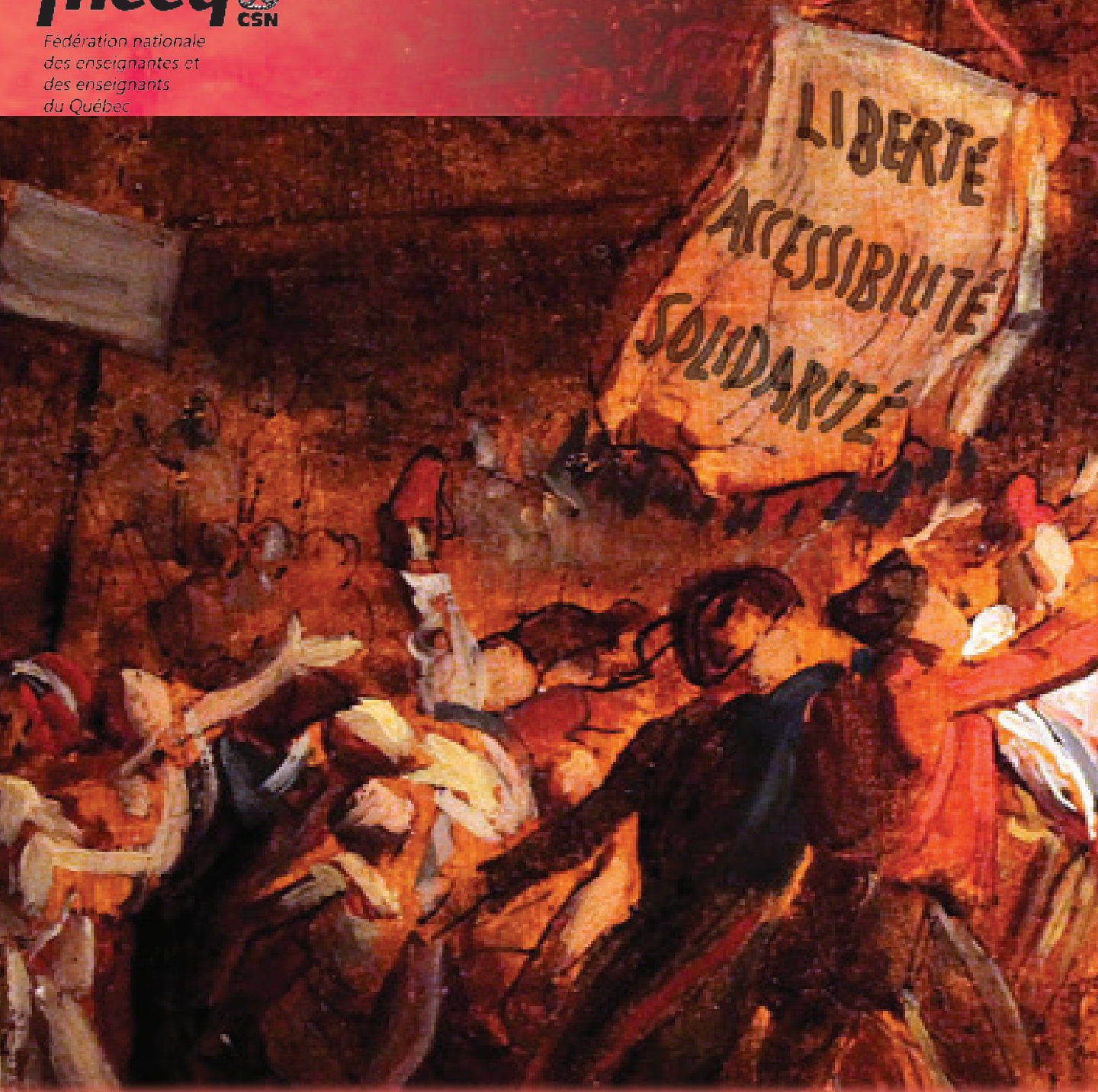


# carnets 34

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CSN

Fédération nationale  
des enseignantes et  
des enseignants  
du Québec

Autumn 2016



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## Tis the season to consult!

After what have been known as the “lean” years—which ultimately progressed into the skinny then downright emaciated years—the Liberal government has decided to do something besides making sweeping cuts to education.

So here we have two of its ministers—Education Minister Sébastien Proulx and Higher Education Minister Hélène David—launching wide-scale consultations in view of major educational reforms.

Regional tours and an online call for opinions are some of the tools that will serve to inform Québec’s new Policy in Educational Success. Minister Proulx has thrown out 50 topics for discussion and wants to know what we think of them—all in a brief of no more than 10 pages in length. Already, this isn’t boding well for the future...

The consultation document includes everything but the kitchen sink: from kindergarten at age four and the introduction of new technologies to the academic achievement of boys in intensive English, the education and training of teachers and the educational success of Indigenous populations. Even long-discarded ideas have made their way back to the fore, like the creation of a professional order for primary and secondary teachers. This proposal has already been given the thumbs down by the *Office des professions*, not to mention by the vast majority of those it directly concerns, namely the teachers themselves. Having a professional structure imposed on us that we don’t want is squarely out of the question.

