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ENVIRONMENT: IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP!

The environment is a hot topic of conversation, a subject that concerns everyone—including healthcare professionals. Indeed, healthcare professionals witness firsthand the effects of the environment on their patients' health.

As a labour organization focused on health, the FIQ intends to play a key political and social part in the environmental debate in the years to come. As the political officer for the Youth Committee, I sincerely believe that young healthcare professionals can make a real difference in this issue: they have the power to influence the Federation's direction in terms of its role and level of involvement.

Our theme for the 13th edition of the Youth Network held on April 11 and 12, 2017, was "Environment: It's Time to Speak Up!" These motivated and inspiring youth made the Network a success and raised important issues that could influence the future actions of the Federation.

Marie-Claude Ouellet, Political Officer, Youth Committee

The next generation...

At the microphone: Mélyna Désy-Bédard, CISSS de l'Outaouais





Laure Waridel, Executive Director, Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche en opérationnalisation du développement durable (CIRODD)

L'ENVERS DE L'ASSIETTE

Laure Waridel, a founder of Équiterre, started off the Youth Network's two-day meeting on the environment. Her conference entitled "L'envers de l'assiette" gave participants a better understanding of the issues around the production, consumption and disposal of food products.

Ms. Waridel spoke about where products that we consume on a daily basis come from and their impact on the environment. Countries that produce these products that are in high demand, and on which their economies are often dependent, are sometimes tempted to increase production without taking environmental impact into account.

For several years, we have also been contributing to the loss of species diversity (biodiversity), through our use of monoculture farms designed to meet the populations' ever-increasing needs. These farms become disproportionately large and are run by just a few people who own major corporations, which exploit people in developing countries. More and more, we are seeing the relationship of cause and effect between particular diseases and agricultural chemicals. This type of agriculture increases social inequality and impacts the social determinants of health by keeping part of the population in poverty while simultaneously reducing their life expectancy.

Ms. Waridel highlighted that 30% to 40% of food is wasted. This significant percentage illustrates how famines are caused not by a lack of food but rather a lack of justice.

Laure Waridel suggests four principles called the 3N's-F to help people make better food choices:

N-P for Non-Packaged: Choose foods that are Non-Packaged or with packaging that is reusable, recyclable or compostable. N-P also stands for sharing food with people.

NF for Not Far: Buy local and from farmers' markets.

N for Foods that are Natural: Choose products that are Natural. You can integrate this principle into your daily life by buying organic food, which supports organic farming, as well as by cooking rather than buying ready-made food.

F for Fair: Choose foods that are Fair. It is important to choose food based on ethical criteria. This way we help to democratize the economy, reduce economic inequality and protect the environment.

Laure Waridel believes that social engagement helps make people happier.

"I've always done it like that."

We held an ice-breaker activity to encourage participants to mingle, talk and get to know each other in a playful atmosphere.

Each participant was asked to stand up, put on their coat and notice which arm they started the action with. Then, everyone was asked to take off their coat and put it back on, but starting with the other arm.

While seemingly trivial, this activity illustrates how easily we develop unconscious habits and how our usual way of doing things can sometimes block us from starting new habits. At the same time, it demonstrates that it is possible to do things differently and just as efficiently.

In round-table discussions, participants then discussed habits and quickly identified the connection with their own ways of doing things with respect to the environment.



Ms. Waridel highlighted that 30% to 40% of food is wasted.



Marie-Pascale Deegan and Rosalie Laframboise, activists from the *Regroupement vigilance hydrocarbures Québec* (RVHQ)

HOW HYDROCARBONS AFFECT OUR HEALTH

Marie-Pascale Deegan and Rosalie Laframboise, two activists from the *Regroupement vigilance hydrocarbures Québec* (RVHQ), an organization that represents 130 citizen committees across Québec, presented the state of the hydrocarbon projects in Québec to the Network participants and explained how hydrocarbons affect our health.

As healthcare professionals, the participants greatly appreciated hearing how hydrocarbons affect physical and psychological health, which, in the end, also has an impact on their workload.

WHAT IS A HYDROCARBON?

Although this word is in the media more and more, its meaning is more or less well known. As Mesdames Deegan and Laframboise explained, hydrocarbons are fossil energy like oil, natural gas and coal. Because these resources have been harvested for many decades, why then such an outcry over the last little while? The reason for the mobilization against these projects, in Québec and elsewhere in Canada, is that the conventional hydrocarbon deposits are decreasing and are therefore becoming increasingly rare. Thus, the companies that harness them, must be able to fall back on the so-called non-conventional hydrocarbons, like shale gas, which are much more difficult to harness and which also have much greater devastating consequences on the environment.

