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post-negotiation year

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# ENACTION

FÉDÉRATION INTERPROFESSIONNELLE DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC | [www.fiqsante.qc.ca](http://www.fiqsante.qc.ca)

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Federal Council  
June 5, 6 and 7, 2012



At the microphone: Marilyn Tremblay,  
CSSS de Chicoutimi

## OUR PENSION PLANS BEING UNDERMINED!

While the pension plans have been questioned on several stages, the FIQ took advantage of this Federal Council to explain to the delegates the issues linked to retirement in order to equip them on this subject which will certainly be among the most crucial over the coming years.

Currently, information is circulating everywhere claiming in particular that defined benefit pension plans, like the one for the healthcare professionals (RREGOP), is too generous and expensive. The eligibility age will also be challenged on the pretext that the participants can no longer fund it.

Public hearings will also be held in order to find ways of maintaining older workers at work longer.

### A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL SECURITY NET

Over time, our society has given itself a collective social security net including, among others, old age financial security measures. However, this net is being increasingly threatened by rising neoliberalism and the economic crises, particularly that of 2008.

Despite these economic considerations, the threat is first and foremost purely ideological: primacy of market forces, minimum intervention from the State and individualism. Social programmes

would become a luxury! "We do not have the means", "Everyone must do their share and take responsibility"...

So, to comply with this ideology, new formulas have recently appeared. The provincial government has installed the *Régime volontaire d'épargne retraite* (RVER) (Voluntary Retirement Savings Plan -VRSP) while the federal government has increased the age of eligibility from age 65 to age 67 (Old Age Security Pension and the Guaranteed Income Supplement).

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At the microphone: 1. Joëlle Thiébaud, CHA universitaire de Québec 2. Richard Beauregard, CSSS Richelieu-Yamaska

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**WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT**

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**THE SAGUENAY LIVED UP TO ITS REPUTATION!**

*Régine Laurent*

This Federal Council was certainly a milestone for the Federation! For the first time in 25 years, it was now being held outside the major urban centres. Celebrating 25 years of battles and gains for the healthcare professionals, it was obvious that we had to go and visit our seasoned "fidgeters", as I like to call them.

In fact, as soon as a demonstration is organized, as soon as a manager tramples our rights and must be confronted, the union reps in this region are the first ones to lead the way. What a privilege to have them in our ranks!

**RED SQUARE/ DEBATE SQUARE**

Inspired by this great community of union reps and by the context, the FIQ could not pass up the chance to discuss the student movement. All of Québec is currently rediscovering the virtue and the strength of belonging to a community in a social conflict which goes well beyond the hike in tuition fees. Already, things have changed and the Québec that the Federation has decried for some time is now wavering.

For more than three years, it is the young people, but also the not so young, who are rising up to defend their values and to propose solutions. Feeling involved from the beginning, the Federation chose

to support the student movement in their fight, as much as it can. In fact, the FIQ has opposed the hike in tuition fees, just like it opposed the setting up of the health tax: two measures that are in complete contradiction with its statement of principles, with its values of solidarity and social justice.

Obviously, the conflict has evolved over the last few months, notably when the Charest government went so far as to impose the infamous Bill 78. Now, there is no longer a question of staging "sit-ins" to denounce the dismal working conditions in the healthcare institutions, any more than to spontaneously invade the World Trade Centre to apply pressure on the government, like we did during our most recent negotiations.

In Québec, democracy is a fundamental value. There is therefore every indication that contradictory opinions could coexist without anguish. Unfortunately,

the Liberal government has adopted a stance and a rigid and authoritarian attitude and some media has contributed to polarizing the debate by "demonizing" those who wear the red square. Since the members of the FIQ are subject to some media influence, they are no different than the rest of the population. The subject is controversial, even within our ranks.

**ANSWERS HEARD DURING A MEMORABLE DEBATE**

During this Federal Council, the union reps in the organization discussed the student issue with maturity, and listened with tolerance to opposing opinions. My last words will therefore be the answers heard during this memorable debate. ■



Within the context of the FIQ's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities, the Federation's decision-making meetings are being held outside the larger urban centres to give the delegates an opportunity to get closer to their colleagues in the regions. This Federal Council was an opportunity to visit the delegates in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area.

