



Situation Analysis

Collective Bargaining 2015



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By the Bargaining and Mobilization Committee



Contents

Introduction.....	3
I- Social and political context.....	3
2012 student strike	3
Liberals' return to power.....	4
Next Liberal budget.....	4
Flaherty Budget	4
Current discourse on trade unionism	5
Summit on Higher Education and creation of MESRST	6
Symposium on the development of CEGEPs in the regions.....	6
II- State of the situation in the college sector.....	7
Continuing education and the recognition of acquired competencies	7
Status report from the task force on CEGEP training.....	8
The calling into question of CEGEP study programs.....	8
Students with disabilities	9
Workload and resources	10
Job precarity.....	11
Reconciliation of family-work-training.....	11
College research	12
The CEEC and quality assurance	12
Occupational health and safety	13
Hiring outlook.....	14
Salary relativity and the master's-doctoral echelons	14
III- Elements of a strategic framework.....	14
CPNC sectoral issues.....	15
Bargaining results and timetable	15
Alliances	16
Communications plan.....	16
IV- Mobilization outlook	17
Conclusion.....	18
V- Glossary of acronyms used in this document.....	19

Introduction

In this lead-up to the next round of public sector negotiations, we will soon be relaunching the exercise to define our objectives by drafting our list of sectoral demands. We will once again have the task of demonstrating that better working conditions for us means better rights and access to quality education for all Quebecers, as much for young students as for adults in continuing education. We will also need to choose the means by which we hope to achieve these objectives. To that end, an analysis of the prevailing social and political situation and of various recent developments in higher education is important in helping us identify the main issues and challenges. This exercise will also allow us to properly orient our strategy for putting forth our demands and having them reflected in our next collective agreement. Four main areas of focus will therefore be examined in this analysis: the current social and political context, state of the situation in college education, strategic framework and mobilization outlook.

I- Social and political context

2012 student strike

If we look back at the social and political situation in Quebec with regard to education, there is no question that the 2012 student strike stands out as a pivotal and defining event. A veritable *tour de force*, the student movement catapulted education to the front lines of Quebec politics through unprecedented mobilization. Indeed, this student strike succeeded in rallying tens and in some cases hundreds of thousands of people to the cause, its duration breaking every record as it morphed into a wider movement of social discontent. It was also the first large-scale social movement in the province to make such extensive use of social media. This facilitated the organization of numerous mass events, including night-time demonstrations, naked protests, pot-banging marches, and so on. Social media became the venue for debate and brought like-minded people together in groups like Teachers Against the Hike and Angry Mothers in Solidarity.

With the recent return to power of a Liberal majority government, we cannot help but be reminded of the resistance and intractability of the Charest administration's handling of the student crisis: excessive use of police force, mass arrests and prosecutions, the enactment of a special law and, ultimately, the suspension by government of the CEGEP and university semester until the following fall. These actions laid bare the Charest government's contempt for a democratic movement it justified quashing by associating it with "violence and intimidation."

The special law adopted May 18, 2012, also contained a number of clauses restricting the right to demonstrate. Despite its repressive measures, this legislation was openly defied, including in pots-and-pans protests that, although in direct violation of the law, were not disbanded by police.

The Charest government called an election on August 1, 2012, in a bid to put an end to the student crisis. On September 4, Quebecers elected a minority Parti Québécois government, representing somewhat of a victory for the student movement. Although its initial demand wasn't met—namely a complete freeze of tuition fees—the 75% hike over five years planned by the former government became, instead, an annual increase of about 3%. Whatever part the student strike may have played in bringing about the resignation of a minister, an early election call in 2012 and the defeat of the Liberal government, the solid return to power of the party on April 7, 2014, a mere 18 months later, is cause for concern for the upcoming round of negotiations.

Liberalists' return to power

Up until April 7, the Parti Québécois formed a minority government, with the QLP and CAQ—two right-of-centre parties—holding the balance of power. The election held that date resulted in the election of a Liberal majority government, which took 70 of the 125 available seats, leaving it with substantial room to manoeuvre.

It is difficult to predict the effect this situation is going to have on education, particularly as there was virtually no talk of the issue during the election campaign. What we do know, however, is that Premier Philippe Couillard's decision to entrust responsibility for both MELS and MESRST (are they now merged into one department?) to a single minister with no experience in education, namely Yves Bolduc, does not bode very well. Similarly, the decision to leave research in the hands of this super-department while making the Ministry of Economic Development responsible for technological innovation—as the Harper government has also done—is somewhat troubling. There is reason to fear that the issues affecting CEGEPs and universities may not be a priority for the new government, especially in light of the premier's campaign promise of \$1.3 billion in cuts to Quebec's bureaucracy over two years.¹ The Liberal Party's electoral platform contained a number of other disconcerting elements concerning education, including easing the entry requirements [and bureaucracy] for training programs leading to a diploma of professional studies (DEP), attestation of college studies (AEC) and diploma of college studies (DEC), and drawing inspiration from the German model by introducing professional training programs in which students spend two-thirds of their time in a company setting. These proposals reflect a vision of an education system dictated by market requirements, which runs completely counter to the one held and advocated by FNEEQ.

Next Liberal budget

On February 20, 2014, two weeks before the election call, Finance Minister Nicolas Marceau tabled an electoral budget that did not have the chance to be debated in the house. Will the new Liberal government take a page from this austerity budget, which provided for a \$1.75 billion deficit for 2014-2015 before achieving a balanced budget in 2015? The PQ budget also limited the increase in health care and education spending to 3% a year—considerably lower than needed to meet these systems' requirements—which would have meant major cuts to operating budgets and specific projects, notably in the CEGEP sector.

