

CARNET COLLÉGIAL

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Fédération nationale
des enseignantes
et des enseignants
du Québec

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L'éducation publique
et accessible, une priorité
pour le Québec!

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du Collège François-Xavier-Gamelin

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A NEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

With the new provisions of the collective agreement now signed, an important page in the union life of CEGEP teachers has been turned. This last round of collective bargaining was marked by several important events, including the creation of an unprecedented Common Front, a sectoral agreement that resolves a number of problems, even if only partially in some cases, and an agreement at the central table that, on pay at least, clearly falls short of our members' most conservative expectations.

The bargaining review and assessment committee will present its analysis and recommendations after the summer break, when we will be able to have a broad-based debate on it. This will be a very important step in preparing for the next round of negotiations.

I would like to use this space in this academic year's last issue of *Carnet collégial* to highlight the exceptional work done by all the members of the strategy committee and the bargaining and mobilization committee. Their work was difficult, very demanding and required a lot of intellectual rigour. A number of issues required very specific, detailed technical skills and many political decisions demanded great maturity. The bargaining and mobilization committee always measured up to the task at hand. Real team work was needed to identify our way forward and avoid the various obstacles so that bargaining talks could continue. The work took place on several levels: co-ordinating mobilization and information, depending on whether or not there was movement in talks at the bargaining tables; the various decision-making bodies, in particular for the *Regroupement Cégep*; and not to mention the work of sounding out members constantly. There were thrilling moments as well as more frustrating ones, like the blitz that was announced but never took place.



We mustn't leave out the tremendous work that went into preparing a very pedagogical training session, the rapid updating of guides and the creation of a new guide on the calculation of experience. All this showed great dedication on everyone's part!

But above all, I would like to acknowledge the ceaseless work of delegates in the *Regroupement Cégep*, who were extraordinarily attentive and took responsibility for bargaining at all times. Debates were difficult at times, and the choices not always obvious. But the *Regroupement Cégep* succeeded in preserving its cohesion, and I think that the negotiations left it stronger than before.

Finally, to all of you, union members, I say Bravo! for your participation in union meetings and your solidarity in action. Your participation will be needed again on other local and national issues. To be strong, a union federation has to be able to count on its members' involvement and commitment.

Micheline Thibodeau
FNEEQ Vice-president

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Why attach so much importance to the department?

The end of negotiations obliges us to review all the guides and documents put out by the FNEEQ. In this regard, the *A look at departments* training has been updated. We take this opportunity to present some of the main ideas in the guide and invite you to consult it. It is available on the FNEEQ web site. Since it is organized in modules, departments can choose the chapters that are more appropriate to their specific needs at a given time.

The organization of CEGEP teachers' work has some very specific characteristics. It is largely based on the departmental structure, the primary focal point for integrating new teachers.

CEGEPs are part of the realm of higher education

In the spirit of the Parent report, CEGEPs were to be a new level of education much closer to universities than to high school. This is why it seemed "natural" to group experts in a given field or discipline together in departments. Generally speaking, teaching at the college level requires a master's degree in the subject taught.

The departmental structure is thus an explicit recognition of the role of CEGEP teachers. Although programs are developed in accordance with skills determined on the basis of an analysis of the labour market situation, it is up to the departmental collective to organize course content, pedagogical policy, evaluation methods, etc. This is work that can only be done by the specialists in the discipline concerned.

A collegial approach to the work is crucial to quality teaching

The department is a place for consulting and co-ordinating on educational issues, in relation to the knowledge in a given discipline. Although an individual is elected

annually as department co-ordinator, this position certainly does not involve hierarchical responsibility. Departmental work is based on team work and the pursuit of consensus.

In addition to administrative duties, the department co-ordinator's role involves facilitating the life of the department – calling meetings, for example, ensuring that documents circulate and seeing to it that the departmental work plan is followed, ensuring that departmental decisions are transmitted to members, CEGEP management or the Commission of studies, as the case may be. This collegial way of working means that the department co-ordinator has to abide by mandates from the departmental meeting.

