



FRANCIZATION  
GROUP  
LEADERS

## Spreading a love for Québec and the french language

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**A**fter two school years of constant uncertainty, government improvisation and pandemic-related restrictions, we can barely believe that things are getting “back to normal” in the Fall 2022 semester. But they are! Across the province, schools, CEGEPs and universities are back to in-person teaching, humming with the buzz of classes and activities of all kinds. Let’s hope it continues!

This issue of *Carnets* is also about the resumption of international meetings. Our representatives have recently attended a string of union gatherings abroad—in Chicago, in Hammamet, Tunisia, in Querétaro City, Mexico. In these pages, they share the highlights and tell us how the experience has expanded our engagement, enriched our thinking and strengthened our solidarity. Let’s hope this too continues!

We followed the Québec election closely. FNEEQ–CSN decried the fact that schools and higher education received scant attention during the campaign. Not only were educational issues ignored, but the CAQ’s platform on education was very weak. It doesn’t bode well. This government’s second term looks unpromising.

As far as the new Cabinet goes, we are pleased that there will still be two separate ministries for education and higher education. We had said we were hoping for new blood and we do have two new ministers. Let’s not forget François Legault’s promise on election night: he said he wanted to make education “the priority of priorities” for his government. So hopefully Bernard Drainville, Minister of Education, and Pascale Déry, Minister of Higher Education, will be the Premier’s eyes and ears. We will need strong voices in Cabinet to defend our communities.

While the economic picture is darkened by inflation and the spectre of a recession, it is also conducive to unity and solidarity. The Common Front, the alliance of CEGEP teachers’ unions, the coordinated bargaining by university lecturers and, most recently, by the private sector unions all bear this out. In addition to this list of alliances, we saw the creation of the Syndicat national du personnel de francization, also covered in this issue.

In solidarity!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Quesnel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Caroline Quesnel**  
PRESIDENT



Francization teacher Emma Drouhin's class analyzes a *Cowboys Fringants* song.

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## Sharing the love of culture, one song at a time

Stepping into francization teacher Emma Drouhin's classroom is like a step into Québec culture. When *Carnets* visited her class, her students were dissecting the song *Toune d'automne* by the Cowboys Fringants. It was moving to see a group of newcomers trying to sing *Tsé qu'ça m'a fait ben d'la peine de t'voir partir, ma mignonne*. Clearly, the Lanaudière band's lyrics touch on the universal!

That fun activity is a good example of how francization teachers give their students an intro to Québec culture. "We're their first contact with the host society," says Emma, who has a master's degree in cultural mediation and has been teaching francization classes for three years. "We're the caring friend, the first source of information. We're there to give our students a taste for French, a taste of Québec identity. We're the ones who convey these things." The previous week, her class had visited the Jean-Talon market in Little Italy to strike up conversations with the vendors and practice their food vocabulary.

While she finds her work rewarding, she and her colleagues feel they don't exist in the eyes of the government. The government says it wants to "take care" of people who choose to come to Québec but it isn't taking care of the people who help newcomers integrate into their new society. That is why francization teachers have joined the new Syndicat national du personnel de francisation-CSN. "In addition to better pay, the union will give us better protection, a framework, stability. We are building our collective strength."



*Emma Drouhin, francization teacher at Cégep Marie-Victorin and member of the Syndicat national du personnel de francisation-CSN.*



*Newcomers visit the Jean-Talon Market in Montréal in a francization activity.*

## Francization teachers' union is growing fast

**In the space of a few months, more and more francization teachers have flocked to join the Syndicat national du personnel de francisation-CSN. The union signed its first collective agreement in December 2021 and now has members at five schools: Cégep de Saint-Laurent, Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne, Cégep de l'Outaouais, Cégep Marie-Victorin and Cégep de Rosemont.**

**T**here's a reason why. These teachers, who do such exceptional work with immigrants, deserve recognition. It is to improve their working conditions and share in the gains negotiated with the government by FNEEQ-CSN that they have joined the ranks of the Federation.

The working conditions of non-unionized francization teachers are governed only by labour standards legislation. The people who play such a vital role in welcoming newcomers live in a state of permanent insecurity.



### Concrete impact

Unionizing with FNEEQ–CSN has brought these workers better wages. They are now paid according to the public sector salary scale, their experience is fully recognized, and they are appropriately compensated for class prep, team meetings and their work in developing activities.