Flaherty Budget

Turning to Stephen Harper's Conservative government, the budget presented by Minister Flaherty on February 11, 2014, also an "austerity" budget, could end up having an influence on CEGEPs—even though education is not a federal jurisdiction—due to two specific measures.

The first is the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, a measure in which the government intends to invest \$1.5 billion over the next decade "to help Canadian post-secondary institutions excel globally in research areas that create long-term economic advantages for Canada."² As CEGEPs are post-secondary institutions, it is fair to assume a portion of this funding will go to research at the college level.

¹ La Presse canadienne, "Services publics – Coupes : les syndicats veilleront au grain," *Le Devoir*, April 10, 2014.

² Finance Canada, *Budget 2014 (The Road to Balance: Creating Jobs and Opportunities)*, p. 8.

The second measure likely to affect CEGEPs is the Canada Job Grant, which “will encourage greater employer participation in skills training decisions and ensure that training is better aligned with job opportunities.”³ This program applies to all provinces except Quebec, which, after agreement, chose to opt out of the program while still receiving \$116 million per year until 2020 to pursue its own professional training program furthering the federal government’s objectives and involving private enterprise.⁴

The Flaherty Budget also announces investments to help connect people with developmental difficulties with jobs (\$5 million) and allow post-secondary graduates to get internships in small and medium-sized enterprises (\$35 million). These measures could have a direct and indirect impact on CEGEPs.

Current discourse on trade unionism

The provincial and federal governments’ austerity measures find support in the at-times virulent anti-union rhetoric propagated by certain columnists and polemicists and backed and financed by employers.⁵ These measures also feed the discourse some media commentators, notably on “garbage radio”, like to spread by attacking the legitimacy of labour unions, portraying them as enemies of the middle class and reactionary lobbyists there only to serve the interests of a marginal group of privileged wage earners. Nothing could be further from the truth: from the very outset, labour unions have been fighting for social progress and many of the gains they have achieved, first for union members, have since been extended to all workers, as in the case of minimum wage and access to parental leave.

We also hear echoes of this anti-union propaganda coming from the political class. On March 11, for example, in the early days of the election campaign, CAQ leader François Legault proposed measures that would have had the effect of restricting access to unionization and to social and political union activism, all in the name of so-called “modernization.” This is a carbon copy of the kind of anti-union attack the Harper government has been waging with its bills C-4 (restricting the right to strike), C-377 (requiring the disclosure of all spending of \$5,000 or more) and C-525 (requiring a secret-ballot vote for union certification). We also learned at the start of the election campaign that the PQ had pulled its promise to review anti-scab laws from its electoral platform only days before announcing the arrival of a new star candidate, Pierre Karl Péladeau, otherwise known as the “king” of lockouts.

The same anti-union posturing is present in municipal circles, namely in Québec City where Mayor Régis Labeaume has made it his trademark to pit the interests of taxpayers against those of unionized workers, ignoring the very fact that these workers, themselves, are also taxpayers. One of the key planks in his fall 2013 election campaign was to cut city employee pension benefits.

Despite all of this, a recent Harris-Decima public opinion poll commissioned by the Canadian Association of University Teachers⁶ found that a majority of respondents, Canadians and Quebecers alike, believe unions are still needed today and play a positive role in society, which they help make more fair and just. Most respondents also said they are suspicious of politicians who try to limit the power of unions, and a full two-thirds said they support the Rand formula.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 66

⁴ Radio-Canada, “Formation de la main-d’oeuvre: Québec obtient “son” entente avec Ottawa.” [Online]. <http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/Politique/2014/03/04/010-ottawa-quebec-formation-main-doeuvre-entente.shtml> (page viewed March 12, 2014)

⁵ See such websites as *Labourwatch* and *Infotravail*.

⁶ CAUT, “Poll results show majority of Canadians hold favourable view of unions.” In CAUT Bulletin [Online] at https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?articleid=3754 (page viewed March 29, 2014)

In this context, it seems more important than ever that strong ties of solidarity be forged not only with other union organizations, but also with civil society groups. To counter this right-wing alignment at all three political levels—municipal, provincial and federal—greater member mobilization and inter-organizational cohesion is essential.

Summit on Higher Education and creation of MESRST

For CEGEP teachers, these alliances and conflicts are going to crystallize around education, and particularly around higher education. After its election, the former PQ government opted to set up two separate departments in the sector, one for Education and the other for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology. The creation of this new ministry was well received by the college community, particularly as it was seen as clear confirmation that pre-university and technical training is an integral part of higher education by virtue of the complexity of the skills and knowledge it imparts. We will find out shortly if the new government intends to keep these two departments distinct or merge them into one. To us, it seems evident they should be kept separate.

The Marois government also held a Summit on Higher Education in Montréal on February 25 and 26, 2014. To prepare for the event, four thematic meetings were organized in various regions of Quebec. Of these, three were of particular interest to the college sector: the quality of higher education, access to and participation in higher education, and the contribution of institutions and research and development of Quebec as a whole. The fourth meeting, on university governance and financing, was of no direct consequence to the college sector.

The summit concluded with the government setting up five task forces⁷ on the future of higher education, only one of which concerns college teaching and has to do with the education offering. The task force is to table its final report in June 2014, although an interim status report⁸ was already released in December 2013. Produced by Guy Demers, the task force chair and a former director-general of Lévis-Lauzon CEGEP, this status report raises a number of issues that will be addressed later in this analysis.

Symposium on the development of CEGEPs in the regions

Another important event that brought together a large number of stakeholders from the college sector was the symposium held on the theme of “Quebec, equipped with a strong college system in all regions.” Concerned about projected demographic declines and the need to ensure a diversified program offering in regions far removed from major urban centres, FNEEQ took the initiative to organize this symposium in Jonquière in April 2013, with the collaboration of FEC and the *Fédération des cégeps*.

