

CSQ

MAGAZINE

SOLIDARITY THROUGH CHANGE

A women's crisis
.....

Sonia Ethier: looking back
.....

Activism in a transformed
world



**Centrale des syndicats
du Québec**

Special Edition Summer 2021





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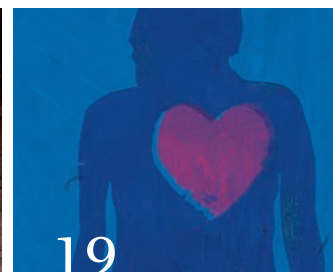
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CSQ Magazine Volume 36, SE2 Official publication of the Centrale des syndicats du Québec, 9405 Sherbrooke St. East, Montréal, Québec, H1L 6P3, Phone 514 356-8888, Fax 514 356-9999, E-mail magazine@lacsq.org / Director of Communications Catherine Gauthier / Chief Editor Audrey Parenteau / Production Secretary France Giroux / Translation Annie-Danielle Grenier, Suzanne Lepage, Caroline Richer / Revision Dominique Carle / Photos Archives FIPEQ-CSQ, François Beauregard, iStock, Frédéric Lavoie, Pascal Rathé / Illustrations Lino / Legal deposit Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Library and Archives Canada. ISSN 2561-3685 / Printing Impression F.L. Chicoine

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Desjardins

A LONG TRADITION OF FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Through the School Caisse, Desjardins has been educating young Quebecers about saving for over 100 years.

Mélanie Beaudoin and Claude Genest
Fédération des caisses
Desjardins du Québec

On December 6, 1900, Alphonse Desjardins founded North America's first financial cooperative in Lévis with the help of his wife, Dorimène, and volunteers. The Caisse de Lévis was the first of 136 caisses in Quebec, 19 in Ontario and 9 in the US.

With a view to raise the public's financial literacy, the cooperative included education in its original articles and bylaws. Section 2 highlights the "invaluable benefits of wise foresight" and section 54 allows for the creation of a "special savings plan for children"—a precursor to the School Caisse as we know it today.

Financial literacy has been a priority for Desjardins ever since. This tradition has translated into many initiatives over the years, reaching a large and diverse population. In addition to School Caisse, which started popping up across the province in 1907, the cooperative distributed budgeting folders, school stamps to help students save, and even a vinyl record that explained how to make a budget. Plus, the TV show *Joindre les deux bouts* debuted in 1958, going on to attract nearly 1 million viewers.

The tradition continues today. Rolled out in 21 regions of Quebec and Ontario, Desjardins's Personal Finance: I'm in Charge!®, the financial literacy program for young adults, offers a distinctive approach tailored to young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are faced with making their own financial decisions for the first time. It is offered by external partners throughout Quebec, who ensure that the program is delivered in a neutral way. A complete list of the program's 104 partners is available on desjardins.com.

As for the School Caisse, which has its own website (schoolcaisse.com), it keeps going strong with the help of parents and education professionals. In addition to teaching kids the value of money and consumer goods, the School Caisse shows them the importance of setting savings goals, respecting commitments and managing money well. In line with Desjardins' original mission, the School Caisse's tradition continues to this day.



LOOKING BACK ON AN EVENTFUL TERM

Sonia Ethier, a woman of action and grassroots activist, carried out her mandate as CSQ president with great resolve, advocating for the interests of the Centrale's 200,000 members. Having served three years as president and six within the Executive Committee, and with over 30 years of activism, she is stepping down but leaves a lasting impression.

Audrey Parenteau
CHIEF EDITOR

CSQ MAGAZINE: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TERM AS CSQ PRESIDENT?

Sonia Ethier: It was extremely interesting and significant. We encountered many unexpected challenges. This past year has been particularly intense given the pandemic and public sector negotiations. We brought to the public's attention the state of our members' working conditions time and again, to bring home that the battles we fight are not just for public sector workers but for our society as a whole. Through our efforts, the population now embraces the fact that we must begin by improving the staff's working conditions to secure better public services.