The members of the CSSS de Chicoutimi local union team were very happy to welcome their colleagues.

From left to right:  
Back row:  
Nancy Michaud  
Lynda Sirois  
Annie Ruelland  
Geneviève Blackburn  
Nadia Tremblay  
Clément Tremblay  
Marie-Pierre Simard

Front row:  
Frédéric Savard  
Audrey Côté  
Émilie Lévesque  
Julie Bouchard

**"What we are experiencing with the student issue is rather refreshing."**

*Ginette Bédard,  
CSSS du Cœur-de-l'Île*

**"It is a process of change which has been started. It will be long and painful. We represent members who have different ways of thinking. That is confrontational."**

*Sara Caron-Guay, CHUQ*

**"For once they [the youth] are standing up. Maybe not in the way we would like, but ... »**

*Claude Boucher,  
CSSS de Bécancour-Nicolet-Yamaska*

**"We would not have the gains that we [the healthcare professionals] have today if we hadn't stood up for them."**

*Rita Lamothe,  
CSSS de la Vieille-Capitale*



**"If we are not concerned with politics, politics will dominate us."**

*Michel Desautels,  
Hôpital Rivières-des-Prairies - AIM*

**"The members are entitled to their own opinions."**

*Pascal Beaulieu,  
CHA universitaire de Québec*

**"We are among people [the youth] who need to dream. At the very least, don't shatter their dream."**

*Régine Laurent - FIQ*

**"For me, the FIQ is more than labour relations. It is an organization which defends not only the healthcare professionals, but also social values."**

*Julie Ouellet,  
CSSS Alphonse-Desjardins - SPSQ*

**"I am proud to see what is happening. They are our members of tomorrow!"**

*Michel Léger, West Island Health and Social Services Centre - UHCP*

PENSION PLANS

Our pension plans being undermined! (CONT'D)

ANNUAL OHS WEEK 2012

The poster for the 2012 Occupational Health and Safety Week was revealed to the delegation. This year, the theme concerns protection against dangerous chemical products in the care settings and aims to make the healthcare professionals aware of the risks linked to the exposure and manipulation of such products. Hence the slogan, "Invisible aggressors... GOTCHA!".



OUR PENSION PLANS BEING UNDERMINED!

(CONT'D)

OLD AGE REPRESENTS AN AGE OF POVERTY FOR A MAJORITY OF WOMEN

Women who have not worked only receive the Canadian Old Age Security Pension (OAS). In 2008, 53% of older women received the Guaranteed Income Supplement as compared to 41% of men. Therefore, the public plans are particularly important for women.

Women's income on the job market only represents 70% of that of men. This is explained in particular by the fact that they work mostly in much less well paid job categories, that they work part time more often to balance family-personal life-work and that they are absent for pregnancies, childcare and caring for their loved ones.

Women therefore, on average, contribute based on a lower income, for a shorter period of time and have less available income to invest in private pensions (eg.: RRSP). So, since their life expectancy is longer, they must stretch a smaller pension over a longer period of time.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE FOR RETIRING

Organization of work has a big influence on the choices of an aging work force to remain at work or not. Retirement is a right and not an obligation and the pension plans give acceptable living conditions at retirement. Even if retirement is linked to a union concern, it is also an employer responsibility.

Workers who are not in a position to truly choose when they retire are affected on both a financial and personal level. Some factors make the work experience more difficult. Take the case of the healthcare professionals, half of whom retire early because of difficult working conditions if they have no such restrictions.

Choices that will surely result in more poverty and uncertainty at retirement..

RREGOP

The members of the FIQ contribute every week on their pay cheques to the Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan (RREGOP), a defined benefit plan guaranteeing the payment of a pension until death. The government and the worker are obliged to contribute to this plan.

However, Minister Bachand introduced a new plan which will go into effect on January 1, 2013, the Régime volontaire d'épargne-retraite (RVER) (Voluntary Retirement Savings Plan - VRSP) which covers all companies without a pension plan with five or more employees. This is a defined contribution plan clearly less advantageous because the employer has no obligation to contribute and the benefit is

only established at the time of retirement.

The healthcare professionals must remain vigilant of the attacks against the defined benefit plans, a collective tool that must be preserved, because the pension is guaranteed for life, the income at retirement is higher for the same amount of money contributed and the risks linked to performance and life expectancy are assumed collectively.