The event helped bring to light a number of important findings about training programs in regular education, continuing education, student mobility and funding. Among other things, problems were noted with the program optimization plan, which calls for the creation of generic programs of questionable relevance and efficacy, leading FNEEQ to conclude the need for province-wide management of the CEGEP program roadmap. Also identified was the need to curb competition with the private college system, as was seen with Jonquière’s Media Arts and Technology program. The symposium highlighted a number of other elements requiring in-depth reflection to avoid further erosion of the college system, particularly in the regions: the criteria governing the establishment of college study centres, competition

⁷ The five task forces are: legislation regarding universities, the Council on Universities, CEGEP training, university funding, and student financial aid.

⁸ The CSN, FNEEQ and FEESP contributed to the work of this task force by submitting a brief in September 2013.

between regular and continuing education, and competition between high-school vocational training and college technical programs.

One of proposed solutions, garnering the support of both the *Fédération des cégeps* and FNEEQ, is that the enrolment-based funding formula be the same in continuing education as in regular education. This idea is consistent with FNEEQ's long-held position that continuing education should be integrated into regular education. Moreover, FNEEQ believes that the viability and diversity of the college network, both in regular and continuing education, can only be preserved through a modification of the funding formula that fully reflects the actual work performed.

II- State of the situation in the college sector

The Jonquière symposium identified continuing education as one of the potential levers to further the development of CEGEPs in the regions. Continuing education was also the subject of considerable analysis by the national meeting committee (CNR).

Continuing education and the recognition of acquired competencies

The report on continuing education released by the CNR last February shows wide disparity from one institution to the next in the recognition of acquired competencies (RAC) when it comes to the work of course lecturers in continuing education and to that of regular teaching staff. The committee's research, an extension of the work that led to the 2008 Parity Committee report entitled *Teaching at the College Level...Profile of the Profession*, clearly reveals that although the tasks performed by course lecturers in continuing education are virtually identical to those carried out by regular education teachers, course lecturers are neither fully recognized nor fully compensated for these duties. Indeed, a large number of course lecturers take part in training needs assessment and program development, are involved in program teams and program committees, and engage in pedagogical and skills development activities. It is true that, due to the absence of departments and program committees in continuing education, there are fewer coordination activities than in regular education stream. But course lecturers also provide student support outside of class time and often have to make up for the lack of available evening services by taking on additional responsibilities, such as when no lab technician is present or a special-needs student requires assistance. Where these activities are even paid at all, the compensation varies wildly from one institution to the next. Lastly, the committee found that more than half of all course lecturers in continuing education also teach in the regular education system.

With respect to the recognition of acquired competencies, it is also urgent that the role of teachers as content specialists be clarified, as this role is sometimes played by professionals or individuals from the labour market seen as experts in their field. As FNEEQ clearly states in its report, "only teachers have the authority to act as content specialists because they are the only ones specialized in teaching their discipline."⁹ This situation goes to the very heart of the recognition of our profession and therefore merits serious attention in the upcoming bargaining talks.

Plainly, lecturing teachers in continuing education are victims of unfair treatment and have been forced into a situation of job precarity that must be rectified.

⁹ Comité national de rencontre, *Rapport sur la formation continue*, February 2014, p.118

Status report from the task force on CEGEP training

The status report from the task force on CEGEP training, otherwise known as the Demers Report, also raises a number of important questions about the state of the situation in college education. It takes particular interest in the effect the projected decline in the student population will have on the future of CEGEPs in the regions, favouring diversified education that responds to students' abilities and interests while taking economic needs and requirements into account. The report also recommends a minimum educational curriculum for each college in order to satisfy the diversity of fields of interest and stresses the importance of maintaining programs with flagging recruitment when these areas represent a need in the labour market. Overall, FNEEQ is in agreement with these recommendations but insists that the decision to open and close study programs must not be made solely on the basis of short-term economic cycles.

Despite the joint brief submitted by the CSN, FNEEQ and FEESP recommending a stock-taking exercise on distance education and urging the government to proceed cautiously on the matter, the Demers Report proposes the “deployment of distance training throughout the CEGEP system for basic and continuing education.”¹⁰ If the department were to follow through with the report's recommendation, distance education could very quickly have a major impact on our job conditions, especially as the report further suggests that a mandate be given for the next collective agreement negotiation with teachers to “facilitate the deployment of the various modes of distance education [...]”.¹¹ Moreover, Guy Demers proposes that CEGEPs develop a “culture of collaboration” and urges more flexibility in working conditions to achieve that. Such a vision makes us fear an underlying desire to fragment the teaching workload and limit professional autonomy.

The final report, expected out in June 2104, will deal with such issues as the optimization of continuing education, regional niche sectors and the educational offering in the regions. It will also propose modifications to legislation, rules and the college budgetary system and examine the impact some of these recommendations could have on the working conditions of salaried employees working in the CEGEP network.

The calling into question of CEGEP study programs

The search for solutions to ensure the viability of the college system is made all the more relevant by the fact that certain college study programs have been called into question in recent years. One of the reasons for this is that the Quebec college system is the only one in Canada, if not in the world, where all training programs between high school and university, whether technical or pre-university, come under higher education. Because of this, technical diplomas from the province are often compared to their secondary or university equivalents elsewhere in the world.