Photos François Beauregard

WHAT WERE YOUR MAIN PRIORITIES THESE PAST THREE YEARS?

My main priority was to foster closer ties between the CSQ and its members. At the outset of my mandate, Executive Committee members and I met with our federations, the RUC-CSQ,¹ the AREQ-CSQ² and our local unions to better understand their needs and make sure we were working in sync. We also wanted to describe all the work our advisors and the entire CSQ staff do to improve their working conditions and services to the population. It was important that our members see the faces of those working within the CSQ Executive Committee and that they realize that we work with them and understand their reality.

Another priority was to speak to the public and the government on behalf of our members. We appeared before several parliamentary committees over the past three years. We expounded our views on many bills regarding essential services, healthcare, education, early childcare, etc. To a certain extent, when speaking on behalf of our members, we were also giving a voice to women. We must always keep in mind that a majority of our members and public service workers are women.

¹ Regroupement des unités catégorielles.

² Association des retraitées et retraités de l'éducation et des autres services publics du Québec.



BEFORE BECOMING PRESIDENT, YOU WERE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT AT THE CSQ. LOOKING BACK ON YOUR TIME IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

It was a great source of pride to speak on behalf of our members with other elected members of the Executive Committee for so many years. I am proud of the work we did, demonstrating the importance of great labour unions—ours in particular—in our society.

Let's not mince words: central unions are struggling. Given how difficult things are in our workplaces and how challenging negotiations can be, people sometimes feel that they would go further if they formed sector-specific groups. However, in the past three years, we have demonstrated our central union's strength: what we say is taken into account. The CSQ is a key player in the advancement of our social rights.

As Occupational Health and Safety Committee political officer for six years, I am also very proud of our accomplishments toward having the importance of workplace psychological health recognized. Among other things, we implemented an extensive campaign on the psychosocial risks related to poor work organization to help workers understand that the problem is not in their head.



Photo Archives FIPEQ-CSQ

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES THE CSQ MUST TAKE ON IN THE COMING THREE YEARS?

The CSQ will face a great many challenges in the coming years. It will need to take stock of our ongoing negotiations and prepare for those to come by further strengthening all our components.

In the early childhood sector, national negotiations regarding CPEs³ (early childhood centres) will take their course. It is essential that a satisfactory agreement, meeting the expectations of our members, be reached to avoid seeing even more childcare workers leave their job, close to a dozen each week, as is currently the case. Lack of recognition and a critical shortage of resources result in severe exhaustion throughout the sector.

Planning for the post-pandemic period and considering future issues are also things we must take on. We will need to take stock of what has occurred during the crisis, and what that entails as far as activism and working conditions are concerned. The CSQ will have to examine how, going forward, it will advocate for its members' rights in an ever-changing world of work.

Among other challenges, there will be the emergence of a new form of work, where workers are not subject to nor protected by the Labour Code, in the sectors we represent. It will be important for the CSQ to find how to include and protect these individuals.

There will also be the added challenge of teleworking which has increased in the past year due to the pandemic. Even if less prevalent once the crisis is over, teleworking is here to stay. This will lead to solitude and mental health-related issues. The CSQ will need to consider this issue.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE CSQ IN THE COMING YEARS?

I hope that open dialogue is maintained within the Centrale. Members can discuss matters and hash out any number of issues at the CSQ. We must continue to work together to identify problems and pinpoint the right solutions.