The delegates liked these explanations, but denounced the disengagement of governments from the workers who must carry the burden of the whole responsibility as well as all the risks associated with retirement.

They also recalled that particular attention must be given to the overtime worked that is not counted towards RREGOP. Lastly, they stated that it is necessary to also look at the impacts on the young members who are also concerned about their retirement. A reflection to be continued!

For more information, the *Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics* produced a document entitled "La retraite n'est pas un privilège" (Retirement is not a privilege) on which the FIQ collaborated. The latter will be available shortly on the FIQ website. ■

At the microphone:  
 1. Valérie Latreille, CSSS du Suroît  
 2. Michel Léger, West Island Health and Social Services Centre - UHCP  
 3. Lucie Landry, CSSS de la Haute-Yamaska



## POLITICAL CHOICES

The finances are the result of political choices, decisions taken by the decision-making bodies of the Federation. Thus, the priorities established in 2011 by the union reps led to the investment of the necessary financial resources to carry them out. Here are a few examples:

- The Labour Relations Sector, the most significant budgetary item at the FIQ, devoted this post-negotiation year to the implementation and application of the national provisions of the collective agreement.
- The Legal Team ensured the defence of the unions and the members before the various courts, but also greatly contributed to the pursuit of the action plan aimed at countering independent labour. Thanks to its hard work, the Federation won its case before the *Commission des relations du travail* in October 2011 concerning 21 respiratory therapists at *Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont*.
- The Occupational Health and Safety Team saw the number of appeals linked to work accidents and occupational diseases cases increase in a significant manner. This increase can be explained by the desire of the employers to reduce their costs linked to this type of disability and by the increase in the complexity of the health problems. The FIQ will be addressing this in the months to come, given that the situation is worrisome.

## BALANCE SHEETS 2011 POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF A POST-NEGOTIATION YEAR

The delegates attended the presentation of the 2011 balance sheets of the FIQ, a presentation which is of particular interest to them just like the members who want to know how the FIQ uses its money and the state of the organization's financial health.

First and foremost, it should be pointed out that an administrative follow-up of the different budget items of the FIQ is carried out monthly in order to prevent or anticipate any cost overruns. In addition, a quarterly monitoring is done by the Executive Committee of the Federation so that the latter can bring adjustments, if needed, in order for the budget targets to be reached. This way of doing things certainly has positive effects, because the 2011 balance sheets do not reveal any major surprises.

Moreover, they demonstrate the importance that the Federation gives to the services offered to the affiliated unions and the members. If, in 2010, all energy was concentrated on the negotiations, 2011 brought a return to the organization's regular activities.

However, despite a positive assessment, a strict management is necessary to preserve the financial health of the FIQ. In fact, since the context still remains uncertain and the financial impacts are difficult to forecast, it is crucial to maintain a healthy management of the Federation's expenditures.

The delegates unanimously adopted the 2011 balance sheets. ■

ADMINISTRATION FUND	2011 (12 months)	2010 (12 months)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Regular Dues	27 498 309	26 697 141
Interest	157 628	115 134
Grants	49 450	49 440
Other revenue	118 697	103 089
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>27 824 084</b>	<b>26 964 804</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Meetings and elected union officers	1 937 769	1 891 260
<b>SECTORS</b>		
Labour Relations	12 943 222	12 525 515
Sectors and Services	874 827	1 015 133
Sociopolitical	571 502	520 310
Status of Women	339 711	276 987
Health and Safety at Work	230 472	282 637
Task and Organization of Work	324 259	401 014
Social Security	226 541	234 700
<b>Total for the sectors</b>	<b>15 510 534</b>	<b>15 256 296</b>
<b>SERVICES</b>		
Education-Animation	768 349	451 809
Union Organizing	599 551	622 614
Communication-Information	950 598	540 837
Translation and Web	186 206	218 000
<b>Total for the services</b>	<b>2 504 704</b>	<b>1 833 260</b>
General Administration (including computer)	6 405 733	6 751 115
Human Resources	929 625	1 215 263
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>27 288 365</b>	<b>26 947 194</b>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>535 719</b>	<b>17 610</b>



The Internal Audit Committee, composed of Jérôme Rousseau, Carl Picard and Pascal Beaulieu, presented its 2011 report to the delegation. This report referred in particular to the good financial management of the FIQ for a first year post-negotiation and applauded the adoption of a code of ethics by the Federation.