In countries inspired by the Anglo-Saxon “K-12”—kindergarten to grade twelve—model of schooling, the standard practice is one year of kindergarten followed by 12 years of pre-university education, general and professional, with the term “college” usually referring to a private elementary or secondary school. A poor understanding of the Quebec education system, coupled with the increasing globalization of markets, including the labour market, are largely responsible for the lack of recognition of CEGEP training programs. When complex competencies and knowledge are to be acquired, comparable training

¹⁰ Guy Demers, *Rapport d'étape du chantier sur l'offre de formation collégiale*, January 2014, p.76. (our traduction)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77 (our traduction)

programs in the rest of the world are given at the university level. This is one of the main arguments the Quebec Order of Nurses (OIIQ) has been advancing since 2012 to justify its demand that a university bachelor's degree be required to qualify for entry into the nursing profession. When the interdepartmental (MSSS-MESRST) committee wrapped up its work in December 2013, the ministers decided to move forward with a sectoral analysis¹² to determine the functions that relate to each job title as well as the appropriate level of education needed for each. This sectoral analysis must involve both MELS and MESRST because the various job titles under review require education at either the secondary, college or university levels, depending on the skills and knowledge needed for the position.

The challenge waged against certain college study programs is also the result of lobbying by some employer groups seeking to cut labour costs. While on the one hand they acknowledge the complexity of the skills and knowledge acquired by graduates of CEGEP technical programs, on the other they are advocating for greater recognition of the competencies acquired by high school technical graduates, supervised by technical or university graduates. This is the case with the Ocular Prosthesis Technology program, for example.

A similar situation is affecting college graduates with a technical diploma in Early Childhood Education. As outlined in the joint brief to the task force on CEGEP training, if graduates of these programs wish to work in a school daycare centre, they are required to obtain a high-school level attestation of professional studies (AEP), even though their college diploma qualifies them to actually teach these AEP courses themselves!

What role will CEGEP teachers play in these eventual sectoral studies? Could the establishment of a provincial committee for each technical program, including in contributive disciplines, serve as a safeguard against the devaluing of technical programs? Would a better solution be to implement a council similar to the one planned for universities in the college sector? These are some of the many elements that must fuel our reflection.

Students with disabilities

One of the most frequently voiced concerns during the bargaining committee's union tour was, without question, the impact of the rising students with disabilities (SWD) population, formerly referred to as special-needs students, on teacher workload. This is hardly surprising, given that the number of SWDs in the CEGEP system has grown considerably in recent years. According to data presented by MESRST to the Summit on Higher Education, from 2007 to 2011 their number jumped 285%—from 1,542 to 5,942— or 0.9% of the college student population in 2007 to 3% in 2011. As acknowledged by the CNR (April 2013), the increase in SWDs has had a major impact on the workload of teachers; SOCRATE¹³ identified 7,500 such students in the college system in fall 2012, up 385% over 2007.

Providing access to education for all SWDs who meet the admission criteria is not all it takes to adequately meet the needs and rights of these students. The right to education also means the right of every student to benefit from the kind of support that allows them to develop skills and knowledge to the fullest of their potential, without lowering the educational requirements. Schools must be able to offer

¹² Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, *Rapport du président du groupe de travail sur la formation de la relève infirmière* (December 2013). [Online]. <http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/acrobat/ff/documentation/2013/13-945-01W.pdf> (Page viewed March 30, 2014)

¹³ SOCRATE is the CEGEP student database management system.

adequate services to SWDs and have the legal obligation to adapt these services to user needs.¹⁴ This must also translate to the classroom and be recognized in the teacher workload.

The impact of SWDs on workload

The national meeting committee reviewed the question of SWDs in its report entitled *La présence de la population étudiante ayant des besoins particuliers et son impact sur la charge d'enseignement* (April 2013). Based on a survey of 748 CEGEP teachers, the report identified four aspects of the teaching workload on which the presence of SWDs can have an impact: the planning and organization of pedagogical activities, in-class teaching and support, support outside the classroom and the evaluation of work and exams. While the impacts on workload appear relatively limited when it comes to course planning, the organization of pedagogical activities and in-class teaching and support, they are considerably higher in the case of support outside the classroom and of evaluations. The report also looked at the effects on workload in relation to the number and nature of the SWDs' functional limitations, concluding that the higher the number of functional limitations in the group, the greater the impact on workload. Moreover, the nature of the limitations is a variable that can significantly increase the workload for teachers.

Many accommodations must also be made by teachers outside the classroom. Consider, for example, the pre-correction of work, special dispensations for frequent short-term absences due to disability, the modification of documents or their method of presentation, and the drafting of course notes. The essential part that teachers play in implementing these accommodations and the impact this can have on their workload need to be recognized. Other situations that may be stressful or require frequent intervention in class due to particular student behaviours must also be taken into account when assessing the impacts on workload.

While the organization of integration and support from service centres for disabled students is of obvious importance, to assume that these centres alone can be responsible for integration ignores the fundamental role that teachers play in student success. In-class teaching activities, support and supervision, the teacher-student relationship and peer relations are all key factors of success. Action must be taken both outside the classroom, through adapted services, as well as in it, through the teacher.

The upcoming negotiations are an opportunity for us to put forth solutions that will allow this growing reality to be taken into account in teacher workloads, not only for the sake of our own professional recognition but also in the name of the right of all to have access to quality public services, notably in education.

Workload and resources

The comments gathered from general assembly members during the bargaining committee tour echoed other long-standing concerns of FNEEQ: the heavy burden of correcting and grading work in some disciplines and the challenge of course preparation in fields of rapidly-evolving knowledge. Also raised was the increased time spent managing emails, particularly those from students.