In Québec, the areas affected by future hydrocarbon projects are, in particular, the Gaspésie, Anticosti, Lotbinière and Bécancour. A particularly disturbing element for them is the recent dismantling of the regulatory protective

measures by the Government of Québec. In fact, last December, the government passed Bill 106, under closure, which henceforth allows the expropriation of a citizen by industry, oil and gas exploration and exploitation as well as hydraulic fracturing.

HOW DO THEY IMPACT OUR HEALTH?

Non-conventional hydrocarbon exploitation requires massive installations that endanger the health of the communities around them. In fact, removing oil shale gas requires drilling a borehole 2,000 meters deep to which is attached tunnels also measuring 2,000 metres. The problem? These "arms" which help in removing the hydrocarbons go underground beneath agricultural land and houses. One can easily imagine the disastrous consequences that would result from a leak or accident releasing these toxic chemicals into the environment.

The situation related by the speakers from the RVHQ is alarming. According to recent research, 4,000 people a day die in China because of poor air quality. This is primarily due to particulates produced by the combustion of hydrocarbons which get stuck in the lungs. In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revealed, in 2016, a direct connection between hydraulic



Audrey Bélanger, CISSS de Lanaudière

fracturing and the contamination of drinking water. In fact, in order to extract the oil, several chemical products are used in the shale gas exploitation process and contaminate the surrounding water. In addition, the pollutants emitted linked to shale gas exacerbate respiratory problems, including asthma, in the populations affected. The impacts of the oil spills, including the toxic fumes, cannot be ignored as they endanger the health of the workers who have to repair the damage and that of the people in general. Moreover the impacts on physical health, the disorders linked to noise and fumes as well as stress and anxiety affect the mental health of the people affected by the hydrocarbon projects.

Who, at the end of the day, has to take care of all these people who develop health problems linked, in one way or another, to the dependence on hydrocarbons or even their exploitation? Healthcare professionals, of course!

HOW TO REACT?

Because of the magnitude of the challenge, activist commitment, is without a doubt, the key to a change in direction on hydrocarbons. The speakers from RVHQ therefore invited the Youth Network participants to get informed, involved and commit to the fight against hydrocarbons. It is an important battle that affects healthcare professionals, who have a particular interest in health issues and are citizens.

All these projects are obviously there to support the growing needs of the population, which cause more public health problems. Think, for example, of the dependence on cars which has contributed to increasing obesity in western societies. This style of sedentary life, closely linked to the dependence on hydrocarbons, also has significant consequences on health.



THE FIQ, SOON TO BE 30

The FIQ will be holding its triannual Convention and celebrating its 30th anniversary in the fall of 2017. Nice surprises await the union representatives of the Federation at that time. With this major event in mind, two members of the team organizing the 2017 Convention took advantage of the Youth Network meeting to take the pulse of the participants in round-table discussions. With the theme of “30 years through the eyes of those age 30 and younger”, here are a few of the questions that helped to make the discussions lively:

- What are the historic moments that define the Federation?
- What does a young healthcare professional first hear when she asks her more experienced colleagues about the FIQ?

Photos: Julie Rioux and Marc-Antoine Durand-Allard, Union Consultants, 2017 Convention Team



Geneviève Aude Puskas, Consultant – climate and energy changes, speaker, Équiterre

CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS AND SOLUTIONS

Over the last few years, the Équiterre organization has become a reference in environmental matters in Québec. At the last meeting of the Youth Network, the participants had an opportunity to listen to and to discuss climate change with the speaker, Geneviève Aude Puskas.

CLIMATE CHANGE: FACT OR MYTH?

At a time when the top leaders in the United States are questioning the data on climate change, some people doubt the importance of this issue for today's societies. However, climate change, far from being a myth, is a very real threat even in the short term. Ms Puskas brilliantly presented the facts around this change in temperature, unprecedented in modern history, to the young members present.

Obviously, faced with particularly cold winters or chilly summers, certain people are questioning whether climate change is real. So, as explained by Ms. Puskas, there is a difference between the climate, which is measured over several decades, and the weather, which is evaluated day-to-day. In fact, since the beginning of the industrial age, around 1840, scientists have measured an accelerated increase in average temperatures. This is why many countries, including Canada, committed in December 2015, as part of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to take concrete measures to limit the rise in average temperatures to 2° C to preserve human biodiversity and health. The intention is commendable, but are governments keeping their promise?

According to Geneviève Aude Puskas, to reach this objective, the areas which cause the most greenhouse gas must be tackled

first. Generally, it is transportation and industry which causes the most pollution by emitting 41% and 31.4% respectively of all the greenhouse gas. Note that, in Québec, the industries that pollute the most are aluminium, concrete and refineries.

In Alberta, a Canadian province particularly affected by the exploitation of shale gas, the impacts on the health of aboriginal people are significant. Research shows there's an imbalanced ratio of girl vs. boy births and serious asthma problems. Moreover, the smog caused by greenhouse gas throughout Canada causes changes in heart rate as well as respiratory problems.