The collective agreement also protects their intellectual property rights to the educational materials they create. They are receiving overtime pay and better protection of parental rights. Finally, they are entitled to improved vacation pay and the same number of paid personal days and sick days as other unionized CEGEP employees.

The unions' demands for the next collective agreement were submitted to the government at the end of October 2022. At this time, FNEEQ–CSN urges all francization teachers in Québec to come join the movement.

## TESTIMONIALS

### Having a union means you exist

**S**uzanna Martres has been a francization teacher for five years and her passion is contagious. Her eyes light up when she describes her profession. “Doing this job is a marvelous daily human adventure. Our class is a meeting place where we construct a shared story and try to offer newcomers an array of possibilities.”

There are indeed many possibilities in Québec, as long as one understands the society's codes. Suzanna says she offers her groups a wide-ranging set of activities. She sees herself as a sure companion who helps them discover, participate, open up to the host society and communicate. In class, the students learn French and converse. On outings, they meet Quebecers. They discover the culture and obtain tools that help them reduce the culture shock. For culture shock there is. Behind every journey to a new land, there is a different person, culture and language.

Suzanna's heart is warmed by the gratitude she feels from her students. But she sees a paradox: “It's somewhat contradictory that we get this recognition in the classroom but not from the government. Unfortunately, our work is not understood. They seem to think we're glorified camp counsellors. We are among newcomers' first points of reference in Québec society. But the government seems to overlook the psychological and adult education dimensions of the job.”

That's why Suzanna joined the union: to get recognition. The union is enabling her to improve her salary, reduce the precariousness of her employment from one session to the next, and obtain benefits such as more paid leave. In the long run, she believes, better working conditions will reduce the high turnover rate.



*Suzanna Martres, francization teacher at Cégep de Saint-Laurent and member of the Syndicat national du personnel de francization–CSN.*

# Environmental activism in the union movement

By Nova Doyon

FRENCH TEACHER AT CEGEP DE SAINT-LAURENT, MEMBER OF THE FNEEQ-CSN ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

In the fall of 2018, my eco-anxiety was echoed in the call to action issued by *La Planète s'invite au parlement*, a citizen's collective formed to denounce the egregious neglect of climate issues in the Québec election campaign. I channelled my feelings of powerlessness, indignation and anxiety about climate change into activism. Since then, I have been doing what I can to make the world a fairer and more environmentally friendly place, starting with my own workplace.

It was therefore natural for me to become involved in the union at my CEGEP. First I joined the environmental mobilization committee, which was exerting pressure for change where the institution's environment committee was only identifying the problems. Then I became a member of the union executive. Among other things, I wanted to make sure our local environmental demands were, if not accepted, at least discussed in the 2020 bargaining talks. Finally, I ran for the FNEEQ-CSN Environment Committee, hoping that the environment would become as important an issue as education for the Federation. Even though FNEEQ-CSN has clearly supported environmental activism since the big Global Climate Strike in 2019, we still need to tie together our labour demands and political demands so that the climate transition, which promotes social justice, becomes the lens through which the Federation makes decisions.

To help mobilize the rank and file, I joined the extra-union organization *Travailleuses et travailleurs pour une justice climatique (TJC)*, which was created in 2021 to help union members start a democratic conversation about climate issues in their workplaces. With the same goal, I became active on Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM-CSN) environment committee. In June, the CCMM convention passed ambitious motions to actively engage in eco-responsibility and eco-citizenship.



Climate march in Montréal, September 23, 2022

As we know, in the current environmental crisis, individual efforts are not enough. The trade union movement has the ability to bring social actors together around climate issues and to transform the workplace in the ways the climate emergency demands.

The quickest way to mobilize union members around environmental issues would be to take advantage of the renewal of collective agreements to embed the fight against climate change in our working conditions. As workers, we have opportunities to act on many fronts in our workplaces: health and safety, transportation, purchasing policies, energy, governance, etc. Using our collective agreements as tools for social transformation would certainly be the most concrete way to involve unions in the just energy transition. And our members would be proud to know they are doing their part to reducing our carbon footprint when they go to work.

# Coordinated bargaining in the private sector: Strength in unity

By Caroline Leblond  
COORDINATOR OF THE REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ



The idea of introducing coordinated bargaining at the Regroupement Privé had been simmering at FNEEQ–CSN and at some of the Regroupement’s unions for years. The disparities between some of the clauses in the collective agreements, even though all the teachers do the same work, was the most compelling argument in favour of the idea. Since most of the private sector unions represent teachers at the primary and secondary levels, coordinated bargaining is starting there. Given the interest among unions at the private colleges, they will be able to align the end dates of their collective agreements in the coming years in order to move to coordinated bargaining as well.