It is important to note that a significant gain was made in the last round of bargaining talks with the addition, over five years, of 430 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to teaching, 403 of them to type 1 of the

¹⁴ This obligation is limited by the notion of excessive constraint, which, under the meaning of the law, occurs when all reasonable means of accommodation have been exhausted and the only remaining accommodation options are deemed unreasonable or unrealistic.

workload. Nearly half of the new resources, or 203 FTEs, were allocated for student support and supervision. Of these 203 FTEs, 87 are to be distributed across the colleges beginning in 2014-2015. What's more, the eligibility criteria under Budget Schedule S-026 (Consolidation of the education offering) for programs with small cohorts have been improved, bringing an additional 55 FTEs for type 1. The work of the advisory committee on teaching workloads also made it possible to distribute 51 FTEs to offset, in part, the overload associated with clinical teaching in Nursing. Lastly, 94 FTEs were added for course preparation, notably in Music. Other topics frequently raised in the general assemblies included the lack of resources for the coordination of internships and for necessary travel, with some members calling for the recalculation and increase of the fixed resources in Appendix I-2 to reflect the numerous changes that have taken place since these resources were established in 1988.

The main issues regarding teaching resources for the next round of negotiations therefore centre on the growing number of students with disabilities in colleges, the heavy demands of work correction and course preparation, and the proliferation of internships in the CEGEP system. On top of these is the need to put measures in place to prevent the teaching load from becoming even heavier in the years to come. To that end, FNEEQ's long-standing demand that the allocation of teaching resources be tied to the amount of work to be performed is more pressing than ever. The system of allocating teaching resources on the basis of program-slopes, as is currently the case, must be changed.

With respect to workload and resources, the application of the present collective agreement has also clearly shown a lack of transparency in the submission of the allocation plan and report on resource use that must be rectified.

Job precarity

While improving the job conditions of contingent teachers is connected with obtaining additional resources for teaching—in that more resources will mean the creation of more permanent positions—job precarity is an issue that merits separate treatment. In the upcoming bargaining talks, securing better working conditions for those with the greatest precarity—namely course lecturers in continuing education—will therefore be one of our priorities. That's not to say that contingent teachers in regular education, who account for about 40% of the teaching staff in the stream and have for at least the last decade and a half, are not faced with important problems of their own. What can be done to stabilize the jobs of contract teachers who have more than five years' seniority and whose workload will never reach full-time status? Can we improve their access to the various leaves? Can we clarify the moment from which a teacher is under contract with the college? These are a few of the many questions we will need to debate in drawing up our list of demands.

Reconciliation of family-work-training

How much priority will we assign to the family-work-training balance in our upcoming list of demands? In the previous negotiations, at the central bargaining table we secured an improvement in leaves of absence for family reasons: 10 days of leave per year to care for the health of a child or a close family member, and up to two years of unpaid leave if the illness is serious and potentially fatal. Is there a way to further require colleges to grant schedule accommodations or part-time leave to parents with young or disabled children? Can the same be extended to an employee caring for a sick loved one or continuing their studies? In addition to the leave granted to pursue a master's degree, could we also have access to leave to obtain a doctorate?

College research

Another issue that emerged from the general assembly tour was the hope that research be given a greater role in colleges in the coming years. This aspect of our job, the central theme of the *Fédération des cégeps*' 2012 convention, is one of the defining elements of higher education. Research has the effect of stimulating the college community while diversifying the teacher workload. Whether didactic, basic or applied, research helps fuel skills development among the teaching body. Given that education is the primary mission of CEGEPs, maintaining close ties between teaching and research, particularly in the case of college technology transfer centres (CCTT), is essential to ensure that any research conducted fully benefits the CEGEPs, their departments and their students. This cannot be done without a willingness to harmonize the grants and leaves in our collective agreement. Moreover, to preserve the quality of education, adequate funding for research must be provided without cutting in to the budget for teaching. Lastly, all forms of research must be encouraged to ensure the commodification of education does not take primacy over the social mission of the research.

From that standpoint, the National Research and Innovation Policy adopted by MESRST in October 2013 sets off alarm bells for us with its emphasis on applied research at the expense of other forms of research it considers less important. Further still, the policy establishes certain funding criteria, notably for CCTTs, based on their performance and ability to work collaboratively with the other organizations that have been integrated into a new structure, the Quebec innovation research network (RRIQ), to offer a “portfolio of services.”¹⁵ This business-oriented approach to research is of concern to us.

A number of federal research funds—from the NSERC and SSHRC—have also been made to available to CEGEP teachers in recent years provided their college has a formal research policy. Many CEGEPs have adopted such a policy and set up a research ethics board.

In view of the seemingly favourable context for research development, the tabling of sectoral demands will be an opportunity for us to express our position on the role and form we would like to see research take in our CEGEPs in the years to come. Would we want to see schedule accommodations, a paid or unpaid partial leave of absence, or leave for those wishing to pursue doctoral studies?

The CEEC and quality assurance

Another key issue that has been the subject of considerable reflection since the beginning of the year is quality assurance. The matter was also raised in one of the preparatory meetings for the Summit on Higher Education when Michel Lauzière, president of the Quebec's college teaching evaluation board, the *Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial* (CEEC), tried to convince the audience of the value and relevance of his quality assurance process. In light of the positions subsequently taken by the unions and *Regroupement cégep*, it is fair to say he failed to succeed.

Since 2012, the CEEC has taken on a new mission of quality assurance. Indeed, the Commission's focus is no longer only on assessing study programs, institutional policies and strategic success plans, but also on evaluating college quality assurance processes. This new approach has taken the form of five-year audits aimed at assessing “the ability of the [evaluation] systems themselves, and the management thereof, to ensure the quality of the different dimensions of the colleges' mission.” The talk is no longer about evaluation, but about meta-evaluation, with any real concern for quality becoming less and less evident.

¹⁵ MESRST, *National Research and Innovation Policy*, October 2013, p. 44.