Collective autonomy

Collective autonomy takes the tangible form of regular active participation in departmental meetings. These are places for discussions on all aspects of departmental responsibilities. The most important of these is to ensure the quality of teaching, in part by adopting policies on course content, teaching and evaluation methods, as well as the mandates for the program committees. Department members have an obligation more or less to ensure the continuity and coherence of teaching.

Individual autonomy

This is based largely on the policies decided by the department, which



*Micheline Thibodeau
FNEEQ Vice-president*

is why participating in meetings is so essential. This autonomy comes into play in designing courses, supervising students, preparing teaching materials, organizing work-study tours abroad, etc. In short, individual autonomy is developed through a certain number of rules and shared objectives that orient how the profession is practised.

Why review these basic policies? Because constant vigilance is necessary to preserve what makes our college system specific in North America and Western countries. There are many who envy our college system, but others would like to standardize Québec's education system with the rest of Canada's. Since the department is the cornerstone of what makes us part of higher education, we have an obligation to preserve its fundamental nature. •

Will the planned increase in the actuarial penalty for the QPP affect the RREGOP?

As part of its budget, the government curiously chose to announce upcoming changes in the financing of the Québec Pension Plan (QPP). Although increases may be necessary to ensure the sustainability of the plan, it is fairly unusual to proceed like this. Nevertheless, the announcement has raised a lot of questions among members about the impact that the increased penalties contemplated for the QPP would have on the RREGOP (Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan). So how exactly will the announced changes affect benefits?



*Lise Pomerleau
FNEEQ Union Advisor*

First, let's look at the measures announced in relation to financing of the QPP. The contribution rate for employees will rise gradually from 4.95% of pensionable earnings to 5.4% in 2017 – an increase of 0.15 percentage points a year. As well, the actuarial penalty, that is now 6% per year of retirement before the age of 65 will start going up as of January 1st, 2014, to reach 7.2% by 2016. For a person who begins drawing QPP pension benefits at age 60, benefits would be reduced by 36% instead of 30%, as is now the case.

The RREGOP is co-ordinated with the QPP. This means that the contributions we pay into the RREGOP are lower than they would be otherwise. For a person who earns the equivalent of the MPE throughout all the years she or he pays into the RREGOP, the

pension at age 65 is reduced by 35%. If the person's earnings exceeded the maximum pensionable earnings (MPE), the reduction is slightly less than 35%. (MPE stands for maximum pensionable earnings, the earnings on which contributions must be paid to the Québec Pension Plan. It is adjusted each year. For 2011, the MPE is \$48,300.)

The co-ordination of RREGOP benefits with QPP benefits applies at age 65 in the following way:

You first have to calculate the RREGOP benefits, i.e., the average earnings for the 5 best years X 2% X the number of years of contributory service.

Take the fictitious case of a woman who retires on her 60th birthday on January 1st, 2011, with 33 years of contributory service. To simplify, we'll ignore any indexation of benefits.

Suppose that her average earnings for her 5 best years is \$70,000.

She will receive RREGOP benefits equal to \$70,000 X 2% X 33, or \$46,200.

When she turns 65, her RREGOP pension will be reduced because of

the co-ordination of her pension with the QPP. The reduction corresponds to 0.7% multiplied by the MPE for the last five years multiplied by the number of years of contributory service for the RREGOP, up to a maximum of 35 years. Note that the potential three additional years of RREGOP contributions obtained in the last round of negotiations are not co-ordinated with the QPP.

Suppose that the average MPE for the last five years for the person in our example is \$38,000. The reduction in benefits would equal \$38,000 X 0.7% X 33, or \$7,980. So co-ordination means that the pension benefits received from the RREGOP at age 65 would be \$38,960 (\$46,200 minus \$7,980).

She can apply for her QPP pension at age 60. If her QPP pension is equal to \$800 a month, she will receive \$9,600 a year. But since she is taking her pension 5 years before the normal retirement age for the QPP, this amount will be reduced by a penalty of 30%, or \$9,600 X 70% = \$6,720. If these are her only sources of retirement income, her income will be \$52,920.