**FINANCES**

**Balance Sheets 2011 (CONT'D)**

<b>RESERVE FOR NEGOTIATIONS</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2010 (12 months)</b>
<i>ADMINISTRATION FUND CONTRIBUTION</i>		
Regular dues	1 600 000	1 600 000
Additional dues	0	5 072 223
Other revenue	<u>425</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total contribution</b>	<b>1 600 425</b>	<b>6 672 223</b>
<i>NEGOTIATIONS</i>		
Salaries and fringe benefits	364 925	1 019 116
Travelling expenses	81 784	356 252
Rental expenses	24 338	43 576
Printing expenses	80 626	55 685
Courier and communications	21 468	28 993
Professional fees	60 664	110 474
Publications	0	406 417
Admission and membership fees	1 033	215 829
Federal Council meetings	(2 505)	1 921 967
Other expenses	67 929	1 390 855
Private sector negotiations	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total for negotiation expenses</b>	<b>700 262</b>	<b>5 549 164</b>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>900 163</u></b>	<b><u>1 123 059</u></b>

<b>BALANCE SHEET AS OF DEC. 31, 2011</b>	<b>Union Defence Fund</b>	<b>Adminis- tration Fund*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash	1 032 044	2 059 816	3 091 860
Temporary investments	1 775 515	5 333 040	7 108 555
Advances to Administration Fund	0	0	0
Advance to Parity Ins.Comm.Fund	0	12 721	12 721
Advance to Union Defence Fund	0	3 726	3 726
Debtors	0	1 391 188	1 391 188
Expenses computable on next period	0	132 455	132 455
Deferred expenses	0	8 194 358	8 194 358
Fixed assets	<u>0</u>	<u>6 429 459</u>	<u>6 429 459</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>2 807 559</u></b>	<b><u>23 556 763</u></b>	<b><u>26 364 322</u></b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Suppliers and accrued liabilities	0	1 147 723	1 147 723
Deferred income	0	0	0
Human resources dev't	0	403 562	403 562
Debt coming to term within a year	0	0	0
Accounts payable	<u>0</u>	<u>5 423 017</u>	<u>5 423 017</u>
	<u>0</u>	<u>6 974 302</u>	<u>6 974 302</u>
Advance from Administration Fund	3 726	0	3 726
Long-term debt	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>3 726</b>	<b>6 974 302</b>	<b>6 978 028</b>
<b>MEMBER'S EQUITY</b>			
Accumulated surplus not assigned	2 803 833	(351 237)	2 452 596
Assigned surplus movables/equipment	0	1 311 259	1 311 259
Assigned surplus computer	0	5 118 200	5 118 200
Assigned surplus-head office	0	8 194 358	8 194 358
Surplus reserved for negotiations	0	1 854 515	1 854 515
Surplus reserved for solidarity	0	122 012	122 012
Surplus reserved for FC and Conv meetings	<u>0</u>	<u>333 354</u>	<u>333 354</u>
	<b><u>2 803 833</u></b>	<b><u>16 582 461</u></b>	<b><u>19 386 294</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b><u>2 807 559</u></b>	<b><u>23 556 763</u></b>	<b><u>26 364 322</u></b>

\*negotiations, solidarity, head office and Conv. & F. C. meetings

<b>SOLIDARITY RESERVE</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2010 (12 months)</b>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Administration Fund Contribution	164 919	162 744
Other revenue	<u>455</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total contribution</b>	<b>165 374</b>	<b>162 744</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Solidarity	<u>125 708</u>	<u>125 526</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE/EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>39 666</u></b>	<b><u>37 218</u></b>

<b>RESERVE FOR CONVENTION &amp; F.C.</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2010 (12 months)</b>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Contribution from administration fund	2 066 667	2 161 667
Other revenue	<u>29 000</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total contribution</b>	<b>2 095 667</b>	<b>2 161 667</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Meetings (including Equalization)	<u>2 464 838</u>	<u>1 767 448</u>
<b>EXCESS (INSUFFICIENT) OF REVENUE/EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>(369 171)</u></b>	<b><u>394 219</u></b>

