

UNWAVERING IN THE FACE OF TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES

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TOGETHER

13TH CONVENTION OF THE FIQ
CENTRE DES CONGRÈS DE QUÉBEC
JUNE 2—6, 2025

DECISION

A25-C-I-D8

D8

Policy Implementation and Monitoring Committee
on the Fair Representation of Women in Positions
of Power and Decision-Making



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The Policy Implementation and Monitoring Committee's (PIMC) work is the result of the necessary reflection on the place of female union reps in the organization and the possible obstacles they face. Initiated by members of the Intersyndicale des femmes in a publication¹, this reflection highlighted the continuing resistance to the role of women in Quebec's union structures. While this was obviously an issue for unions with a majority of men, it was surprising that the FIQ, which has had a majority of women since it was founded, would be faced with this issue.

When the Status of Women Sector addressed the issue of the place of its female union reps in the organization, one finding emerged: we observed less women participating in the different union decision-making bodies. This observation coincided with the various reforms and austerity measures to which the health and social services network was subjected. For the Federation, which had enjoyed a degree of stability and homogeneity since its creation, this has meant that it has had to review its structures and composition, going from the FIIQ to the FIIQ+, and lastly to the FIQ today.

While delegates and union teams faced many challenges, experienced by some as a forced marriage, the FIQ delegation, which has always advocated feminist values and the involvement of its female union reps, not only had to adapt and observe what was happening, but also put in place measures to facilitate the participation of all in union democracy and take concrete action to ensure the representativeness of its members.

Origins of the PIMC

In June 2018, the Status of Women Sector presented the Policy on the Fair Representation of Women in Positions of Power and Decision-Making at the FIQ to the delegation which adopted it. One of the aims of this policy was to achieve a 75% target of women participating in all decision-making bodies, such as the Convention, Provincial Council, by pursuing the following objectives:

- To promote equitable representation of union reps;
- To work on sexual and sexist stereotypes;
- To involve the men in the delegation as allies;
- To support the women who want to stand for election;
- To involve the union teams.

The PIMC is an ad hoc committee composed of 11 union reps. It was subsequently appointed to draw up an initial action plan, which was adopted by the delegation in December 2018. The second PIMC action plan was adopted in June 2021. The PIMC reports, presented at every convention should be accompanied by regular, quantified monitoring of changes in women's participation in federal councils, conventions, FIQ committees and affiliated unions.

¹ Intersyndicale des femmes, *Réalité, perceptions et résistances, la place des femmes dans nos organisations syndicales*, 2014.

From the policy to action plans

During the 2018-2021 mandate, the PIMC was able, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, to implement several elements of the action plan, including:

- A trial meeting schedule implemented in March 2019;
- A Support Measures Guide intended for affiliated unions in December 2019;
- A virtual training program on adding your voice at meetings in 2020;
- Pre-election training available on the AGORA-FIQ platform.

However, the measure which usually leads to significant results in encouraging the involvement of women in organizations was not set up: the mentorship program pilot project, which also included training.

Moreover, the first action plan did not achieve the target initially set. In fact, 68% of the positions of affiliated union presidents were held by women, union teams were composed of 70.5% of women on average, and the latter were present at 72% in the decision-making bodies².

The job turned out to be more complex during the PIMC's second mandate (2021-2025) because of several factors, such as managing the meeting days due to the high number of union reps, the absence of certain union reps, and a pause in meetings due to negotiations. Consequently, several actions had to be abandoned, including a consultation of union reps on developing a training to encourage women to actively take part in union life. In addition, a feasibility study on offering daycare services at decision-making bodies was to be conducted, but was compromised in the post-pandemic context, where the services were no longer accessible, which prevented this evaluation from being completed.

Despite the challenges, in May 2023, the PIMC benefitted from the expertise of Marie-Pier Bernard Pelletier, a doctoral student in the Department of Industrial Relations at Université Laval, who gave a talk to committee members on the theme of "Gender relations and union leadership". The speaker asked the following question: "How do the obstacles and levers to accessing and maintaining union leadership differ between women and men, and what are the differences in exercising their union leadership?" The committee members were able to identify the factors that can affect men and women differently, such as gender stereotypes, family and domestic responsibilities, imposter syndrome, the masculine culture of unionism, and the role of natural caregiver.