On the higher education front, some of the ideas put forward during the short-lived PQ government’s Summit on Higher Education have resurfaced, such as the creation of a council of universities. Not to be outdone, the Liberal government also wants to establish a council of colleges along with a joint commission of colleges and universities to serve as an interface between these two councils. For the CSN and FNEEQ, our position is clear: “yes” to the creation of new structures that help promote greater cohesiveness and stronger partnership among the various educational institutions and between the different systems; a categorical “no” to using these structures for quality assurance and the standardization of education for the sake of snagging a top spot in international rankings. In our view, one thing is evident: to be beneficial, these councils must be made up for the most part by the artisans of higher education, in other words by the different categories of staff working in the system day in and day out, such as professors, course lecturers, professionals and support staff, who should all have the right to appoint those they wish to have representing them.

The Couillard government is now saying it wants to make education its top priority. Judging from its track record, it’s hard to be sure if that is cause for celebration or for worry. But what we do know is that the last few years of budget restraint have been painful, especially for those most vulnerable. All the reforms and new structures in the world can’t repair the damage that has been done. We’re not so naïve as to think the government’s sudden interest in education has nothing to do with election strategy. As educators, it will be up to us to defend the core mission of education in a society that considers itself democratic.

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FNEEQ-CSN  
1601, avenue De Lorimier, Montréal, (QC) H2K4M5  
Téléphone : 514 598-2241 - 1 877 312-2241  
fneeq.reception@csn.qc.ca - [www.fneeq.qc.ca](http://www.fneeq.qc.ca)



**Editor-in-Chief:** Caroline Senneville

**Publication Coordinator:** Sonia Beauchamp

**Proofreading:** Ariane Bilodeau

**Contributors:** Julie Audet, Ariane Bilodeau, Sébastien Brousseau, Yves de Repentigny, Nicole Lefebvre, Virginie L’Héroult, Véronique Lépine, Sylvain Marois, Jean Murdoch, Caroline Quesnel and the members of the school and society committee.

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**We care about our forest.**



# A look back at the 2016 World Social Forum and ahead to the *États généraux de l'enseignement supérieur*

Sylvain Marois  
FNEEQ Vice-president

The 2016 World Social Forum held in Montréal last August made history as the first-ever edition to take place in the global North. While staging the Forum this side of the North-South divide may not have been the subject of unanimity, this gathering nonetheless demonstrated that, in the face of the global crisis affecting all humanity, solution bearers from every continent need to come together to take collective action.



## Education Space at the FSM

On January 20, 2016, FNEEQ began meeting with its many education partners in Québec to lay the groundwork for what would ultimately become the Education Space of the Montréal World Social Forum.<sup>1</sup>

Our intention was to bring together not only organizations representing the other levels of education, but also student associations and adult and grassroots education groups.

Each organization was to propose topics and eventually organize a workshop. An information-sharing process was then put in place to pool connected or related topics in the aim of developing a rich, representative and varied programme of events.

The result was a week of activities on education—from early childhood through to university and continuing education—that was both fruitful and well attended. Indeed, even though other workshops were going on at the same time, the rooms were always filled to capacity. This was supported by the presence of international guest speakers and of representatives of Education International (EI)—another first for a World Forum—who took part in two workshops, one on philanthrocapitalism and the other on university privatization.

The plethora of workshops on offer—1,500 in total—may have caused some dilemmas in terms of which ones to attend, but it also demonstrated the great many issues and challenges that participating organizations and individuals wanted to bring to the table.

In short, the WSF Education Space gave rise to a wealth of productive and engaging discussions that follow on the heels of the Peoples' Social Forum held in Ottawa in 2014. Based on our synthesis of these discussions, it seems clear that those advocating for open, accessible and free education have succeeded in consolidating their causes for greater cohesiveness of action.

## *États généraux de l'enseignement supérieur* in Québec<sup>2</sup>

Members of the higher education community have long been calling for the organization of a major assembly to let the government know what they would like to see and how they envision the future for Québec's colleges and universities. During the WSF, a workshop was dedicated to bringing education stakeholders together in the goal of furthering the project for *États généraux de l'enseignement supérieur* in Québec (ÉGES).

The “mandate” for this project dates back to 2013, following the Summit on Higher Education organized by the then Parti Québécois government. That Summit led to the creation of five major task forces which, for the most part, did not address the key demands from 2012,



Soirée de l'enseignement supérieur - March 19, 2015

<sup>1</sup> See FNEEQ's Carnet FSM, published fall 2016, <http://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Publication-FSM-2016-11-17-final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Summary of the preparatory workshop for *États généraux de l'enseignement supérieur*, held Thursday, August 11, 2016, from 1:00-3:30 p.m., as part of the 2016 WSF Education Space. See FNEEQ's Carnet FSM, published fall 2016, <http://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Publication-FSM-2016-11-17-final.pdf>.





## Workshop on the LGBTI reality

Nicole Lefebvre  
FNEEQ Vice-presidente

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, the FNEEQ Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee invited members of the three *regroupements* to its first official activity, a training workshop on the realities of the LGBTI community. While the primary objective of this session was to bring new committee members up to date on issues relating to this community, it was also an opportunity for encouraging local unions to set up a committee of their own to study matters of inclusion and diversity and to develop concrete measures for stamping out homophobia and transphobia in our educational environments.