<b>RESERVE FOR HEAD OFFICE</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2010 (12 months)</b>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Contribution from administration fund	0	0
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Head office	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE/EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<b><u>0</u></b>

<b>UNION DEFENCE FUND</b>	<b>2011 (12 months)</b>	<b>2010 (12 months)</b>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
<b>Administration Fund Contribution</b>		
<i>BENEFITS</i>		
Regular dues	968 966	847 058
Donations	0	0
Interest	<u>10 942</u>	<u>12 104</u>
	<u>979 908</u>	<u>859 163</u>
<i>UNION ORGANIZING</i>		
Regular dues	0	100 000
Interest	27 837	21 328
Other revenue	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>27 837</u>	<u>121 328</u>
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>1 007 745</b>	<b>980 491</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<i>BENEFITS</i>		
Union Defence Fund Committee	1 697	1 609
Salaries and fringe benefits	0	0
Fines and legal expenses	205 000	3 607
Professional fees	156 264	126 915
Interest and bank charges	0	0
Other expenses	703 017	685 514
Financial aid	<u>3 334</u>	<u>6 791</u>
	<u>1 069 312</u>	<u>824 436</u>
<i>UNION ORGANIZING</i>		
Professional fees	11 664	0
Other expenses	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>11 664</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1 080 976</b>	<b>824 436</b>
<b>EXCESS (INSUFFICIENT) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>(73 231)</u></b>	<b><u>156 054</u></b>

# BILL 21 NEW SHARING OF PROFESSIONAL FIELDS OF PRACTICE IN MENTAL HEALTH

The presentation of this bill to the delegation generated some concerns particularly concerning the place of licensed practical nurses in mental health. According to the Federation, nothing calls into question their contribution, because organization of work and the composition of the teams are the responsibility of the institutions.

As a follow-up to Bill 90, which aimed to modernize professional practice in the area of physical health, here is new legislation, known as Bill 21, to amend the Professional Code in the field of mental health and human relations.

This bill, expected to come into force in September 2012, concerns, in particular, the professions of psychologist, social worker, marriage and family therapist, vocational guidance counsellor, psychoeducator and occupational therapist, and it amends the Medical Act and the Nurses Act.

*Bill 21 amends the Medical Act and the Nurses Act*

In addition to giving a modern definition to the fields of practice of these professionals, Bill 21 reserves activities for these professional where there is a risk of prejudice for the patients.

Since this bill is likely to affect several stakeholders, the delegation feels that it is crucial that the members of the FIQ completely understand its nature in order to be able to have an influence on the different changes which will take place in organization of work in their institution.

Lastly, the Federation sits on the ministerial committee whose mandate consists of planning the implementation of the bill in the institutions in the health and social services network together with all the partners. It will also continue its meetings with the FIQ union

representatives from the institutions providing mental health care. The FIQ will continue its reflection and analysis over the coming months. ■

For nurses, Bill 21 adds three reserved and shared activities in particular, including the assessment of mental illnesses, providing that the requirements of education and clinical experience determined by regulation are met.

At the microphone:  
1. Marie-Josée Forget,  
CSSS du Haut-Saint-François – SPSE  
2. Julie Ouellet,  
CSSS Alphonse-Desjardins – SPSQ



**BALANCE SHEETS 2011 (CONT'D)**

REVENUE AND EXPENSES FOR THE PERIOD AND BALANCE OF ALL FUNDS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2011						
	Union defence Fund	Administration Fund	Negotiation Reserve	Solidarity Reserve	F.C. and convention Reserve	Total
<b>BALANCE AS OF 31-12-2010</b>	2 877 063	13 736 862	954 353	82 346	702 526	18 353 150
Adjustment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Balance after correction as of 31-12-2010	<b>2 877 063</b>	<b>13 736 862</b>	<b>954 353</b>	<b>82 346</b>	<b>702 526</b>	<b>18 353 150</b>
Revenue for the 2011 period	1 007 745	27 824 084	1 600 425	165 374	2 095 667	32 693 295
Expenses for the 2011 period	<u>1 080 975</u>	<u>27 288 364</u>	<u>700 263</u>	<u>125 708</u>	<u>2 464 838</u>	<u>31 660 148</u>
Excess for the 2011 period	(73 230)	535 720	900 162	39 666	(369 171)	1 033 147
<b>BALANCE AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2011</b>	<b><u>2 803 833</u></b>	<b><u>14 272 582</u></b>	<b><u>1 854 515</u></b>	<b><u>122 012</u></b>	<b><u>333 355</u></b>	<b><u>19 386 297</u></b>
Assigned surplus-movables/equipment		1 311 259				
Assigned surplus-head office		8 194 358				
Assigned surplus-computer		5 118 200				
Accumulated surplus-not assigned		(351 237)				