**A**fter several presentations at meetings of the Regroupement Privé and a meeting with the unions whose collective agreements were due to expire in June 2022, the project began with three unions. They met in June to agree on a bargaining protocol and a common list of demands. At their general assemblies, the Kells Academy Teachers’ Union, Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège Regina Assumpta and Syndicat des travailleuses et des travailleurs de Villa Maria voted unanimously for the coordinated bargaining arrangement.

The negotiating committees of the three unions met several times to work out their common demands. Their solidarity held fast and consensus was reached. Though conditions are quite different at the three schools, agreement was found on common points, particularly with regard to student services.

One of the nine demands involves recognition and compensation for managing individualized education plans. The number of IEPs is growing

year by year at all the schools, increasing teacher workloads, and there is no clause in the collective agreements governing IEPs. The unions also want to be consulted about any technological change that the school administrations might introduce that would affect their conditions of practice. For example, a distance education pilot project should never be conducted without the union’s agreement.

The three unions tabled their demands between October 24 and November 4. At the same time, the start of bargaining on FNEEQ–CSN’s demands was officially announced. This new way of bargaining is driven by a strong sense of solidarity among the three unions, which stand united in their fight for better conditions of practice in order to better serve their students.

The process of bringing in the unions whose collective agreements expire in June 2023 is under way. So far, five of the seven unions have received the necessary information to start discussing it.



American activist and politician Bernie Sanders addresses the Labor Notes conference.

PHOTO: JIMWESTPHOTO.COM

## Labor Notes: Putting the movement back in the labor movement

By Josée Déziel

MEMBER OF THE FNEEQ-CSN REGROUPEMENT CEGEP BARGAINING AND MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE

**Labor Notes, an American organization founded in the late 1970s to “put the movement back in the labor movement,” held its convention in Chicago from June 17 to 19, 2022.**

Labor Notes’ members promote unionization and advocate fighting unionism. They believe the necessary renewal of the union movement must come from the rank and file. They advocate an alternative to stagnant versions of unionism and criticize union organizations that refuse to look beyond the status quo on the grounds that the membership is supposedly too resigned and apathetic.

Labor Notes puts out publications, has a web presence, organizes workshops in the workplace and holds a biennial convention, which usually draws between 1,000 and 2,000 attendees. The 2022 edition attracted 4,000 activists from U.S. labour organizations and delegations from 24 other countries (including a sizable contingent from the CSN).

There was excitement in the air. The 2019 conference had been cancelled and then the pandemic raised American workers’ awareness of their own importance and their shabby working conditions. The labour shortage made them realize their power. As people who are essential, they carry a big stick and it is in their interest to use it! That is the experience that workers from workplaces hostile to labour shared at the conference.

There were nearly 200 workshops on organizing, union democracy, mobilizing and pressure tactics, bargaining, defending members, political action, etc. spread over three days. The diverse backgrounds of the attendees also contributed to the special atmosphere at the conference. There were of course a good number of unionized workers, many of them members of their union’s executive, but also grassroots workers, unionized or not, who want to renew their union or organize one, often in a hostile environment such as Starbucks or Amazon. All of them were there seeking tools, support and ideas.

Attending the Labor Notes convention at a time of revival in the U.S. labour movement was a stimulating experience. The struggles of unorganized workers (U.S. laws don’t make it easy!) are certainly inspiring.

One of Labor Notes’ defining characteristics is the way it makes resources readily accessible. Many of the conference activities were taped and are available online. Labor Notes also publishes many interesting books and holds very modestly priced monthly online workshops.

### MORE INFORMATION:

<https://www.facebook.com/labornotes>

<https://labornotes.org/>



*Christine Gauthier has been named a member of the CSFEF Bureau.*

## 18<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION UNIONS COMMITTEE

# International union solidarity in action in the French-speaking world

By **Benoît Lacoursière**  
GENERAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER OF FNEEQ-CSN

**The Comité syndical francophone de l'éducation et de la formation (Francophone education and training unions committee – CSFEF) held its 18th meeting in Hammamet, Tunisia from October 13 to 15. For the first time, the meeting was preceded by a women's caucus on October 12.**

**T**he CSFEF traditionally meets every two years, a few weeks before the Francophonie Summit. The 17th meeting was held online in 2021. This is the first in-person meeting since the 16th meeting in Paris in 2018.