The workshop was led by two excellent facilitators: Bill Ryan, professor of Social Work at McGill University, international expert in sexuality, sexual education and homophobia, and co-author of the *Institut national de santé publique du Québec*'s training program "For a new vision of homosexuality," and Gabrielle Bouchard, peer support and trans advocacy coordinator with Concordia University's Centre for Gender Advocacy. After broadly discussing the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, they outlined the notions of sexual and gender diversity as they relate to each letter in the LGBTI acronym.

It soon became clear that the more we learn about this diversity, the longer and more complex becomes the term that collectively describes this community, which is now more generally identified by the letters LGBTTIQQ2SAa+<sup>1</sup>.

We also spent time looking more specifically at the issue of transgender, a reality that, while not new, is increasingly prevalent and we feel needs to be better understood in view of the integration challenges it poses.

Participants found the day-long workshop very valuable, only too short. Consideration will have to be given to the possibility of extending the training session to two days next year. ■



1 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer, Questioning, 2S (Two-Spirited), Asexual and Ally.....

# Consultations on higher education and educational success

Caroline Senneville  
FNEEQ Presidente

Julie Audet  
Union Counselor, Labor Relations Department-CSN

Announced at the height of last summer, Québec's ministerial consultations on education kicked off this fall and will be continuing on for the next few months. On the higher education front, the main proposals centre on new framework structures for the systems and institutions, notably with the creation of a council of universities and a council of colleges, and on amendments to the *Règlement sur le régime des études collégiales* (see page 12). For early childhood education and the primary and secondary levels, Minister Sébastien Proulx is criss-crossing Québec for regional and provincial consultations on the 50 some courses of action proposed in his document on educational success (see page 7).

The idea of setting up a council of universities has been the subject of talks and consultations in the past, most notably during the Summit on Higher Education organized by the Marois government in the aftermath of the student protests. At the time, the CSN and FNEEQ stressed the need for better coordination of the university sector in the face of, among other things, the proliferation—in some cases unbridled—of university campuses. For that reason, we proposed the creation of a council of universities consisting primarily of peer-appointed members of the different groups within the university community that would strive for parity between men and women and whose mission would be to build a common vision of the university network and improve coordination among the institutions while respecting their individual autonomy. We also demanded that this body not be permitted to implement any quality assurance mechanisms.

When the Minister of Higher Education announced this latest consultation would also focus on a proposed council of colleges, we saw it as an opportunity to advocate for the creation of an entity of similar composition and collegial functioning to ensure better coordination of continuing education and skills

development in the college sector. At present, continuing education is being delivered in a somewhat pell-mell manner, without any coordination or wider vision.

We have long been calling for a reflection on a vision of higher education that would rally the college and university communities and the Québec State and society around a common project. Without it, achieving any kind of consensus on the development of higher education and how it should be done is next to impossible. To us, the future of higher education must be firmly rooted in humanistic values and in the defence of education as both a fundamental right and a common good.

But the arguments being advanced by the Minister to justify the need for these new structures and their orientations go against our core views and beliefs about higher education. References to such things as the fast pace of change, the need to develop expertise and keep up with the times, the relevance and ongoing progress of the college and university systems, and the squaring with best practices are all examples of a utilitarian view of education that we simply do not share. We challenge the notion that universities and colleges must rapidly

adapt to the issues of the day: higher education cannot wax and wane according to the trends, passing fancies and short-term projections of the labour market.

We are therefore vehemently opposed to any initiative that seeks to reinforce the commodification, privatization and internationalization of education. This is a major political shift that must be publicly denounced. It goes without saying that we also object to any quality assurance, governance or accountability mechanism that finds its basis in the principles of new public management, and we will continue pushing for the abolishment of the *Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial*. The proposal to give the future Québec council of universities responsibility over accrediting non-Québec universities and attracting foreign students shows an inclination on the part of the government to open up and deal in the "education market," a prospect we find deeply disconcerting.

For many years, we have railed against the perverse effects of quality assurance mechanisms and, on those grounds, we oppose the creation of a joint commission on higher education that would serve to that

end. A clear distinction must be drawn between quality assurance and quality assessment. The work that teachers do each and every day is testimony of their commitment to providing quality educational services. That quality needs to be defined on the basis of such factors as the teacher-student relationship, transmission of knowledge, curriculum, learning conditions, teaching conditions, student support, accessibility (financial and geographic) and democracy. Assessing that quality, as we see it, must hinge on the traditional principles of self-management and collegiality; it must rely more heavily on qualitative than on quantitative analysis and reflect a humanistic perspective on education and the uniqueness of our institutions; it must be conducted with the utmost transparency within the institutions themselves and provide for follow-up on recommendations.

Instead of a joint commission, we propose that a standing liaison committee on higher education be put in place with the sole mission of ensuring coherence, complementarity and collaboration in higher education, while at the same time respecting the establishments' core missions, the autonomy of universities, the provincial nature of the college diploma and the college-university diploma sequence.

In short, while we are favourable, in principle, to the idea of establishing a council of universities and a council of colleges, we feel that both the models proposed for these and the creation of a joint commission to serve as an instrument for quality assurance and training modernization in higher education are unacceptable.