Note: Difference is due to rounding off of decimals

**NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS**

**More than a 70% satisfaction rate for the collective agreement  
The FIQ waged a hard 17-month fight against a tough opponent**



Francine Simard, from the firm Repère Communication Recherche

## MORE THAN A 70% SATISFACTION RATE FOR THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

Within the context of the consultative exercise for carrying out the evaluation of the negotiations, the FIQ mandated the firm, *Repère Communication Recherche* to conduct a survey in order to find out the level of satisfaction of the members for the last negotiations.

Francine Simard presented the results of this telephone survey conducted with 659 of the FIQ French and English speaking members to the delegation. Here are a few of the salient facts:

For the overall satisfaction of the negotiations, more than 70% of respondents are satisfied with the 2011-2015 collective agreement negotiated by the FIQ and they feel that the gains obtained are significant. More than half indicated that the collective agreement meets their expectations and that they have good knowledge of the content.

A difference was noted according to the age of the respondents

for following the progress of the negotiations. The members aged 45 and older stated they often followed the negotiations while those aged 29 and younger stated they rarely followed them.

### THE FIQ AND THE INTER-UNION COMMON FRONT

More than 70% of the members feel that the FIQ played an important role and that it succeeded well in being heard within the Common Front.

### THE FIQ IN THE MEDIA

More than 70% of the members find that the FIQ was present in the media throughout the negotiations while more than 80% feel that this presence was pertinent and that it

had a positive impact on the results of the negotiations.

### CONCLUSIVE RESULTS

This survey enables the FIQ to conclude that its members are satisfied with the last negotiation of their collective agreement. The negotiations as a Common Front were also a path that the members liked.

However, since the level of mobilization and participation of the members in the mobilization activities in the context of the negotiations were not high, a reflection and an evaluation of the use of new forms of demonstrating the mobilization of the members must be done. ■



Michel Grant, Associate Professor at the École des sciences de la gestion de l'UQAM

## “THE FIQ WAGED A HARD 17-MONTH FIGHT AGAINST A TOUGH OPPONENT”

In order to have an outside view of the last negotiation of the national collective agreement for the healthcare professionals, the FIQ asked Michel Grant, Associate Professor at the École des sciences de la gestion de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, to evaluate the content.

Mr. Grant was the executive secretary for the *Conseil du Québec du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique* (SCFP) for ten years. He negotiated in the municipal sector, hydroelectricity and in the public and parapublic sectors where he acted as the coordinator for the FTQ-CEQ-CSN Common Front in 1975.

First, Mr. Grant wanted to emphasize that the content of a collective agreement is not evaluated using the demands, but rather at the time the employer offers are accepted. According to him, the FIQ waged a

hard battle with a tough opponent for 17 months. The alliance in the Common Front was a key factor and must not be seen as a discriminating factor for the Federation.

In the context of alliances, questions must be asked on the way of forming them and at what time to do so. Alliances are a place for the convergence of common interests and are inevitable for specific subjects. Mr. Grant believes that the challenge for labour organizations in the next round of negotiations will be protecting the pension plans.

The delegates emphasized that it was difficult during the last negotiations to maintain unity throughout the negotiations as a Common Front. While the negotiations start at the same time in alliances, they might end otherwise.

In that respect, Mr. Grant specified that realistic goals must be set and the chances of protecting what we have are greater with alliances. He reminded the delegation that every negotiation is first and foremost political. A rewarding meeting for everyone! ■

Some delegates questioned Michel Grant on the fact that the healthcare professionals represent a specialized workforce that is in short supply and that they can negotiate alone and still have bargaining power.

**NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS**

**THE FIQ, A STRONG VOICE, ACTIONS THAT COUNT**

**MAJOR GAINS OBTAINED BY THE FIQ**

- Recognition of the overlap period
- Increase in premiums
- New definition for the licensed practical nurse team leader job title
- Recognition of the nurse clinician specialist job title
- Payment of overtime worked by nurse clinicians
- Arrangement of work time
- Reduction in independent labour - Upgrading of part-time positions
- Improvement in the classification of nurse clinicians
- Improvement in salaries, retirement and parental rights

Your delegates adopted a recommendation to broaden the consultations at the time the priorities for the negotiations are determined. They also adopted recommendations to soften the structure of negotiations, to make determining essential services easier and to promote greater participation by the members in union life.

**A WINNING STRATEGY**

This Federal Council was an opportunity for the delegates to discuss the evaluation of the last national negotiation of the FIQ collective agreement. An historic negotiations during which several significant gains were obtained for the healthcare professionals.

To carry out this retrospective, the Federation conducted a broad consultation of the union reps and the employees of the organization as well as of its affiliated unions. Remember that the 2009-2010 negotiations were special for the FIQ, because it was negotiating for the first time for all the Class 1 healthcare professionals which they now represent.

The prevailing context at that time, frankly unfavourable to the labour movement and undermining public services, influenced the FIQ in the choice and the number of the priorities to submit, the position to take on the public stage, the type of mobilization to propose to the members and the strategies to promote to reach a satisfactory negotiated settlement.

**THE PERTINENCE OF MAKING ALLIANCES**

In combining the somewhat somber portrait of the context and the imposition of the 2005 decree, the FIQ chose to undertake the negotiations by making the strategic move of first participating in the SISP-Négociation (APTS, CSQ, FIQ, SFPQ, SPGQ), then in the Common Front with the CSN and the FTQ. Thus four subjects were dealt with at the intersectorial table of the Common Front: salaries, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities.

This new labour alliance, which made it possible to negotiate in the name of the 450,000 government employees, was the key to countering the government, from the onset, with a significant show of strength, making it politically impossible for a second decree.

The consultation conducted by the FIQ confirmed that the sharing of the matters to be negotiated between the sectorial (FIQ) and the intersectorial (Common Front) was completely appropriate and accepted by the majority of the members of the Federation.

In a context of alliances, the FIQ however, like the other labour organizations in the Common Front, did encounter a certain number of difficulties in its labour relationships. Take the difficulty that the FIQ had, within the strategic framework, of reaching an agreement in principle at the same time as the other unions in the Common Front. Also take the structural and functional difficulties and the questions linked to the identity, visibility and mobilization within the FIQ.

Alliances, for the delegates, are always included in the FIQ's struggles and even more during a time of negotiations. The FIQ has to take advantage of the experience of the last negotiations and take the necessary step back to evaluate the impacts of continuing or not to work in an alliance, structured or not, with the other labour organizations.

Belonging to the SISP and the creation of alliances will be evaluated this fall and discussions will be held at a later time at all levels of the Federation.

**NECESSARY CHANGES**

All the other subjects specifically linked to the reality of the workplace of the healthcare professionals were negotiated at the sectorial table by the FIQ. The Federation proposed an important and audacious change in order to bring lasting and innovative

solutions to resolve the deteriorating conditions of practice.

The objective of the four major priorities of the FIQ, the recognition of inconveniences, the recognition of responsibilities, the recognition of additional training and the arrangement of work time, was the long-term survival of the public health network by insuring the quality of the services and access to care for the population. They also aimed to take into account family-personal life-work balance as well as the recognition of the healthcare professionals.

The employer offers however were discouraging and the FIQ chose to pursue the battle. A petition with more than 126,000 signatures, hundreds of demonstrations, a musical theme, "pop-up" events across Québec, camping in front of the National Assembly, all of this and much more over a period of 18 months. The originality and creativity of the FIQ were on the agenda.

All the groups met during the consultation confirmed that they supported the FIQ's strategy and that it was a defining moment in the last negotiations. The union reps are proud of it. They also indicated that a broader consultation and validation of the major priorities would indicate to the FIQ how the healthcare professionals see the application of these priorities in their workplaces.

The decisions taken at this Federal Council will make it possible to better prepare for the next round of negotiations, scheduled in 2015. ■



At the microphone:  
1. Martine Côté, CSSS de Chicoutimi