The quality assurance process falls within the spectrum of the global commodification and standardization of education. Using so-called objective criteria (such as an audit of the efficacy of final examination approval mechanisms, for example), the CEEC compares the different institutions and their programs, notably in the aim of student and teacher mobility. Is its goal also to certify colleges so they can issue their own diplomas? This approach to evaluation is already arousing much concern.

The audit system used by the CEEC is creating a hierarchical structure that is diametrically opposed to the more collegial and autonomous method of functioning where every CEGEP community is able to put in place the measures that are best suited to its particular reality. This jeopardizes not only individual autonomy, but also the autonomy of the structures provided for in the collective agreement: the departments and program committees where matters of quality and quality assurance are regularly discussed.

But the CEEC process is not the only quality assurance process in CEGEPs. The multiplication of approvals and accreditations required for many technical programs are significantly impeding the functioning of these departments and programs. The organizations issuing accreditation (professional orders, independent organizations, government agencies) have requirements concerning not only teaching, work and exam correction, course content, objectives and standards, but also safety, building compliance, teacher qualification and experience, and so on. The pressure on these departments and programs to comply with the requirements of the accreditation is huge: the very credibility of their program depends on it, as does the ability of their graduates to work elsewhere in Canada or the world and to obtain membership in professional orders. Accreditation poses two kinds of problems: first, the process is extremely time-consuming and the resources allocated to it—which at present are taken from the payroll of the very same colleges already struggling with the added burden—are insufficient to meet all the requirements. And this is a recurrent problem as the accreditation is not permanent and must periodically be renewed. Second, these outside organizations, by imposing their criteria and standards, are bypassing the mechanisms provided for in the collective agreement and are eroding the professional autonomy of these teachers.

CEGEPs are already equipped with structures to ensure the quality of education: departments and program committees. Instead of piling on more bureaucracy and meta-evaluations, we should be considering ways to strengthen the college system, such as by setting up provincial program committees made up mostly of teachers, including from contributive disciplines, or maybe even by doing away with the CEEC entirely and replacing it with a national council of college study programs.

Occupational health and safety

While the quality of education must be one of our concerns, so must the quality of the workplace and the importance of creating a healthy work environment. We are no strangers to the fact that, for a number of years, teachers have been faced with difficult work conditions and that this can have consequences on health, and particularly on mental health. This situation must be addressed in the next round of negotiations, both in terms of prevention and of the conditions surrounding invalidity and the return to work. On top of the factors that may be contributing to the problem, like workload, for example, we must also look at certain aspects of the organization of work, such as absenteeism, presenteeism, the definition of invalidity and the notion of gradual reintegration. The recent trend in some colleges to obtain certification in the area (Healthy Enterprise, Best Employers) has us concerned about the associated bureaucratic red tape and constraints, not to mention the questionable relevance of such certifications.

Hiring outlook

Over the past few years, the college network has hired a large number of teachers due to a high level of retirements and a rise in student enrolment. What can we expect in the coming years? Government projections on student enrolment until 2018 and statistics on the age of teaching staff in the college system show that the expected decline in enrolment, as a percentage, should roughly match that of the anticipated departures due to retirement. The percentage of teachers expected to retire between now and the end of the current collective agreement is estimated at 2.8% per year, or 5.6% from 2013 to 2015. That percentage is estimated at 8.4% for the period of 2015 to 2018, which corresponds to the next collective agreement.

Based on the government's student enrolment projections, if they are accurate (which hasn't been the case for the past five years), we should see a similar decline of 5.6% from 2013 to 2015 and of 7.5% from 2015 to 2018. As the percentage of departures through retirement is basically equivalent to the projected drop in enrolment, we can expect very little hiring over the next few years, which could result in continued job precarity for those already in that position.

Lastly, and again if the government's forecasts are to be believed, student enrolment should level off between 2018 and 2020. Given the continuing rate of job vacancies due to retirement, this should result in a hiring increase during that period.

Salary relativity and the master's-doctoral echelons

During the last round of bargaining talks, FNEEQ affirmed that the low remuneration CEGEP teachers receive compared to other jobs requiring equivalent levels of education was making it difficult to attract and retain candidates to the profession. The reviews under way on salary relativity and the master's-doctoral echelons could help remedy this situation. The salary relativity work in which FNEEQ has been involved as part of the inter-union (CSN, CSQ, FIQ, APTS, FTQ) is continuing with the Quebec Treasury Board. In February, the latter filed a new evaluation placing CEGEP teachers at rank 22, which corresponds to our current remuneration. This means the spectre of a salary drop, which has been haunting us since June 2013, has now been eliminated. But we must now press the Treasury Board to fully recognize our role in higher education by raising us to a higher rank, notably due to our autonomy, the complexity of the concepts we are teaching and the scope of responsibility of CEGEP departments and program committees. Discussions between FNEEQ and the Treasury Board regarding the master's-doctoral echelons are also ongoing, and we are hoping to have these echelons revalued.

Ideally, an agreement with the government on both the issues of salary relativity and the master's-doctoral echelons will be reached before the start of the new contract negotiations.

III- Elements of a strategic framework

The strategic framework we will soon be developing is intended to allow us to plan out—within the prevailing social, political and economic context—the actions we should be taking and alliances we should be building to permit us to successfully promote our demands. It must also take into account the issues and positions of those we will be facing at the bargaining table: the *Fédération des cégeps* and the ministry, sitting together on the college management negotiating committee (CPNC), and the Quebec Treasury Board. Lastly, the framework will have to place considerable attention on communications and

mobilization to help us achieve our objectives. Here are a few aspects that will need to be taken into consideration in developing this strategic framework.