SOLUTIONS EXIST, BUT WHERE DO WE START?

The objectives of the major conferences on the environment often seem very vague and intangible. Where do we start on a daily basis to address climate change?

First, Ms. Puskas proposes encouraging a cocktail of transportation, that is, to combine public transit, biking, carpooling and the car instead of the car always being the primary means of transit. Major progress has been made over the last few years in this respect. Young people are getting their driver's licences later than ever and often opt for public transit. Moreover, the cost of electric cars and hybrids is



Modeline Jean-Charles, CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal



Kevin Mailloux, CHU de Québec-Université Laval

becoming much cheaper, which adds to their growing popularity. In addition, technological innovations are now helping to build energy-efficient buildings that consume less electricity and hydrocarbons, which then produces less greenhouse gas.

However, like with many battles, the most promising solution is that of collective action. In many cases, only the mobilization of several fronts (unions, citizen groups, environmental groups, aboriginal communities) can truly stop the hydrocarbon exploitation projects and force governments to act. Do not forget that the Government of Canada spends 3.3 billion dollars annually to support the fossil energy industry. Imagine what the citizens and the environmental groups could accomplish in clean energy with that kind of funding!

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, A PHILOSOPHY TO CULTIVATE

To conclude her presentation, Geneviève Aude Puskas presented the young participants with the concept of sustainable development. This notion supports encouraging balanced development between economic, social and environmental interests. Presently, western societies run on the dictates of the economy and industry, to the detriment of working conditions, people's health and the conservation of the environment. It must be remembered that oil was not always the first source of energy. Energy transition is possible. The labour organizations, including the FIQ, can make a unique and important contribution to this battle.



At the microphone:

1. Jessika Pépin, Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Sherbrooke
2. Daniel Perrier, CISSS des Laurentides



BEING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN

In the second presentation, Geneviève Aude Puskas set about explaining the concept of eco-citizenship. This vision of citizen responsibility involves making lifestyle changes and being aware of how your lifestyle affects the planet.

Today, we have better-documented information on the devastating effects of globalization on human rights, work conditions and health. Consequently, citizens are more informed when it comes to buying products. For example, buying goods that are very cheap means that, ultimately, someone else is paying for the purchase.

Being an eco-citizen also means thinking about the life cycle of the products we use. A product is first manufactured from raw materials, then transported, distributed, used and eventually arrives at the end of its life cycle. Each one of these steps has an impact on the environment. Reducing, reusing, recycling and repurposing products are four essential ways to sharpen your eco-citizen reflexes

and reduce your environmental footprint.

To better define the steps of a product's life cycle, the Youth Network participants were asked to describe, with the help of some questions, the life cycle of products placed on different tables (e.g., computer equipment, a battery, a plastic pen).

Ms. Puskas ended her presentation with some suggestions and tips to raise awareness among the young healthcare professionals on the importance of being eco-responsible. She also mentioned that eco-citizenship means getting involved in public discussions to speak out against aberrations and, in particular, to propose solutions for the future.

In 2016, Émilie Racine participated in the internship in Nicaragua to raise awareness of international solidarity organized by the FIQ. At the Youth Network, she explained how this experience helped her gain a deeper understanding of environmental issues. For one, she became aware of the major inequalities between North America and South and Central America, and she also learned how our actions have a major impact on populations in other countries.



Émilie Racine, CIUSSS du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean

BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY: FINDING THE FIQ'S ROLE

After this second presentation by Ms. Puskas, half of the participants were asked to brainstorm on what the ideal role of the FIQ would be in ten years if it got involved in environmental initiatives starting today. Meanwhile, the other half of participants brainstormed as well, but on the potential catastrophic effects if the FIQ decided not to get involved. Everyone then shared their conclusions and identified possible solutions to achieve the "ideal scenario", or at the very least, avoid the "catastrophic scenario".



YOUTH POW-WOW

At the Youth Network, the pow-wow is a formula which has proven effective in helping the participants assimilate the concepts addressed during the presentations.

Here are a few of the questions that they had to answer and their responses:

Spending a day in Peking is equivalent to smoking how many cigarettes?

- a) Between 5 and 10
- b) Between 11 and 20
- c) Between 21 and 40

Answer: c

In March, Équiterre revealed that Montrealers are exposed every day to Atrazine, a dangerous pesticide. How are the residents of Montréal affected?

- a) By the water that they drink
- b) By the air that they breathe
- c) By the food that they eat

Answer: a

One hour cutting the lawn equals how many kilometres travelled by car?

- a) 260 km
- b) 490 km
- c) 320 km

Answer: c

True or false? The number of deaths every year attributed to climate change is 300,000.

Answer: true

In which season is a smog phenomenon most likely to occur?

- a) Summer
- b) Winter
- c) Fall
- d) All seasons

Answer: d



Generation

