and provincial decisions to limit the number of international students at our universities raise serious concerns. These restrictions not only threaten university funding under the current financing model but could also force some institutions, particularly in outlying regions, to cut entire programs.

In a time of widespread misinformation and scepticism about science, universities deserve better than austerity measures.

## COORDINATED BARGAINING: FIVE TENTATIVE AGREEMENTS REACHED

Léandre Lapointe  
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ



PHOTO: YVES LAPOINTE

To date, seven unions in the Regroupement Privé have decided to participate in coordinated bargaining. They have joined forces to defend key shared priorities based on the conditions they face. Since the spring, two more unions have signed tentative agreements,

bringing the total to five: the Syndicat du personnel du Collège Mont Saint-Louis and the Syndicat du personnel du Collège Regina Assumpta. The latter demonstrated remarkable resolve during challenging and pivotal negotiations. Faced with an administration that was not interested in hearing from its teachers, the union exercised its right to strike several times. Their success in securing important gains, particularly regulating distance teaching, sets an important precedent for other colleges. The unions at Collège Jean de la Mennais and Vanguard School are still at the bargaining table. They are also negotiating on the basis of the demands in the coordinated platform. This collective dynamic underlines the importance of solidarity among the unions in the Regroupement Privé in order to improve working conditions across the entire network. Solidarity!

### Collège Trinité: Historic strategic strikes could be the precursor to an all-out indefinite strike

At Collège Trinité, negotiations to renew the collective agreement were particularly difficult because of stonewalling by the administration against demands that are commonplace at the other private colleges. The union's demands included guidelines for technological change and distance education, resources and compensation to support special needs students, class size limits, and vacations for support staff similar to those in the public sector. The administration wanted rollbacks, including the right to change the number of days per teaching cycle without consulting the union. In response to the administration's intransigence, the union called a three-day strike, followed by an additional five days. After these actions, with negotiations still deadlocked, the union's general assembly voted for a mandate to call strategic strikes up to

and including an all-out indefinite strike, depending on the progress at the bargaining table. It was a first in the history of the Regroupement Privé! After that assembly, the union quickly reached a tentative agreement and the members voted unanimously to ratify it.

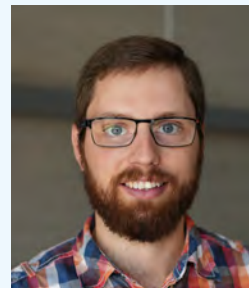
The union's bargaining committee, executive and members all showed exemplary resolve throughout the process. The negotiations were conducted respectfully, combining concern for the membership with unwavering strength and solidarity. It was a demonstration of the importance of standing firm to defend the rights of all employees. Congratulations to all involved!

### French course review

The FNEEQ's Language and Literature Committee recently sought input from high school French teachers to get an overall picture of the students leaving high school and find out about the weaknesses in the high school French curriculum. The committee met with a dozen teachers from different levels, backgrounds and regions in early October and gleaned valuable insights into many aspects of the teaching of French at the secondary level, including the challenges faced by students with learning difficulties, allophone students and the lack of resources to support them. Another concern was the insufficient importance attached to French in other subjects. As students make an effort only in French class, they don't transfer their language learning to other subjects. And of course working conditions that don't allow teachers to give their students prompt, effective feedback (large class sizes, little recognition of the amount of work involved in grading). This initial meeting was only the start of a dialogue between primary, secondary and CEGEP teachers. Other forums will be created for discussions among teachers at all levels.

## A NEW CAUCUS AT THE FNEEQ

Mario Roy  
COORDINATOR OF THE CAUCUS DES SYNDICATS D'ÉTUDIANT-ES SALARIÉS-ES



At the FNEEQ-CSN convention in June, we came together to plan our priorities for the next three years. Just as importantly, the convention voted to create a new structure: the Student Worker Caucus. The FNEEQ now has another body alongside its three sections:

CEGEP, Private School and University. The caucus grew out of a collaborative effort by the McGill and Concordia students' unions and was then approved by the FNEEQ executive committee. It has a promising future and represents a step forward of which we can be proud.

Last year, the Concordia Research and Education Workers Union (CREW-CSN) became part of the FNEEQ, joining the Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM). Although both unions represent part-time employees, together they are a vital force with over 5,000 members who share common interests. The caucus will enable these unions to work together to advance their issues and defend their members' interests within the FNEEQ.



### Growing fast


Shortly after its creation following the convention in June, the caucus welcomed another addition, the newly formed Syndicat des résidents et internes de la Faculté de médecine vétérinaire-CSN in Saint-Hyacinthe. The union elected an executive and formed a bargaining committee at its founding general assembly in August. Improving pay and working conditions will be its top priorities for its first collective agreement, and the caucus will be there to support it throughout the bargaining process.

We were also pleased that the Administrative Tribunal of Québec approved the application for certification of a third unit of the AGSEM, ending a long battle and a series of unionization attempts. The new unit includes other student workers who have duties similar to those of teaching assistants, such as graders and tutors. It's good news for all workers at McGill.

### Upcoming negotiations

This school year will be a busy one for the caucus, as all of its member unions will be at the bargaining table. The Syndicat des résidentes et résidents et internes de la Faculté de médecine vétérinaire and CREW will be negotiating their first collective agreement, and AGSEM will be doing the same for its new unit. Clearly, the current budget cuts in higher education and reduced enrolment at some universities will have an impact on student workers. Now more than ever, we need to join forces to win our union battles. The creation of the Student Worker Caucus is timely indeed!



*My*  
**HEART.**  
*My courses* 

**NATIONAL COURSE  
LECTURERS DAY**

**22 NOVEMBRE 2024**