A number of topics were discussed by the 50 delegates from Québec, Canada, Europe and Africa. FNEEQ-CSN vice-president Christine Gauthier and I were there to represent our Federation.

Despite the diversity of national circumstances, there are several common points among French-speaking education unions. When it comes to the conditions under which trade unions operate, there has been a decline in social dialogue and union rights throughout the French-speaking world, the pandemic having contributed to a turn towards more authoritarian management. In

some African countries, signed agreements are regularly flouted by the government. In the case of the education systems evaluation program (PASEC), for example, unions and even teachers are regularly excluded from local implementation. To which the unions say, "without us, it's against us."

Opinions on the shift to digital were divided. Many see it as a way to guarantee access to education, while others regard it as a threat to the teaching profession, and even to the very idea of the school (a school without a school, without teachers). Many said the use of digital platforms for union activity is useful, at least as a stopgap and to keep in touch.

There was a panel on education for girls in the Francophone world. Much remains to be done in many countries

to guarantee girls' education, especially in rural areas. For example, in Morocco, 53% of girls in rural areas do not earn a diploma, compared with 26% of boys. The most frequently cited causes are forced marriages and premature pregnancies (at age 13 or 14). Responses to the problem include closer ties between unions and feminist groups, more female teachers and school principals, and proactive action in early childhood and preschool.

The delegates adopted a [declaration to Francophonie heads of state and heads of government](#) and a 12-point action plan. We also elected the CSFEF Bureau. Three seats were added, including one for Québec, which will be occupied by Christine Gauthier.

# COCAL: International front to fight the casualization of university education

By Christine Gauthier  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF FNEEQ–CSN, AND RICARDO PEÑAFIEL,  
MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

**The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) met in Querétaro City, Mexico to discuss the situation of precarious teachers in our universities. Trade unionists from Mexico, the United States, Canada and Québec decided to broaden their missions in order to fight the growing precariousness of university teaching as a whole.**

**N**oting that the commodification of our universities, public underfunding and authoritarian governance are on the rise in the wake of the pandemic, COCAL decided to call on student associations and other higher education unions (representing tenured faculty, support staff, student workers; etc.) to organize an International Day for the Right to Free, Democratic, Egalitarian and Pluralistic Education.

## Intellectuals on the cliff's edge

As the workers who are on the front lines of the casualization of university teaching, contractual university instructors are in a good position to diagnose the problem as a whole. Keeping these highly qualified teachers dependant on sporadic assignments represents a loss for our entire society. They are on a “temporary visa” to academe—a stark image which, unfortunately, reflects a stark reality. Treated as “foreigners” in our own universities, lecturers and part-time profs are under constant threat of expulsion. Despite their qualifications, they must regularly beg for renewal of their access to and participation in our institutions of learning.

For precarious academics, these perennial contractual relationships mean permanent insecurity and the withering of their vocation. University administrations sometimes try to gloss it over by calling them “teaching professionals” but the union representatives stressed the hard fact that these are “intellectuals made precarious by the system.”



The widespread indignation reported by many springs from what can only be called an abusive and discriminatory system. It does not function to teach and produce knowledge but rather to generate profits on the backs of the most precarious teachers, thus deepening the inequalities between employment categories. This is a system that strips contract teachers of power in their work, their institutions and sometimes their lives. It is based on unacceptable working conditions that have become systematized throughout North America and the world.

## International movement to increase our power

To fight these appalling conditions—which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, during which unregulated distance education was introduced supposedly as a temporary emergency measure and is now being made permanent—hundreds of union activists representing millions of members across North America undertook to focus COCAL’s actions in the coming years on organizing an international strike day or mobilization day against the casualization of university teaching.

FNEEQ–CSN is very involved in this process. We presented the *Pieuvre de l'économie du Savoir* (knowledge economy octopus) from the États généraux de l'enseignement supérieur (ÉGES) as an example of a broad mobilization that engaged all education stakeholders in a process of co-creation of knowledge leading to action.

The octopus has now been translated into English and Spanish and is set to travel across the Americas, from Nunavut to Tierra del Fuego, as COCAL-Mexico is proposing to extend the movement to its South American partners.