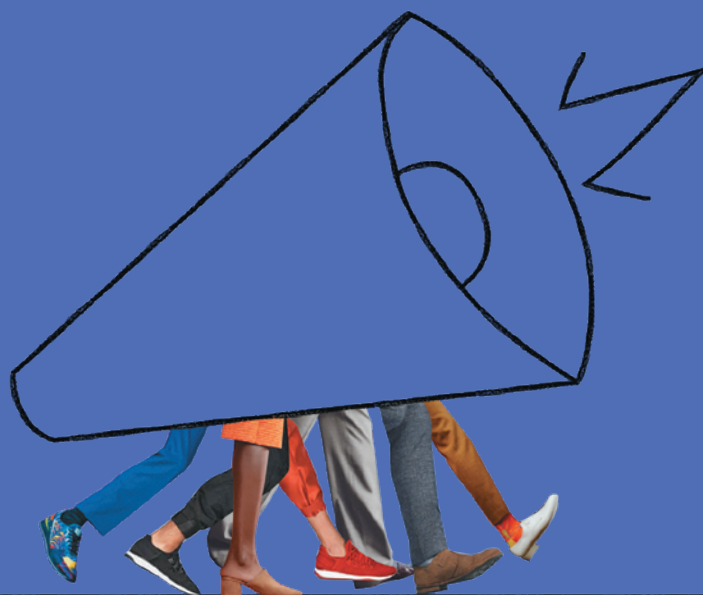
AFTER MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF ACTIVISM, WILL YOU REMAIN ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITHIN OUR UNION?

I will always be, to my very core, a unionist, even though I am taking a step back. I will always follow the news and be on the lookout for social issues affecting the labour movement. I will always be proud of seeing my Centrale on the public stage, advocating for workers' rights. I will always be proud of my work advocating for the CSQ all these years.

³ Centres de la petite enfance.

THE CENTRALE DES SYNDICATS DU QUÉBEC EXTENDS ITS WARMEST THANKS TO THE PARTNERS AND SPONSORS OF ITS 43rd CONGRESS.

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this great event is
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43rd
CONGRESS

RENEWED ACTIVISM

The pandemic disrupted our daily lives but, amazingly, it has not all been negative. When it comes to union mobilization, its effects are in fact positive.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR



In recent years, and more so since the beginning of the public health crisis, the working world as well as union mobilization have drastically changed. The evolution of activism, an important topic for the CSQ, is the focus of its 43rd Congress, which will also address the new challenges of mobilizing members.

One of the goals of this event is to continue focusing on what motivates members and identify individual incentives to stimulate local enthusiasm.

ACTIVISM IN ALL ITS FORMS

The Centrale wants more members to get involved, and not just by taking part in face-to-face events. Today, union participation takes several forms, all equally encouraged: virtual presence, establishment of a joint committee, creation of a Facebook group to defend working conditions and attest to numerous diverse realities, etc.

RENEWED MOBILIZATION DURING THE CRISIS

COVID-19 significantly changed the world of work; Quebec's education and higher education sectors are key examples.

Distance learning has brought about diverse teaching tools and methods, simultaneously altering student ratios and increasing connectivity. These conditions make it difficult to feel satisfied at the end of the school day or to even hope that the learning goals have been achieved.

Suddenly, believing that it was nearly impossible to weather the storm and uphold distance learning in the manner in which it was imposed on them, everyone began to withdraw. Many members mobilized anew in their environment to demand that working conditions be protected.

Individual awareness turned into collective mindfulness at the local level. The abrupt stirring up of long-time traditions generated mobilization.

Certain labour relation committees have been re-energized within the federations and the Centrale, thanks to the strength of collective power combined with union action.

Ultimately, the pandemic did not cause the feared collapse of the collective. Rather, the public health crisis and its consequences on workplaces gave rise to different communication tools, making it possible to increase participation, either virtually or through renewed individual mobilization.

MEMBERS ACTIVELY INVOLVED FOR THE FIRST TIME

Today's technologies made it possible to hold virtual assemblies. Members who were less present before the public health crisis were now able to participate. This enabled the involvement of certain groups who could not attend traditional union meetings.

These once under-represented members included those in precarious, part-time or temporary jobs, women, youth and members between the ages of 30 and 45. However, these people represent a large percentage of CSQ members and they deserve better working conditions. These individuals—whom the Centrale struggled to reach before—are now active in union mobilization.

In conclusion, the pandemic has had the positive outcome of renewing activism. People who are at risk or whose children are at risk, need answers. The clear and structured message is backed by union leaders. People now understand that the union is not just a monthly membership fee. It's more than that, regardless of which union you belong to.