In the coming months, the Minister of Higher Education will have to prepare draft bills for the creation of these new institutions as well as a draft by-law to amend the RREC. This will give us the opportunity once again to make our positions and recommendations known during the consultation process on these legislative and regulatory changes. We will continue making representations on these issues in order to promote our vision of education and higher learning and, with the delegates at last October's special federal council meeting, have prepared a federation action plan. Throughout the winter and spring, we will have to keep up our efforts, with the help of all of our unions, to cleanse the temple of the merchants who would sacrifice the human right to education for short-sighted gains that could prove devastating to the citizens of tomorrow.

This past September, Sébastien Proulx, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, launched a wide-scale consultation in view of developing a policy on educational success at the primary and secondary levels. He invited education stakeholders and the general public to take part in the process.

To help guide the reflection, the Minister identified 50 specific courses of action to help promote educational success from early childhood to the end of secondary school. These ministerial proposals cover a wide range of subjects, such as, for example, support and funding for students with special needs, compulsory schooling, teacher training and continuing education for teachers, establishment of a provincial institute of excellence in education, evaluation of learning, creation of professional orders, development of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies, integration of information technologies, and so on.

The CSN and its affiliated federations from the education sector (FNEEQ, FEESP, FSSS) drafted a brief that, submitted in mid-November, advocates the importance of, among other things:

- ensuring access to education and promoting the public school system;
- fostering equal opportunity and countering inequalities;
- offering services to students with special needs;
- valorizing teachers by recognizing their professional autonomy; etc.

We encourage you to visit our Website for more on these positions and orientations: <http://fneeq.qc.ca/fr/memoires-662/> ■

# Update from the *regroupements*



## Regroupement *université*

Sylvain Marois, FNEEQ Vice-president

Higher Education Minister H el ene David's proposal for setting up a council of universities has been met with some trepidation by the *Regroupement universit e*. While our member unions generally support the idea of creating an advisory body, this would have to be done with a view to promoting an open, democratic and accessible university system in Qu ebec in partnership with the university community. But since the content of the Minister's consultation document falls considerably short of our expectations, FNEEQ and other university labour organizations have come up with eight key principles of consensus<sup>1</sup> that should guide the creation of a Qu ebec council of universities.

The *Regroupement's* unions have been working on a report on current practices in Distance Learning (DL). In many universities, if not the majority of them, DL is seen as the future of education. At Universit e Laval, for instance, the administration is looking to translate its DL interface in order to export its know-how. This is all about exporting a *business* model, and doing so in the name of profit rather than of the creation and dissemination of knowledge! Collectively, we need to give thought to distance learning in relation to intellectual property rights, resale rights, compensation, number of students and a host of other issues to be able to better frame our collective agreements. To do this, we intend to consult with course lecturers engaged in distance learning by conducting discussion groups and surveys, all under the coordination of a committee of experts in the field. This exercise will culminate in a reflection day on the issue, which we hope to hold in winter 2017.

Another matter of key interest around the negotiating table is that of annual status. This refers to course lecturers who have a full-time teaching load and a contract of more than a year (often renewable). Whereas this situation may create a certain sense of job stability for some, it can also have various adverse effects on others. A *Regroupement* committee has been working intensely to draw up a portrait of the situation by analyzing the reality in several universities and comparing the different collective agreements for course lecturers. The committee's report is expected to be submitted shortly to the *Regroupement* and the FNEEQ team.

With the help of experts from the CSN's SRT division, the *Regroupement universit e* has now carried out a comparative salary analysis that will serve as a key tool in determining the wage gap between a course lecturer giving a class and a professor (of comparable status) giving a class. Our main goal, as outlined in our platform of common demands, is to reduce that gap. Each union is free to tackle this challenge as it sees fit during bargaining.

Two other important issues are also on the work table: the transformation of governance and the toughening of labour relations. It is no great secret that since the mid-90s, the administration of our universities has shifted from a collegial to a more managerial approach. *Regroupement* delegates want to see the situation reviewed and a position developed to counter this movement, whose business-oriented slant is largely blamed for the increasingly contentious labour relations and growing presence of lawyers around the bargaining table. This is a complex situation that requires thorough consideration of a great many factors. FNEEQ's advisors will be helping us reflect on these.

It is against this difficult backdrop that we are accompanying the SCCUQ and SCCUM in their long and arduous negotiations. Despite a few positive inroads, the salary proposals from management are wholly insufficient, if not downright insulting. The union representing Concordia University course lecturers, for its part, is working hard to salvage whatever it can, particularly on the pension plan front. Here again, FNEEQ's advisors, with the help of CSN actuaries, are doing everything in their power to support the union. Let's hear it for solidarity!

## Is that enough?

At their annual assembly of November 26, the lecturers of UQAM overwhelmingly rejected the employer's final offer by 96.5%, while 86% of the members present voted in favour of a strike mandate of five consecutive days, to be exercised when deemed necessary. The negotiation talks have been taken place over 17 months, at an excruciatingly slow pace.<sup>2</sup> ■

## Solidarity!

1 [http://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/cuq\\_fr.pdf](http://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/cuq_fr.pdf).

2 <http://fneeq.qc.ca/fr/les-chargees-et-chargees-de-cours-de-luqam-rejettent-loffre-finale/>.