# FNEEQ–CSN at the 87<sup>th</sup> convention of the American Federation of Teachers

By Yves de Repentigny and Léandre Lapointe  
FNEEQ-CSN VICE-PRESIDENTS

Yves de Repentigny and Léandre Lapointe, FNEEQ–CSN vice-presidents for the CEGEP and private sectors respectively, were among 50 international guests from 15 countries at the 87<sup>th</sup> convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which represents 1.7 million workers in the education (early childhood to university), health care and public service sectors. 3,000 delegates attended the convention, held under the theme “Reclaiming Our Future,” at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center from July 14 to 17.

**T**he meeting kicked off with a pre-recorded message from none other than Joe Biden. Over the subsequent four days, delegates heard speeches from distinguished guests including First Lady Jill Biden, U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu. They adopted a number of important

recommendations on matters including public funding for community schools, lifelong learning, a detailed report on staff shortages in education, attraction and retention challenges in health care, inadequate wages in a number of job categories (below the poverty line), the environment, abortion rights, violence in schools, and the situation in Ukraine. There was a stirring moment of solidarity with the guest from the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine.

FNEEQ–CSN’s presence at this major gathering gave us a chance to forge or strengthen ties with colleagues in the U.S. and around the world. We saw how teachers the world over are facing the same problems. It is important for the unions that represent them to continue talking to each other and supporting each other.



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# Women activists in the time of COVID: Mental load takes its toll

By Christine Gauthier  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF FNEEQ-CSN

By Caroline Leblond  
COORDINATOR OF FNEEQ-CSN'S REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ

**The work of the women activists and teachers who held the fort during the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the isolation, loss of networks and uncertain work situation, needs to be underscored. The following is a brief account of the first of two women's meetings that took a closer look at the experiences of these women.**

**T**he FNEEQ-CSN Women's Committee wanted to investigate the impact on women activists and teachers of the emergency situation created by the public health crisis. We did it with the help of Amélie Châteauneuf, author of the essay "Si nous sommes égaux, je suis la fée des dents" (if we are equal, then I'm the tooth fairy). We thank her for her support and for the humanity she brought to the role.

## Traditional roles are back

More than two years after the outbreak of the pandemic, many women teacher/activists testified to the appalling decline in their living conditions and emancipation as women. It is as if the decades-long efforts to break out of traditional socially determined gender roles and all the gains made had been wiped away by the virus. Not completely, to be sure, but enough to be able to say that Simone de Beauvoir was right: every social crisis is a threat to women's rights.

Confined indefinitely to their homes to run their personal and professional lives there simultaneously, women bore the brunt of the collision between two worlds. The imperatives created by the crisis—such as the closing of schools and daycares—and the division of labour in the home made some women wonder whether they had accepted the unacceptable. They felt a mix of frustration and powerlessness.

## Supporting others while in pain

These women were often also mothers or caregivers who took the lead in supporting their children and parents. In their roles as activists and teachers, they were particularly attentive to the psychological health of their co-workers and supported students in distress. So they were carers in every sphere of their lives. And while caring for others, they had to manage

their own emotional load and try to maintain meaningful activities at work and at home to keep up their morale.

This across-the-board support was draining. Women had to support without being supported, while locked down and deprived of the meaningful personal spaces that gave them energy and their lives meaning. It was taken for granted that they would. The lack of recognition from the government and from society of their role during the pandemic added to the sting. In the midst of the chaos, did they really need to assert, in the public arena, the importance of their role?

## Costly survival strategies

Faced with a heavier workload as teachers and as union activists, many women said they had to give things up: plans to study, plans to publish, activist spaces. These sacrifices were perceived as necessary under the new conditions spawned by the pandemic, but nevertheless they limited the scope of their possibilities and ran counter to their emancipatory goals.

This refocus on the roles of mother, spouse and natural caregiver is cause for concern. It can have lasting impacts on women's journeys. We must remain vigilant in the coming years to make sure the pandemic does not leave a permanent rent in the social fabric and set back the place of women in our society.

By Yves de Repentigny

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT CEGEP



**A**t the Regroupement CEGEP, the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year was dominated by preparations for the upcoming round of bargaining in the public and parapublic sectors. Although the current FNEEQ–CSN collective agreement for teachers at public colleges was signed on

March 1, 2022, it expires on April 1, 2023. Under the law, we had to submit our demands to our counterparts by the end of October.