CPNC sectoral issues

The March 2014 issue of the *Fédération des cégeps' "Perspectives collégiales"*¹⁶ newsletter and the status report from the task force on CEGEP training (Demers Report) give us a pretty good idea of the potential issues we can expect the CPNC to raise in the next round of collective bargaining.

To offset the projected decline in student enrolment, both groups advocate internationalizing Quebec education by intensifying efforts to draw foreign students to regional CEGEPs and programs with small cohorts. In order to maintain the availability of a sufficient number of programs in each college, the Demers Report also recommends placing greater emphasis on teleteaching, including through inter-CEGEP collaboration for a same program of studies or in collaboration with the *CÉGEP à distance* network.

Funding for continuing education will likely be another key issue: at the symposium on the development of CEGEPs in the regions, many administrators came out in favour of improving the working conditions of teachers in the sector. The aim was best summed up in the request that funding associated with student enrolment in the continuing education stream be the same as it is regular education, which would greatly facilitate the integration of the two sectors. We know that Quebec is lagging far behind other provinces in the area of continuing education and that boosting the volume of activity in the sector, and thus the budget allocations for delivering this education, should be among the government's priorities.

In another vein, careful attention must be paid to the recent and marked interest the *Fédération des cégeps* has been showing in the concept of universal teaching. This pedagogical approach, largely inspired by the notion of universal design in architecture, maintains that the number of individual accommodations for students with disabilities can be greatly reduced by developing broadly inclusive teaching practices. However, FNEEQ believes that this approach cannot eliminate all accommodation needs, nor does it in any way reduce the relevance of our demand for additional resources. At the present time, college is the only level in the education system where the heavier workload resulting from SWDs is not recognized.

Other issues, like increased funding for research activities both within and outside college centres for technology transfer, have also been raised by the *Fédération des cégeps*.

Bargaining results and timetable

If it is important that the strategic framework take into account the CPNC's issues, it is all the more paramount that it reflect the expectations of FNEEQ's members. In the last public sector negotiations, the Common Front was eager for a speedy settlement. Coming out of a restrictive law following the 2005 decree, it was intent on reaching a negotiated agreement. But when the bargaining talks were over and the agreements-in-principle hurriedly pushed through for signing in June (as our summer vacation was starting!), many were left with a bitter taste in their mouth. Should the Common Front have held out? Could it have gotten more? In the next bargaining round, will it still be looking for a quick settlement or will its focus be on getting the best possible deal?

¹⁶ Fédération des cégeps, *Perspectives collégiales*, Vol. 9, No.1.

[Online]. <http://www.fedecegeps.qc.ca/perspectives-collegiales/2014/03/14111/> (page viewed March 12, 2014)

It seems plain enough that we can't afford to scrimp on the outcome. In a perfect world, a good one would be arrived at quickly, sparing us the threat of an imposed decree or the denial of a retroactive pay raise. But as a member of the Common Front, FNEEQ has little choice but to go along with the other labour organizations and adjust to their pace of negotiation. We need to convince our Common Front partners of the importance of coordinating our efforts to secure a satisfactory deal in as reasonable a time frame as possible. To that end, the Common Front's new operating protocol, which aims to coordinate partners' actions and messages, is already a significant improvement over the last round.

This coordination work also involves harmonizing the Common Front members' bargaining timetables. We can expect the government to resort to its usual strategy: virtually every agreement-in-principle signed somewhere around the 24th of June or the 24th of December, when it is difficult, if not outright impossible to mobilize members and convene a meeting of the governing bodies. It is a known tactic that is hard to counter. The 1999 negotiations are a good example: the Common Front rolled out a strategy counting down to an unlimited general strike in November, but the strike was rejected. Two bargaining rounds later, in 2010, the Common Front's strategy was to hold a negotiating sprint at the expiry of the collective agreements in late March; again, this failed due to a lack of good will on the part of the government.

Whatever the strategy chosen this time, in order to be in a position to take diligent action at the conclusion of the negotiations, the *Regroupement cégep* and unions need to decide on mechanisms for rapid consultation that will allow them to determine if the government's proposal is satisfactory or if further gains can be made and, if the latter is the case, what would be the most realistic timetable.

Alliances

The *Regroupement cégep* has come out in favour of having the broadest possible coalition for collective bargaining, despite the critical view it took of the 2009 Common Front in its post-mortem of the last round of negotiations: some of that coalition's failures can be chalked up to the lack of coordination among its constituent members, notably on the political front and in terms of mobilization. We are hopeful that these pitfalls will be avoided in the next bargaining round given that the newly-formed Common Front—which again includes the CSN, FTQ and SISP—has agreed not only on a solidarity protocol (anti-pilfering), but also on an operating protocol that calls for the creation of a coordinating committee to ensure better political cohesion and mobilization. As a member of this Common Front, we will be involved in determining its orientations and actions.

Moreover, the participation of FNEEQ in the CSN's public and parapublic sector coordinating committee (CCSPP)—in which is also found the FP, FEESP and FSSS—gives us the opportunity to intervene in the debates and to know how the bargaining talks are unfolding in the other sectors. These inter-federation alliances are also important in ensuring the cohesiveness of demands, actions and the pace of negotiation throughout the bargaining round.

With respect to sectoral alliances, talks are currently under way between FNEEQ and FEC to look at how both federations could best benefit by joining forces in terms of such things as shared analyses, objectives and potential solutions. The Common Front's operating protocol encourages the building of such alliances.