Meeting schedules and participating in a hybrid mode

The PIMC actively collaborated with the Secretariat for decision-making bodies to develop a questionnaire in order to document the delegates' perception of the new trial meeting schedule, adopted in 2018, then modified with the addition of the hybrid mode. The objective was to give a report on this mode of participation in decision-making bodies at the Federal Council in December 2023. This new schedule, combined with the hybrid mode, aimed to achieve three objectives:

- To balance work-family-union rep responsibilities;
- To promote women taking part in democratic decision-making bodies;
- To maintain the right to vote, regardless of the mode of participation.

² 2021-2025 Action plan, Policy Implementation and Monitoring Committee, RFIQ-A21-C-I-D8.

The PIMC members therefore formulated the data requirements in order to first validate the union reps' adherence to the schedule, and, secondly, to verify whether the hybrid mode met the union reps' needs. The questionnaire was designed to gather the following information:

- Sociodemographic information, such as gender, region, age, as well as the family or personal situation;
- The circumstances or obstacles which prevent union reps from traveling to meetings;
- The reasons determining the time of arrival of delegates at meetings;
- Information on the use of the expense policy for daycare expenses;
- The impacts of the new modes of participation (virtual and in-person) on how the vote is held and on speaking at meetings.

The answers from the 272 delegates surveyed in October 2023 verified that the trial schedule made the personal and work life balance of respondents easier, and they wanted to keep it in place. And the hybrid mode was not a barrier to their participation: they could attend the meeting, speak at the meeting and vote.

Where does the FIQ stand, ten years after the policy was adopted?

If the policy and work of the PIMC resulted in implementing structural measures, such as an organization of the meeting schedules and creating tools and training in order to take action on gender socialization, the 75% target of women participating in the various bodies was not achieved.

In 2015, the female-male proportion in the delegation was 75%. In 2024, it is 72%, reaching a low of 69% in December 2023. So despite the efforts made and the measures identified in the two successive action plans, the initial objective has not been achieved.

Hence, 2025 will mark a new turning point for this policy, which will need to be adapted, as will the resulting action plan. It will be essential to focus more on the socialization factors that foster the leadership of union reps and integrate a broader approach, taking into account the anti-racist focus voted for at the 2021 Convention. There will be no shortage of challenges, particularly with the creation of the government corporation Santé Québec, which will once again change the organization and its composition. Furthermore, the social and political climate, marked by the rise of conservatism and the setback to the rights of women and people of diversity means that the FIQ must step up its actions to preserve the gains made and continue the fight for fair representation.

Recommendations

The Executive Committee recommends:

- That the trial meeting schedule be permanent.
- That the *Add your voice to debates 2* training session be given to the delegation in the year following the Convention.
- That the *Support Guide* intended for affiliated unions be updated and developed in line with the evolution of the FIQ's orientations.
- That a consultation of union reps be conducted to identify their training needs to encourage their participation in union democracy.

Recommendations for the long-term future of the Policy Implementation and Monitoring Committee's (PIMC) work

Considering the values and principles in the FIQ's Statement of Principles;

Considering the proportion of members, the majority of whom are women, and the need to encourage the involvement of new union reps;

Considering the Policy's objectives, namely

- Fair representation as an equality issue,
- To fight against sexual and sexist stereotypes that persist,
- The importance of making allies aware,
- To support women who want to run for election,
- The importance of the union teams' role.

Considering the orientation of the 2021 Convention: Women fighting against systemic racism, and that the Policy does not contain this dimension;

Considering the purpose of the Policy, which is to rectify the tendency and to aim for 75% representation in FIQ structures, and that this target was not reached in several of the FIQ structures;

Considering that the PIMC is not a permanent committee but must continue its work;

The Executive Committee recommends:

- That the Status of Women Sector update the Policy on the Fair Representation of Women in Positions of Power, taking into account the orientations of the 2021 and 2025 Conventions, as well as the social and political issues, and propose an overhaul of the Policy to the Executive Committee.
- That the PIMC continue its work but will be dissolved at the Federal Council in December 2026.
- That the new ad hoc committee be composed of union reps appointed by the members of the Executive Committee, namely two union reps from the Status of Women Committee, two union reps from the Anti-Racism Committee, and two members of the Youth committee, as of December 2026.
- That the new Committee present a report to each convention on the participation of women and racialized people in federal councils, conventions and FIQ committees, as soon as it is given the mandate to apply the policy.

NOTES

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