THE CHALLENGES OF GOING VIRTUAL

Because of the pandemic, the 43rd CSQ Congress will take place online this year. A big challenge for the organizers of such an event.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR

The General Congress is the supreme authority of the Centrale, where the general policies, the major objectives, the main lines of action and main priorities are determined. Exceptionally, specific policies, special objectives or immediate action programs may be established at the Congress.

The Congress happens every three years. Such a big event needs lots of preparation. In fact, as soon as one congress ends (even before!), the organizing committee starts planning for the next one.

The hotel rooms must be booked for close to a thousand attendees almost four years before the event. The preliminary agreement with the venue that hosts the Congress also needs to be signed three years in advance.

A VERY DIFFERENT SCENARIO FROM WHAT WAS PLANNED

In March 2020, no one expected that the June 2021 Congress could be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We believed, wrongly, that Québec would only pause for two weeks and that all this would then be nothing but a bad memory.

In late Spring of 2020, the hope of holding an in-person gathering persisted within the organizing committee. Québec was starting to slowly reopen, summer holidays were happening almost normally.



It was a good sign for the Congress scheduled for the following summer.

With the arrival of the second wave, in the fall, discussions about the possibility to hold a hybrid event were held. The committee was considering inviting part of the delegates to attend on-site, while offering other participants the option to remotely attend the event through online streaming.

However, the governmental decree of January 2021 changed everything by preventing gatherings of more than 25 people in the same room. The committee still hoped that the rules would be softened before the event, to allow it to happen in person, at least in part.

As it is difficult to organize a gathering of this magnitude based only on hope, different formulas had been planned. The members of the committee almost had the impression of organizing multiple conferences at once. However, they had to keep in mind that it might have to cancel at the last minute.

A PLATFORM TO THE RESCUE

The main scenario ultimately chosen for the June Congress rests on the live streaming of the proceedings from a recording studio on a Web platform.

The organizing committee innovated in preparing the 2021 Congress. And in the originality department, the event will certainly make its mark in the Centrale's history!

"The event is also shortened and the agenda has been lightened. The Congress this year will happen over three days," explains the CSQ's general director, Marjolaine Perreault. As the statutes and by-laws of the Congress provide that the event shall happen over four days in person and with a traditional vote, amendments had to be adopted.

AN ANTICIPATED EVENT

The Web platform that will be used will allow the attendees to discuss among themselves, consult documents, access information, etc. Votes will be tallied by software and the result will be known quickly.

Besides the issues about the content, the organization of a virtual conference also presents challenges as to the content's presentation because of the time constraints, as well as to recruiting and training the delegates who will ensure that the event runs smoothly.

Still, the attendees won't be disappointed. They can expect a few surprises and special collaborations.

The organizing committee innovated in preparing the 2021 Congress. And in the originality department, the event will certainly make its mark in the Centrale's history!



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UNITE TO RALLY



The ACTES Movement knows quite a lot about exploring and adopting non-traditional avenues to reach members and set them in motion. How to draw from that?

Florence Tison
CSQ ADVISOR

The need to find unconventional ways to reach and mobilize CSQ members isn't new. Discussions on the topic had been underway well before the pandemic. However, the health crisis accelerated the analysis, as in-person meetings and union assemblies couldn't happen as before.

This desire to do things differently has been present for many years. But it was really identified following the 2012 Congress, when the theme of "union renewal" was discussed. This process takes into consideration local realities in the hopes of doing better with what's more a bottom-up than top-down approach.

The idea behind this renewal is to inform and mobilize the members at a local level so that awareness and mobilization are not "imposed by the CSQ," but come from the communities.

For the members to feel heard and for them to mobilize around issues dear to the Centrale, we need to reach them. And to manage that, non-traditional tools, like digital activism and democracy, need to be put forward.