## Regroupement *privé*

Caroline Quesnel, FNEEQ Vice-presidente

After an intense period of unionization from 2012-2015, during which the Regroupement privé welcomed 11 new member unions, this last year has been marked by the wrap-up of a series of first negotiations: this was the case for the unions representing two schools in the Pessamit Innu community, Collège Jean de La Mennais, Marianopolis College and the Centre de musique et de danse de Val-d'Or. In virtually all of these negotiations, conciliation was needed to reach an agreement due to management's unwillingness to bargain. In the end, all four unions were able to negotiate collective agreements that substantially improve working conditions for their members. The Federation is elated by this outcome, which speaks volumes on the collective power to effect change.

There is no question that 2016-2017 is going to be a "big" bargaining year: more than half of the Regroupement's members—or nearly 2,500 teachers and staff in private schools affiliated with FNEEQ—will be coming up for contract renewal. With that

in mind, the coordination team began taking advantage of last year's regular meetings to offer delegates a series of condensed training sessions in the form of workshops: one last February on the "Labour Relations Committee," another, in April, on being a "Member of the Board of Governors," and two more coming up this winter on "Mobilization" and "Information on Social Networks." Geared to the specific needs of the *Regroupement*, this formula is particularly popular with delegates, who have limited leave for union activities, and fosters discussion and information sharing.

Since negotiation is at the centre of the *Regroupement's* discussions and deliberations, the coordination team believes the conditions are ripe for launching a concerted bargaining pilot project similar—albeit on a smaller scale—to the one in the *Regroupement université*. This proposal has been met with interest by advisors and members alike, and we hope to get the project under way this winter with two advisors and four unions that will be launching negotiations within the next two years. ■



## Regroupement *cégep*

Nicole Lefebvre, FNEEQ Vice-presidente

Higher education has been under the spotlight this fall with the government's launch of consultations on the plan to create two councils and a joint commission and to amend Québec's college education regulations, the *Règlement sur le régime des études collégiales* (RREC). The Regroupement cégep reviewed these projects and gave its input on the content of the joint briefs submitted by the CSN and FNEEQ, FEESP and FP. The wording of the ministerial document particularly irked the delegates of the *Regroupement*, who objected to the pervasive use of performance-based language woven through such notions as quality assurance, ongoing improvement and the search for best practices. As open as the *Regroupement cégep* is to the creation of a place that can foster greater partnership and cohesiveness among colleges as well as universities, it does not support this being done in a way that subjugates higher education to a mercantile or managerial conception of education.

Another key issue this fall has been the local distribution of the additional resources secured during the last round of bargaining to support the success of students with disabilities. A survey of *Regroupement unions* reveals that representatives of the *Fédération des cégeps* and many college administrations persist in misinterpreting the purpose of these resources and are consequently delaying their allocation. They appear to be relying on the argument that the financial appendix stipulating how these resources are to be used is still being drafted by the ministry to justify an interpretation that in no way reflects the spirit of the talks held with the college management negotiating committee (CPNC) during the negotiations. Actions have been taken on both the local and provincial levels to rectify the situation as soon as possible and to get concrete recognition for the role that teachers play in ensuring the success of this student population.

Lastly, the *Regroupement* has been advised of the changes that could be made to the various programs currently under provincial review, such as the pre-university programs in Natural Science, Computer Science and Math, Science, Literature and Art, and Social Science. It is critical that teachers in the disciplines concerned are consulted and given the opportunity to provide their opinions on any changes that may affect them. ■

# Red Flag warning on Free trade agreements

On October 30<sup>th</sup> in Brussels, amid great fanfare, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union—a deal that will see 99% of duties eliminated across the board on all tariff lines. Our political leaders were quick to hail the pact, not the least of them Québec Premier Philippe Couillard, who claimed it will mean “jobs, prosperity and quality of life.”

Yet this agreement, like the vast majority of deals of this nature, flies in the face to democracy: it was negotiated behind closed doors, under a veil of secrecy and with zero consultation of the populations concerned, neither at the time of the talks nor prior to ratification. Moreover, the pact places corporate interests above the laws of the nations: in the case of disputes, special tribunals of ambiguous functioning, dubious transparency and questionable impartiality will have the task of ruling on matters between government and business. While it appears that Wallonia has secured guarantees that the arbitration process will be improved, judging from the last 30 years of experience, can we really bank on a promise of change?

## Free trade or the right to destroy the environment with impunity

Yves de Repentigny  
Environment Committee

This primacy of corporate profit over law also applies when it comes to the environment. Most free trade agreements allow companies to sue governments over laws and regulations, including those designed to protect natural habitats or reduce pollution, they feel are prejudicial to their business. Here are a few examples of real-life cases.

### Ethyl Corporation vs Canada

In 1997, Ethyl Corporation, a U.S. manufacturer of the fuel additive Methylcyclopentadienyl Manganese Tricarbonyl (MMT), submitted a Notice of Arbitration under Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into effect on January 1, 1994, following the Parliament of Canada’s adoption of the *Manganese-based Fuel Additives Act*, a law prohibiting the import and commercial trade of MMT. This Act was passed in response to concerns over the negative effects of MMT on human health as well as on vehicle emission systems and the on-board diagnostic systems that monitor these emissions. Ethyl Corporation initially filed a claim for USD\$201 million, but the matter was settled out of the court when Canada agreed to repeal its law and pay the company \$13 million in damages.

### Pacific Rim vs Salvador

In 2009, Pacific Rim Mining Corporation (later acquired by OceanaGold Mining) filed a lawsuit against El Salvador for \$310 million (5% of the country’s GDP) under Chapter 10 of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Claiming the company failed to comply with environmental requirements, the Government of El Salvador refused to grant it a permit to start digging at its El Dorado gold and silver mine property, an operation that would require excessive water consumption. This case is still pending.