At the sectoral table (which deals with working conditions specific to the job category), CEGEP teachers affiliated with our Federation have joined forces with our colleagues in the Fédération de l'enseignement collégial (FEC-CSQ) and formed the Alliance des syndicats de professeures et professeurs de cégep (ASPPC), which held its first meeting on August 19. It then brought an initial list of demands, framed as a set of general principles, to a round of general assemblies at its member unions, which wound up on September 30. More specific demands will be formulated at the beginning of next year. The initial demands are organized into six main themes: precariousness and professional integration; workload, resources and student success; distance education, continuing education and the survival of the CEGEP model; collegiality, teaching expertise and program vitality; organization and labour relations; and salary scale and other pay issues. The demands were adopted by the Alliance at its October 13 meeting and submitted to the Comité patronal de négociation des collèges (CPNC) on October 21.

At the central table (where matters common to all job categories, such as salaries, the pension plan, parental rights and regional disparities, are discussed), FNEEQ–CSN and the other three CSN federations representing public employees (Fédération des employées et employés de services publics, Fédération des professionnelles, and Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux) initially formed an alliance among themselves and set up a coordinating committee, the Comité de coordination des secteurs public et parapublic (CCSP). Then, in the spring, the CSN formed a Common Front with the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ). At the end of September, the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux (APTS) joined

on. The Common Front's demands were discussed at general assemblies into the early days of fall and submitted to Treasury Board on October 28.

In these inflationary times, the key demand is an automatic cost-of-living salary adjustment plus a \$100 per week raise (a nod to the \$100 per week wage demanded by the 1972 Common Front) or the above-mentioned indexing plus 2% in 2023, 3% in 2024 and 4% in 2025, whichever is more advantageous to the worker.

The work on renewing the collective agreement is quite time-consuming but nevertheless the Regroupement CEGEP is not neglecting issues such as the replacement of the Accounting & Management Technology, Office System Technology and Business Management programs by a single program, the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec's attacks on the CEGEP program in nursing as a qualification for the profession, the spread of distance education and the impact of Bill 96 on working conditions at the English colleges.

By Christine Gauthier

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT UNIVERSITÉ



The unions in FNEEQ-CSN's Regroupement Université will be watching the attitude of the new Minister of Higher Education, Pascale Déry, particularly when it comes to the challenge of better integrating contractual teachers into the university of the future and the

projects that were already under way on this score. The Perspectives Scholarships, which came into effect in the fall of 2022, are likely to affect enrolment in some university programs. We will monitor the vitality of the programs not targeted by these scholarships (such as arts and humanities) to see they are maintained and the university's mission is preserved in full.

We are asking for regular contact with the Minister to find solutions to the host of problems (e.g. funding, psychological health, governance) and to have input into determining the thrust of the Ministry's policies.

### Issues on our radar: declining enrolment, review of university funding

We will keep a close watch on university enrolment in this time of labour shortages. Newly released data for 2022, which shows a 2.5% drop in undergraduate enrolment, is cause for concern ([Le Devoir, October 14, 2022](#)). This situation will have to be closely monitored, given the importance of university graduation rates for our society's future.

This decline is all the more troubling because university funding is based on full-time-equivalent student enrolment. The increased accountability for universities will also need to be addressed, as a new budget rule effective fall 2023 will force them to report pass/fail/withdrawal information for students in credited learning activities.

Finally, we are concerned that the government has indicated it intends to review university funding policy. It may want to emulate Ontario, where "the funding formula is based on market indicators and various performance measures" (Bouchard-St-Amand, 2022). The unions in the Regroupement Université are preparing their arguments and gearing up to mobilize against any model that would undermine the stability of funding or promote the subordination of universities to the labour market.

### Academic Freedom Act: What's next?

The adoption of Bill 32 on academic freedom in the university sector in June was good news. It requires each university to have a policy dealing specifically with academic freedom and to create a committee representative of the university community to monitor its application and handle complaints. This should strengthen collegiality and limit the discretion of administrators. The unions will be involved in the consultation process and make sure that lecturers, part-timers and tutors are represented on all committees.

By Léandre Lapointe

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE REGROUPEMENT PRIVÉ



**W**e were pleased to welcome the 44<sup>th</sup> union to the Regroupement Privé: the Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses ILSC–CSN, composed of 43 teachers. ILSC is a language school that teaches French and English at its three Canadian campuses (in Vancouver, Toronto and

Montréal). On September 10, the union's founding general assembly adopted its constitution and by-laws and elected the first executive committee. The next major step will be negotiating the union's first collective agreement. Welcome to FNEEQ-CSN!