CONVERGENCE OF THE FIGHTS

For over 27 years, the CSQ ACTES Movement (which used to be called Brundtland Green Schools Movement) has acted for a more ecological, more peaceful, more democratic society, with greater solidarity, by promoting the involvement of youth and adults.

To know how to reach them, the Movement surveyed its members through consultations and focus groups. Thanks to the consultations, the Movement realized that starting from the members' values is a good way to make them want to get involved with trade unions.

As part of the consultations, the participants mentioned that the ACTES Movement gave a positive image of unionism. Why? Because it offers an inspiring project, that of a more ecological, peaceful and democratic world, and puts people in action in their environment to collectively build it.

Young people are notably very sensitive to the environmental, solidarity, pacifism and democracy values that the CSQ addresses head on with the ACTES Movement. The younger members seem to want not to limit their vision to working conditions, but expand it to living conditions in society as a whole.

The future of activism even goes through a "convergence of the fights". We must break the silos between the different causes, even if it's a way to do things that isn't traditional. Young activists know very well how to do this.

DIGITAL TOOLS AND TURNKEY SOLUTIONS

The CSQ, through the ACTES Movement, listened to the youth and their concerns by changing its way of doing things, including by uniting with groups that aren't necessarily traditional allies. For example, the Centrale is now part of the Front commun pour la transition énergétique, which combines more than 90 organizations. The CSQ and the Front commun have joined forces because they share the same values.

That's not all! With the pandemic, the ACTES Movement worked twice as hard on the digital tools' side by creating a public version of their networks. Their Facebook Live videos reach no less than 8,000 people, and not only Centrale members. This popularity translates in adhesions for the ACTES Movement, which constantly increase.

The Movement also organizes live streamings on different topics related to its values. It recently produced a video titled "*Imaginer la justice climatique*" that primary, secondary and CEGEP teachers can show in their classes without any prior preparation. Incidentally, it's the idea of an ACTES committee member, a primary school teacher. On top of being easy to put in place, these events are informative and allow the CSQ to shine!

MOUVEMENT

ACTES



TO KNOW MORE

To learn about the ACTES Movement's projects [in French]:
actes.lacsq.org.

To watch and share the video titled "*Imaginer la justice climatique*" [in French]: facebook.com/mouvementactes.



PROGRESS, BUT A WAYS TO GO

Photo iStock

Women's participation in associative life has long been an issue at the CSQ. What role do they play in our decision-making bodies today?

Julie Pinel
CSQ ADVISOR

Women have shared their concerns about the lack of involvement of their female counterparts in CSQ committees and councils since the early days of the Committee on the Status of Women, formerly the Laure Gaudreault Committee.

This led to the creation of the *Programme d'accès à l'égalité syndicale* (PAES, or Equal opportunity program at the union level), adopted during the 1994 CSQ Congress following several surveys and discussions on the matter.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION

Building on its 52 measures, the PAES has supported and facilitated women's involvement over the years, resulting in their greater representation within CSQ decision-making bodies. 48% of the 1994 Congress's official delegates were women. Nearly 25 years later, at the 2018 Congress, that number increased to 60%.

Although this progress is good, the goal of 75%, equivalent to the percentage of the members that the CSQ represents, has not been reached yet. A great deal of work still lies ahead before closing this sizable gap.

WHY DOES SUCH A GAP EXIST?

Ever-present gender inequalities in our society remain a barrier to women's greater participation. Even today, the burden of work-life balance is shouldered to a greater degree by women than by men. On average, they spend an hour more on household activities than men. This gap widens to slightly over an hour and 20 minutes when they have children aged 4 and under.¹ Reconciling an already challenging balance with activism may be enough to discourage some women from getting involved within their union.

¹ CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME (2018). Portrait des Québécoises. [PDF file], Conseil du statut de la femme, 54 p.

For many people in Québec, equality between women and men has been achieved. Sadly, this narrative adversely affects the progress of women toward gender equality.

EDUCATION MATTERS

Differential socialization of men and women also explains women's under-representation in the political sphere. Culturally, girls are taught that they should be beautiful, kind and sweet. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to work on their public speaking skills.