### Metalclad vs Mexico

In 2000, the U.S. waste disposal company Metalclad was awarded \$16.7 million in damages under Chapter 11 of the NAFTA after the Mexican State of San Luis Potosi blocked construction of a landfill site when Metalclad refused to clean up 20,000 tons of hazardous waste that had been previously dumped on the site and subsequently expropriated the company to create a natural area for the protection of a rare species of cactus.

These are but a few of the many examples out there; they are just the tip of the iceberg. And if the past is any indication of the future, there are bound to be many more such horror stories to come!

In keeping the public on the sidelines in these trade deal negotiations, decisions are being made to the benefit of a few some whose only real interest is their own personal gain, with little or no concern for the greater good. So when these agreements threaten our public services, as is the case for education, we have the right and the duty, both as educators and as citizens, not only to question these treaties, but to demand that our States refrain from signing and ratifying them.

## Trade in services agreement (tisa): a very real threat to education!

Ariane Bilodeau  
International Action Committee

Last May, Education International, of which FNEEQ is a member, launched an urgent appeal to save education from the Trade in Services Agreement. The 23 countries or blocs engaged in these trade negotiations are Australia, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Colombia, Costa Rica, the European Union, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States. In 2015, two countries, Paraguay and Uruguay, pulled out of the negotiations, the latter in response to growing concerns from the civil society over the potentially grave consequences of the deal. One of these centered on the private funding of education—a phenomenon referred to as “Starbuckization”—which will lead to a proliferation of low-cost private schools whose funding, administration, curriculum and programs are able to circumvent social and regional particularities and policies and result in the standardization of education and mediocre working conditions for teachers.

EI has therefore called on all of its affiliates to lobby their respective governments to have education—a sector that comes under the GATS definition of “services” being proposed for TISA—excluded from the deal. The listed reservations in the area of public services currently do not

go far enough, nor are they sufficiently defined to ensure the protection of public education under the agreement. Education is thus in a position of great vulnerability, and TISA poses a monumental threat to free, quality public education.

Leaving education on the table opens the door—and keeps it open—to foreign investors and suppliers with commercial, profit-seeking designs on the sector and ensures these private interests new rights. By setting legally binding rules on States, TISA will see to it that governments treat education providers in the public and private sectors without discrimination—a practice known as “competitive neutrality”—making any promotion of public education potentially actionable.

The Trade in Services Agreement is expected to come to a conclusion by the end of the year, probably in the final weeks of the Obama administration. Between now and then, FNEEQ, which answered EI’s call to action last May, will continue fighting tooth and nail against TISA! This agreement, just like GATS, could ultimately lead to the liberalization, commodification and privatization of our public education system. Do our governments have to be reminded, once again, that education is an inalienable human right and an essential public good?

FNEEQ signed the *Appel de la société civile francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation et des systèmes éducatifs* launched this past November 24<sup>th</sup> by the *Réseau francophone contre la marchandisation de l'éducation*. Rooted in the protection of the right to education, this joint declaration is to serve as a powerful lever in stamping out the social inequalities that are being accentuated by the privatization and commodification of education in countries in both hemispheres. Do not hesitate to re-tweet #NeVendezPasEducation [#NeVendezPasEducation](https://www.facebook.com/NeVendezPasEducation)

1 To learn more, see *Philantropicapitalisme et éducation* in the special publication on the World Social Forum, available on the FNEEQ Website, <http://fneeq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Publication-FSM-2016-11-17-final.pdf>.

# A DEC IS A DEC

## EVERYWHERE IN QUÉBEC!

### RREC AMENDMENTS: FLEXIBILITY VS **cohesion**

Through its ministerial consultations on higher education, the Québec Government is proposing changes to the *Règlement sur le régime des études collégiales* (RREC) that would give colleges more “flexibility” and “autonomy” when it comes to training and certification. The government could go so far as to grant colleges the right to set competencies and, ultimately, even issue their own diplomas at the local level. This is a major institutional drift and one we must rise against to preserve the provincial nature of our programs and diplomas.

After consulting with FNEEQ delegates, the CSN, FNEEQ and FEESP submitted a joint brief to Higher Education Minister Hélène David outlining our position on the matter.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Short-sighted “flexibility”**

First of all, there is no evidence to suggest that giving colleges greater leeway in these areas would in any way improve access to college education: if anything, this quest for “flexibility” seems to be more in the immediate interests of business than of the student population. The RREC changes the Minister is considering would give more local powers to colleges by allowing them to, among other things, set additional objectives and standards for specific training in technical programs and determine the format of the report card.

Implementing these changes would open the door to worrisome initiatives like the establishment of local diplomas or local competencies in response to temporary regional demands.

#### **Unequal local diplomas**

By divesting itself of these provincial responsibilities and foisting them onto colleges, the State is running the risk of causing major disparities among same programs offered by different institutions. This could have a huge impact on the recognition of the Québec diploma based on these varying objectives, standards and evaluation formats.

Our obvious concern is that this leads to a perception of uneven value whereby employers select graduates on the basis of the CEGEP from which they received their diploma. This could also affect admission to university, since 30% of college technical program graduates continue on to the university level.