If the QPP actuarial penalty announced in the budget becomes 7.2% for each year the pension is

taken early, the only effect will be to reduce total pension income, without affecting the RREGOP portion, since the co-ordination continues to be calculated as a reduction of 0.7% times the average PME for the 5 best years multiplied by the number of years of service contributed to the RREGOP for a maximum of 35 years.

So with the increase in the actuarial penalty announced in the budget for the QPP, the person in our example who takes her QPP pension early would see her total pension at age 60 go down from 52,920 (\$46,200 + \$6,720) to \$52,344 (\$46,200 + \$6,144). Since the actuarial penalty rises from 30% to 36% for the QPP pension, the QPP pension would be $\$9,600 \times 64\% = \$6,144$.

This penalty wouldn't affect the RREGOP pension, since they are governed by two separate laws. Remember, one of management's demands in the last round of bargaining was for an increase from 4% to 6% in the actuarial penalty for each year that the RREGOP pension was taken early.

We have just learned with stupefaction that the MELS wants to do budget cuts of more than 30 M \$ in the CEGEP network.

The budget for the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) is slightly more than \$15 billion – an increase of 2.2% over the previous year. Of this, almost \$2 billion (\$1.994 billion) is allocated to CEGEPs – an increase of 5.6%. However, the budget for CEGEPs includes service on the debt, support for partners of higher education and provisions for the harmonization of the method for accounting for fixed assets. Taking just the operating budget, i.e., what is allocated for the mission and regular operations of CEGEPs, the growth is only 3.4%. The average growth in budgets for CEGEPs since the 2008-2009 budget has been 2.8%. Moreover, the proportion of the budget for higher education allocated to CEGEPs has grown steadily since the 2009-2010 budget, going from 39.6% up to 40.3%, with a corresponding decline in the share going to universities. For comparison purposes, the growth in the 2011-2012 budgets over 2010-2011 for school boards was 3%, and for universities, 2.8%. So CEGEPs are, relatively speaking, the level of education that is the penalized the least by government choices.

There is absolutely nothing added for the development of education at the college level. The budget increase is entirely due to rising systemic costs (about 0.45%) and the implementation of the agreements on additional resources reached in the public sector and in particular CEGEPs, as well as the normal increase in various operating costs, even taking into account the application of Bill 100 on the reduction of administrative personnel and travel, advertising and other administrative expenses.

In short, a lacklustre budget without any vision for college education – much like the rest of the budget, in fact.

Breaking the silence: a shared responsibility

“Breaking the silence: a shared responsibility” was the theme for the very successful first Conference for action against homophobia in the education system, which was held April 14-15, with Mr. Martin Larocque as honorary president. Mr. Larocque is a well-known actor who played the role of Hercule in Virginie, a TV show.

*Dominique Dubuc
Teacher at Cégep de Sherbrooke*

One of the highlights of the conference was unquestionably the talk given by Mr. Bill Ryan, professor and researcher at McGill University. With his trademark eloquence and especially his thorough knowledge of the issue, he captivated us with an overview of the situation of sexual minorities around the world. Yes, there are still about ten countries that officially impose the death penalty for homosexual activities. And in about 80 countries, homosexuality is still a crime punishable by imprisonment. Relatively few countries offer any legal protection at all against discrimination. In this regard, Canada stands out as a champion, offering its gay and lesbian citizens full equality at all levels, with the government being responsible for overseeing the implementation of those rights.

But legal equality is not social equality. As Mr. Ryan pointed out, just try walking hand-in-hand with someone of the same sex in downtown Montréal. You will more than likely be viewed with distaste or scorn by others, and perhaps even subjected to verbal or physical violence.

We would like to think that some of the experiences illustrated in the play *Le cri du miroir* (GRIS- Chaudière-Appalaches) are caricatures, or that the same could be said of the examples cited by Line Chamberland, a

researcher who has just completed a study on *L’Impact de l’homophobie et de la violence homophobe sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaire au niveau scolaire et collegial* (The impact of homophobia and homophobic violence on dropping out and academic success at the school and college levels). Unfortunately, the truth is that homophobia in our elementary schools, high schools and even CEGEPs is still responsible for human tragedies. This intimidation, harassment and violence affects in particular young gays, lesbians, bisexuals and those wondering about their orientation, but it affects young heterosexuals too, who suffer all the more if they don’t conform to social stereotypes of gender.