This differential socialization results in women feeling less capable of speaking in public to defend their point of view. What is more, they often underestimate their strengths and skills in relation to the performance of certain tasks, when quite the opposite is true.

This impostor syndrome can lead many women to turn down a job interview or an interview with reporters, and probably to refrain from applying to be a delegate or an executive member of their union or federation.

BOTH HERE AND ELSEWHERE

These issues underlie the under-representation of women in the labour movement as well as other areas of society. In 2017, 61.2% of all Canadian boards or directors were composed entirely of men. At the municipal level, 32.3% of all elected officials were women and only 19% held a position at City Hall.

In the 2019 federal election, women won 29% of the seats in the House of Commons, while the parity zone (between 40% and 60%) was reached for the first time in the 2018 provincial elections, with women representation hitting 42.4%.

DEEP-ROOTED STEREOTYPES

Although these figures show the persistence of the glass ceiling for women, data from a recent Secrétariat de la condition féminine survey shows that, for many people in Québec, equality between women and men has been achieved. Sadly, this narrative adversely affects the progress of women toward gender equality.

Beyond the more obvious stereotypes, there are those that remain at a subconscious level. They are the ones who come into play when, in the public sphere, a woman is judged on her appearance and the clothes she wears, shifting the focus away from her comments and ideas.

Tolerance toward men and women, when levelling criticism, also seems to be biased against women. We need only look at what women in the current government's Cabinet have to deal with to see the extent of this double standard.

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, stereotypes about women's appearance and skills can influence other people's perception.

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, stereotypes about women's appearance and skills can influence other people's perception. To shatter this glass ceiling and support women's involvement in political decision-making bodies, including those at the CSQ, we must all recognize our own gender biases as well as the barriers impeding women from getting involved in various organizations so as to implement measures which help and facilitate their participation.

The CSQ should celebrate its progress. However, even after 25 years, the PAES remains an essential tool toward reaching the goal of proportional representation for women at the CSQ as well as providing women with the opportunity to have their voices heard throughout the organization.



Be part of history

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What do 51,000 members of the CSQ have in common? They all chose to insure their house, car or business with the group insurance plan “Les protections RésAut CSQ” offered by The Personal.

Jocelyn Roy

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
CSQ ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
AND GENERAL INSURANCE

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of this plan, let's go together over the highlights of its history.

WHERE EVERYTHING BEGAN

In May 1986, the CSQ (previously the CEQ) decided to put in place a group auto and home insurance plan for its members, partnering with The Personal (previously The Security). Business insurance was added to the line of products in 2000. Of the first group of members insured in 1986, 1,863 are still with us.

The plan was created with the goal to offer CSQ members general insurance services on a voluntary basis, and at the best value for money on the market. Thirty-five years later, the objective remains the same.

The CSQ owns 100% of the plan and manages it for its members' benefit. This means the profits come back to us and can then be redistributed to the members as a kickback. In 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2020, kickbacks

were indeed paid to insured members. In total, they shared close to 10 million dollars.

The plan now counts close to 100,000 existing policies, and the number continues to grow year after year.

PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES FOR YOU

On top of the kickbacks, those insured benefit from personalized coverage and excellent group rates that are not offered to the general public, as well as an unparalleled service. Many technological innovations were implemented throughout the years to allow the people insured to save more money and time.

For example, online services simplify policy management, as well as claims that can be done online, in a totally independent way, even from the scene of an event.

If you still haven't taken an auto, home or business insurance, ask for a quote. You'll see that when it comes to insurance, we are stronger together.

For additional helpful safety tips, visit our website today: thepersonal.com/blog

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A WOMEN'S CRISIS

The pandemic has seriously impacted public services and, consequently, women holding most jobs in that sector. And yet, their contribution is critical to weathering this crisis ... and those to come.

Audrey Parenteau | CHIEF EDITOR

Illustration Lino



The pandemic has highlighted how important and crucial public services in sectors such as early childhood, education, health and social services truly are. It also brought attention to the key role women play in these sectors and in our society as a whole. Women do, in fact, hold the vast majority of the care sector's jobs.