#### **Graduates more vulnerable to labour market changes**

The Minister is also proposing amendments to the RREC that would allow colleges to introduce local training modules to provincial technical programs. Rather than promoting mobility, this would have the effect of limiting graduates to

certain job functions and making them more vulnerable to changes in the labour market. We propose that, instead of creating variability in the programs, the addition of objectives and standards be done through supplementary training where particular competencies are needed to exercise a specialization in a trade, as in the case of a kitchen specialist in interior design. This additional training would be offered subsequent to a DEC through the regular program, which would ensure continuity in training since it would be supported by the departmental and program committee processes.

#### **Continuing education and RAC left to their own devices**

The Minister wants to “bring clarification” to the classification of continuing education programs and the recognition of acquired competencies (RAC). While the orientation of this ministerial proposal remains somewhat vague, we, for our part, would like to see a regulatory framework put in place to structure the attestation of collegial studies (AEC) programs currently under the control of colleges. The latitude and “flexibility” that colleges have wielded in this area have produced less than conclusive results: as things currently stand, the same classification of AEC is used to

<sup>1</sup> [www.csn.qc.ca/2016-11-01\\_-\\_memoire\\_ceq\\_csn/](http://www.csn.qc.ca/2016-11-01_-_memoire_ceq_csn/)

apply to programs whose numbers of hours range from 135 to over 2,000, depending on the institution. Such massive variance makes it imperative that we establish a common province-wide classification system for AEC programs.

Moreover, we believe the development of AECs and RACs needs to be regulated to ensure these do not become ways of bypassing programs leading to a DEC and, in the broader sense, to prevent them from being used for strictly utilitarian purposes to the detriment of the

citizen-focused humanistic approach to training that is inherent in the college education system.

The devolution of many of the ministry's powers to the colleges poses a very real threat to the coherence and strength of Québec's

For a **strong** college network  
in **all** regions of Québec

college network. Allowing such a degree of local latitude in crucial areas like the issuing of diplomas runs

the risk of fragmenting the network by fueling competition among institutions and thereby jeopardizing the very existence of some of our CEGEPs in the regions. ■

**Let's make this about cohesion instead!**

**No to the disengagement of the State!**

**Yes to the protection of our provincial programs and diplomas!**



**Fédération des femmes  
du Québec**

The *Fédération des femmes du Québec* (FFQ) is in the throes of a major financial crisis, a situation brought on, in large part, by the deep funding cuts that women's groups have had to endure in recent years, particularly at the hands of Stephen Harper's Conservative government. Despite the best efforts of the FFQ team, that situation has escalated into a full-blown state of emergency.

So, after only just having celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the FFQ is now in a fight for its life: cancelling activities at the last minute, paring its action plan back to the bare bones, abolishing key jobs. A mere shadow of its former self, the organization is devoting every ounce of energy it has to rebuilding its financial health while retaining a presence in coalitions and remaining active through its network of volunteers.

The FFQ is an indispensable conduit for the voice of Québec women. It is a convergence point for the wide diversity of groups and individuals who believe in social equality and solidarity. Its history is marked by vigorous debates and courageous positions that have advanced the feminist cause. For a half-century, it has defended the rights of women while waging an unyielding battle against poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination.

Now, the FFQ needs the public's support to ensure its survival and the pursuit of its mission. That is why FNEEQ is issuing an urgent appeal to you today for financial support to help this essential organization. You can help by making a donation and/or becoming a member by signing up your union, your women's committee and your individual members.

FNEEQ will continue denouncing the underfunding of rights organizations like the FFQ and encourages you to do the same! ■

To show your concrete support, go to <http://www.ffq.qc.ca/simpliquer/faire-un-don/>

## The teacher-student relationship and the notion of authority

Should a teacher and a student be prohibited from having an intimate relationship? In the case where that student is a minor, the answer goes without saying. Our society has clearly—forgive the wordplay here—made its bed on that one. But when it comes to two consenting adults, the matter is a little less cut-and-dried. Between the real-life drama of a criminal complaint and the epic love story that withstands the test of time are dozens of other scenarios only alluded to in hushed whispers in the hallways. No need to spell each one out to get the general picture that these situations can be prickly.

Sonia Beauchamp  
Communications Advisor

At the FNEEQ Congress in May 2015, delegates referred a motion to the Federal Bureau for a reflection process on sexual conduct in the teaching environment. At last May's Federal Council meeting, labour advisor Selma Skalli presented the jurisprudence on the matter, which can be summarized as follows: as a general rule, there is a basic presumption that a teacher is in a position of authority vis-à-vis his or her students, whether these students are minors or of legal age. But this is not sufficient when a criminal complaint is filed against a teacher and the student concerned is an adult: there must be evidence of an abuse of power in eliciting sexual consent. The rules are different when it comes to grievance arbitration: an act does not have to be a criminal offence to be considered misconduct. Arbitrators can very easily make a determination of sexual misconduct solely on the evidence that sexual relations occurred between a teacher and a student, without requiring any specific proof of abuse of power.

But Ms. Skalli issued the following caveat: "While sexual relations between a teacher and an adult student are considered condemnable, especially when the student is a member of that teacher's

class at the time the sexual or romantic relationship occurs, this does not necessarily mean automatic dismissal. Every case needs to be fully investigated to determine whether there were any attenuating circumstances or aggravating factors."