### Agreements in principle adopted

The last few months have been hectic at the Regroupement Privé. Four unions ratified agreements in principle at their general assemblies and were able to wrap up complex negotiations as we emerge from the pandemic: the Syndicat des professeurs du Collège François-de-Laval, the Association des professeurs du Collège Stanislas, the Centennial Academy Faculty Association and the Syndicat de l'enseignement de Saint-Jean-Eudes. All four won significant improvements to their working conditions. Teachers at Centennial Academy, who were signing their first collective agreement with FNEEQ-CSN, will finally be paid on the public sector salary scale. Congratulations to all the members of the negotiating committees and a big thank you to all the union advisors involved!

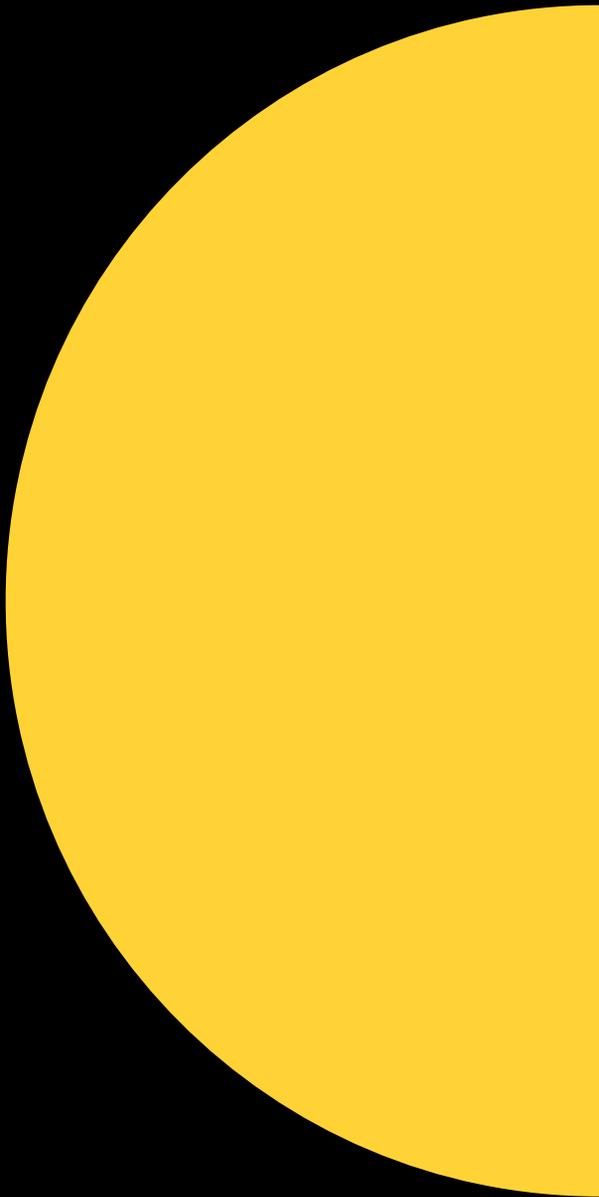
### Coordinated bargaining

At the time of writing, the unions in the Regroupement Privé are about to start tabling their initial coordinated bargaining demands. The Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Collège Regina Assumpta, the Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de Villa Maria and the Kells Academy Teachers' Union will jointly negotiate improvements to working conditions common to all the members participating in coordinated bargaining. So issues such as applying individualized education plans, technological change, distance education, parental rights and so forth will be addressed with a view to arriving at a settlement that is satisfactory to all.

### New Québec culture and citizenship program

In winter 2019, the Québec Ministry of Education launched a review of the ethics and religious culture program. FNEEQ–CSN submitted a brief and participated in the Ministry's first consultations. Then the pandemic pushed the program review out of sight and the process became opaque until the new Québec culture and citizenship program was unveiled.

As we approach the program's implementation in September 2023, the Regroupement Privé is alarmed and is calling on the Ministry to change course. At this point, the program is not completely written. Almost a quarter of the content has yet to be defined. For sex ed, the material to be covered and the allotted time have not been established. No real teacher training will be provided until spring 2023 and the publishers won't be able to offer teaching materials for two years. In this situation, FNEEQ-CSN's Regroupement Privé is calling for the program to be phased in starting in the 2024 school year.



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