Women are largely responsible for having kept health, education and early childhood networks operational during the crisis. The personnel in these female-dominated sectors have pulled out every stop to avoid seeing Québec collapse entirely.

A CRISIS THAT AFFECTS WOMEN

Throughout the pandemic, more women lost their jobs or had to step away from the labour force than men. From the onset of the crisis in March 2020, women's employment fell by 7% compared to 4% for men, according to Statistics Canada.

In Québec, of the 290,000 workers impacted by the crisis, women represent 50% of those unemployed, 90% of those who moved from full-time to part-time employment, and 71% of those who left the workforce entirely.

"The lack of services, particularly places in early childhood educational services, might explain in part the significant proportion of women who left their job," explains the head of the Committee on the Status of Women at the CSQ, Julie Pinel.

Work-family-study-personal-life balance is increasingly difficult due to existing problems within public services and the pandemic's effects. "The situation also has a greater impact on women than on men because child raising and caretaking parental responsibilities lie primarily with women," adds Julie Pinel.



Photo iStock

Furthermore, in families where loved ones are in need of care, caregiving responsibilities, duties and involvement rest even today more heavily on the shoulders of women than men.

FAIR MEASURES ARE NEEDED

Even though the current crisis has been referred to as a she-cession (recession for women) in Canada, the Québec government's recovery measures are primarily intended for male-dominated sectors, notably construction and transportation.

Traditionally, when looking to restore fiscal balance, the government makes cuts to public services, considered as an expenditure, to invest in infrastructure. However, to ensure our economic recovery is fair, the government must invest in public services instead.

This would promote employment for women, who have been hit harder by the pandemic. And given that they are in turn important



1/3 OF WORKING WOMEN

WORK IN PUBLIC SERVICES

users of these same services, “women would also benefit from investments in additional services, such as home support for caregivers or the creation of new places in educational childcare services,” explains Julie Pinel.

Moreover, public services are available throughout Québec. Investments in this sector would help support the economy across all regions.

The government must take women into consideration when planning its economic recovery. An adequate response to the current situation is imperative and that necessarily involves public services.



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A LONG HISTORY

In Québec, the foundations of the health and education systems were laid in large part by women. In the past, associated caregiving jobs were carried out free of charge by women, within the family, or through the clergy, mostly by nuns.

“In the collective imagination, it seems therefore natural for women to care for others,” explains Julie Pinel. “Despite these tasks having been incorporated in various public services employment categories, the sector remains female-dominated.”

Incidentally, one in three working women works in the public sector.

A REFLECTION TO BETTER THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

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Even though the fight against COVID-19 isn't over yet, the government needs to plan the socio-economic recovery. Its strategy needs to place the public services at the heart of a just transition.

Audrey Parenteau | CHIEF EDITOR

The public services suffered a lot from the major cutbacks imposed during decades of austerity. Those cutbacks harmed the healthcare, education and higher education networks, but also the community and early childhood sectors. The pandemic only exacerbated problems that were already present.

The health crisis showed the huge gap that exists between the needs of the population and the available resources. From the first wave, the lack of personnel was greatly felt.

"The fact that our leaders suddenly implored retired health and education workers to lend a hand to our already overloaded and tired networks shows the extent of the deficiencies created by

these years of austerity," claims the CSQ president, Sonia Ethier.

Staff shortages and already difficult working conditions haven't stopped deteriorating since the beginning of the pandemic, hence weakening the public networks and, consequently, society. "Several thousand people in CHSLDs paid this complacency with their lives," adds Sonia Ethier.