Apart from earning the teacher a reputation as some sort of Lothario or, worse, a sexual predator, what kind of impact can a relationship like this have on the student? Or on the class? How free is free consent when one of the parties holds the controls that can make or break the other's academic or professional career? And when the relationship ends, can the student trust the impartiality of the evaluation process? Couldn't it be said that a close platonic relationship between a teacher and a student carries the same risks? Conversely, aren't we being too paternalistic with our students? After all, they are adults and have to learn from their mistakes! The legal aspects aside, these situations clearly raise numerous ethical questions that challenge the notion of free will.

They also make the job more complex for labour unions, and will continue to do so as more and more teaching establishments bat



Picture: Gettyimages

around the idea of introducing a policy on teacher-student relations, including relations of a sexual nature. Whatever happens, unions will remain firm in their commitment to represent and advocate on behalf of their members.

The reflection launched last May needs to be pursued and clear guidelines have to be put in place to support the work of unions in this area. This is not merely a matter of law, or of conduct, or of ethics—for many, it is the very integrity of the teaching relationship that is hanging in the balance. The Federation's unions need to voice their concerns and speak out on an issue that has been passed over in silence for too long. ■

## En route to the 65<sup>th</sup> CSN Congress

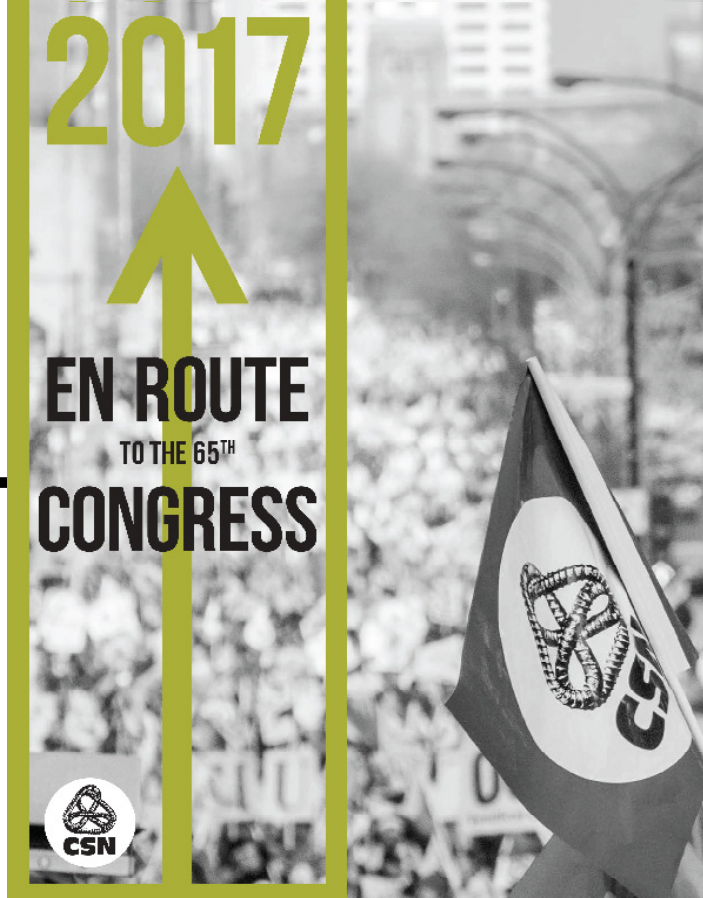
The 65<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CSN will be taking place June 5 through 9, 2017. This is the confederation's largest body, with delegates from each of its 2,000 unions, 13 central councils and eight federations coming together to discuss and decide on the CSN's orientations for the three following years.

Jean Murdock  
FNEEQ Secretary-General and Treasurer

If the Québec Government keeps to the Act respecting fixed-date elections, this next CSN term (2017–2020) will be punctuated by a provincial election on October 1, 2018.

In the past two years, CSN activists have taken to the streets or picketed outside their places of work on countless occasions to protest the Couillard government's austerity measures. Workers from public transportation systems, municipalities, daycare centres, schools, health and social services facilities as well as regional development agencies have seized every available opportunity to demand an end to these restrictive policies and renewed investment in our public services and social programs.

Our vision of development contrasts sharply with that of the QLP, a party seemingly hell-bent on weakening the State. By deconstructing the regions, it is curbing job creation, despite a campaign promise to do just the opposite. So, in the year after our 65<sup>th</sup> Congress, as we get set to elect the next provincial government, it will be up to us to define the kind of Québec we want and to find the ways to bring about change.



### The process

The CSN has come up with nine demands based on five key objectives:

You will find these demands and their explanation in the consultation document.<sup>1</sup>



Union executive committees are invited to review these demands with their members in the forum they deem most appropriate and, if they so desire, to propose others. Facilitation and consultation documents<sup>2</sup> are available to that end. Members can also answer a brief questionnaire<sup>3</sup> on these demands. During the Congress, delegates will be called upon to vote on these proposals and to determine the means by which we can achieve the goals we have set.

1 <https://www.csn.qc.ca/en-route/documents>. (in French)  
2 <https://www.csn.qc.ca/en-route/>. (in French)  
3 <https://www.csn.qc.ca/en-route/questionnaire/>. (in French)



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