Communications plan

While it is too soon to know what the Common Front's communications plan will be, we were given a preview of the CSN's communication strategy in January with the launch of the "*Merci à vous*" campaign

highlighting the contribution of our public service employees. This campaign is aimed not only at union members, but also at the general public. The CSN has also put an information and mobilization structure in place on Facebook that calls on the participation of local action and information head officers (RELAIS) and union operations head officers (RESO). The goal of this initiative is to promote networking and information-sharing among members of local unions, public and parapublic sector federations, central councils and the CCSPP.

On the sectoral level, the first stage of the *Regroupement cégep*'s communications plan, which is still in development, was the organization of the training session on negotiation followed by the tour of local unions. The purpose of this tour, which continues until May 15th, is to discuss bargaining issues with local members and identify the problems experienced by the unions in relation to the collective agreement. Moreover, each local union will be "adopted" by members of the bargaining committee to ensure that the strongest possible links are maintained with the rank-and-file throughout the negotiating process. On a wider scale, the RELAIS, RESO and RAR will play a key role in the communications dynamic between the *Regroupement* and the local unions. In parallel, the bargaining committee will work on developing the communication strategy that will underpin the next round of negotiations. While one of the goals will be to generate public awareness and build support for our demands, we must first ensure that these demands are full entrenched among our teachers. A number of channels of communication will be opened up to keep union members informed of the unfolding and progress of the sectoral bargaining.

IV- Mobilization outlook

The communications plan will also serve to build and sustain mobilization; a show of strength provides bargaining leverage. The rally of support last fall over salary relativity, with Operation Disruption 21, is an eloquent example. Member unions of the *Regroupement cégep* heeded FNEEQ's call for mobilization by, among other things, taking part in the email campaign levelled at the Treasury Board. Many CEGEP governing boards also threw their support behind the teachers. Operation Disruption 21 received wide media coverage during the late fall and early winter, and the union mobilization was so successful that a vote was held for a national day of action in the CEGEPs. More importantly still, this show of support helped relaunch the talks on salary relativity, with the Treasury Board ultimately filing a new evaluation in February that returned CEGEP teachers to rank 22, their current salary level. It also had the effect of reopening discussions on the master's-doctoral echelons, meaning improvements both in this area and in the ranking are now possible given that the issues are back on the table. This resonating mobilization augurs well for our bargaining power in the upcoming negotiations.

On another level, the 2012 student strike illustrated that Quebec society is capable of rallying together and supporting a movement that seeks to improve access to quality public services. This was able to take shape because students came out in masses to answer the call from their organizations. Numerous other groups, such as the Association of Progressive Jurists and the Coalition Against User Fees and the Privatization of Public Services, then joined the movement. The CSN and FNEEQ launched a discussion on the social strike. The 2012 student strike has shown us that, with strong mobilization from the outset, we may be able to count on the support of the public.

And lastly, the Common Front, the composition of which was announced this past March 16th, gives us the strength in numbers we need—with more than 400,000 public sector employees—to be ready for the next round of collective bargaining.

Conclusion

The force of our numbers and the experience of the various events that have taken place in recent years leave us optimistic as to the ability of FNEEQ members to mobilize for the defence not only of their own rights as workers, but also of the broader rights of all to receive quality public services. We have demonstrated a strong capacity to withstand attacks against our social rights and will undoubtedly be up for the challenge again when the time comes to stand up for our demands in the next round of public sector bargaining.

To succeed, we are going to have to rally together and send a clear message that we will remain firm until the end. The tour of the 46 local unions launched this past February already tells us that—from Rouyn-Noranda to Sept-Îles and from Montréal to Québec—teachers share the same concern: improving working and teaching conditions in order to guarantee students the best possible learning environment. It is our job to ensure this strong determination for recognition translates into an acceptable collective agreement.

V- Glossary of acronyms used in this document

POLITICAL PARTIES

CAQ: Coalition Avenir Québec

QLP: Quebec Liberal Party

PQ: Parti Québécois

LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS

CSN: Confédération des syndicats nationaux

CCSPP-CSN: Comité de coordination des secteurs public et parapublic de la CSN (FEESP, FNEEQ, FP, FSSS)

FEESP: Fédération des employées et employés de services publics

FNEEQ: Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec

FP: Fédération des professionnelles

FSSS: Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux

FIQ: Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec

FTQ: Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

SISP: Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (APTS, CSQ, SFPQ)

APTS: Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux

SFPQ: Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec

CSQ: Centrale des syndicats du Québec

FEC: Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégeps

REGROUPEMENT CÉGEP

RAR: Responsable au regroupement (*Regroupement liaison leader*)

RELAIS: Responsables locaux à l'action et à l'information (*Local action and information leaders*)

RESO: Responsables syndicaux aux opérations (*Union operations leaders*)

OTHER ACRONYMS

AEC: Attestation d'études collégiales (*Attestation of college studies*)

AEP: Attestation d'études professionnelles (*Attestation of professional studies*)

CCTT: Centre collégial de transfert de technologie (*College technology transfer centre*)

CEEC: Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial du Québec (*Quebec college teaching evaluation board*)

CNR: Comité national de rencontre (*National meeting committee*)

CPNC: Comité patronal de négociation des collèges (*College management negotiating committee*)

DEC: Diplôme d'études collégiales (*Diploma of college studies*)

DEP: Diplôme d'études professionnelles (*Diploma of professional studies*)

MELS: Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (*Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport*)

MESRST: Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie (*Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology*)

MSSS: Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (*Ministry of Health and Social Services*)

NSERC: National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

OIIQ: Ordre des infirmières et des infirmiers du Québec (*Quebec Order of Nurses*)

SME: Small and medium-sized enterprises

RAC: Recognition of acquired competencies

RRIQ: Réseau recherche innovation Québec (*Quebec innovation research network*)

SOCRATE: CEGEP student database management system

SSHRC: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (federal agency)

SWD: Students with disabilities