Ms. Chamberland’s empirical data shed light on what the situation really is. Though some of her report’s conclusions are predictable (for example, that homophobia affects the dropout rates and academic success of gay and lesbian youth), her study also shatters certain myths: it seems, for example, that experiences in institutions in large urban centres are no easier than those prevailing in more remote areas.

A number of workshops were a chance to explore in more depth specific realities like children in homoparental families, or transgendered or transsexual youth. These young people get very little support in our institutions and encounter and run up against abysmal ignorance and misunderstanding of their lives and experiences. Above

all, the workshops gave us some practical tools for helping to create a safer, healthier environment for young people in our institutions.

We saw that there are a number of actions that can be effective in combatting homophobia, some of them very simple. For example, students who belong to sexual minorities are especially sensitive to teachers’ remarks about sexual minorities, regardless of the sexual orientation of the teacher who makes them. It’s important to realize that our gestures and actions, however small, can have a decisive impact on some young people. As well, the absence of tangible signs of openness, or the use of non-inclusive language, can be interpreted negatively by a young person who is thinking about coming out.

We can’t give an exhaustive list here of all the effective measures that can be taken in school environments, but it is clear that basically we have to begin by refusing to tolerate homophobia when we see it, and not assume that our students are heterosexual. The resources presented at the conference will be available soon under the “Documentation” tab of this web site: <http://homophobie2011.org>.

It takes visible, tangible, regular and, ideally, concerted gestures and actions to put a stop once and for all to the endemic homophobia – at times dismissed as trivial, at times insidious – that can persist in our institutions. •

Forums on matching training with jobs

Where is the government headed?



Jean Trudelle
FNEEQ President

The consultation paper instead outlines a number of findings related to the government's estimate that there will be 700,000 positions in the labour market to be filled by 2014, and that 400,000 people will be needed to meet demands for labour by 2019. How can these goals be met, quantitatively and qualitatively?

In this context, and after identifying a certain number of leading aspects of the current situation, the government invites regional actors (excluding the representatives of teachers' unions) to share their ideas for improving the match between training and jobs, attracting more students in value-added fields of work and innovating in continuing education.

The general way things are presented suggests that there won't be much questioning of initial training – for example, the array of programs offered is only evoked indirectly in the background paper. So in theory, it is more a matter of meeting the needs of business for professional development of workers already employed and job entry or re-entry. The CSN participated in

Reading the consultation paper put together to serve as the starting point for Minister Line Beauchamp's regional forums, it's impossible to figure out where the government intends to go when it comes to matching training with jobs. There will be 17 regional forums on this issue in April and May, and a national forum on June 13-14 to sum up discussions and identify areas of consensus. Sponsored by two ministries – Labour and Education – that usually tend to work in silos instead of working together – this consultation does not propose clear policy directions for the worlds of work and education to respond to.

nearly all the regional forums and prepared along these lines, as did the regional committees of labour-market partners (*Comités régionaux des partenaires du marché du travail* (CRPMT)).

The FNEEQ is concerned, however, that such broad discussions may overflow into issues of initial training. And on this, we have very firm positions. On some matters, like a larger role for CEGEPs in continuing education, we are likely to be in agreement with a number of stakeholders. There is a certain degree of anarchy in the offer of short programs at the college level, the closed budget envelopes for continuing education seriously handicaps the contribution that CEGEPs can make in this field and the competition between and within levels of education means that the establishment of clear guidelines is necessary.

But there are other debates that could emerge. We have always been in favour of technical training that gives students a good degree of autonomy in the labour market, which means they need generic training programs

rather than the “turnkey” or very job-specific approach sometimes demanded by some employers. We think that respect for this basic principle requires the development of a culture of school-to-work transition in companies, rather than the adjustment of initial training programs to specific needs.

As these lines are written, it is hard to predict which direction the regional consultations will take. But the FNEEQ intends to track them closely and would like to participate actively in the June national meeting.*



Hoted by:

 CÉGEP DE LÉVIS-LAUZON
La passion du savoir

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