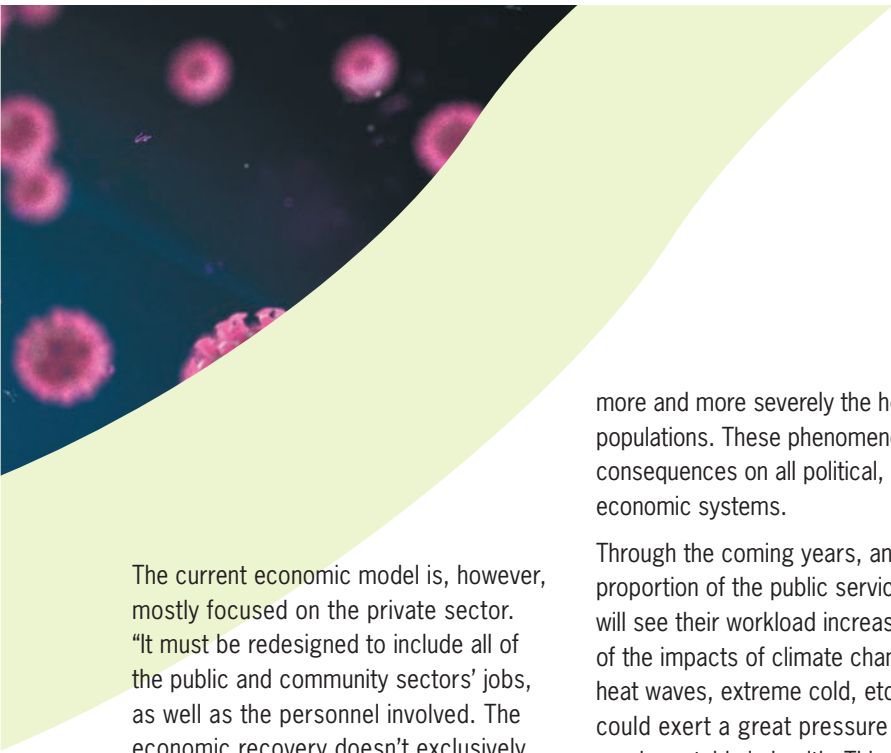
RETHINKING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC MODEL

The pandemic showed all the importance of having well-organized and funded public networks to efficiently face this type of crisis.

According to the World Health Organization and the International Monetary Fund, strengthening the public services and the social protection mechanisms creates conditions that are favourable to a healthy population. They are calling on leaders of the world to invest in public services.

"[The economic model] must be redesigned to include all of the public and community sectors' jobs, as well as the personnel involved. The economic recovery doesn't exclusively go through the private sector!"

– Sonia Ethier, CSQ president



The current economic model is, however, mostly focused on the private sector. “It must be redesigned to include all of the public and community sectors’ jobs, as well as the personnel involved. The economic recovery doesn’t exclusively go through the private sector!” states Sonia Ethier.

In Québec, the public sector includes more than a million employees.¹ “We need to demand that these stakeholders be in the centre of the socio-economic recovery,” continues the CSQ president.

PREVENT AND BETTER MANAGE CRISES

The pandemic, caused by a virus of animal origin, is the electroshock that reminds us that the deterioration of ecosystems and the global climate disruption affect

more and more severely the health of populations. These phenomena have consequences on all political, social and economic systems.

Through the coming years, an important proportion of the public service personnel will see their workload increase because of the impacts of climate change (floods, heat waves, extreme cold, etc.) which could exert a great pressure on the needs, notably in health. This is why “the government needs to build a fairer and more sustainable socio-economic model that respects our social and environmental values,” says Sonia Ethier.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE MEANS

In response to the current crisis, and to face those that will come next, the Legault government needs to massively reinvest in public services. “It has the means to do so, states Sonia Ethier. Its capacity to pay is the result of its political choices. It’s all a matter of priority.”

To improve its financial leeway, the government can:

- Ensure a better management of the most onerous budget items, like drug costs and medical remuneration;
- Update the *Balanced Budget Act* to modify the definition of the concept of budget balance, extend the delay to balancing the budget, review the debt reduction objectives;
- Stop waiving various fiscal and taxation revenue.

Let’s add that for every additional dollar invested in the Québec public networks, the gross domestic product (GDP) increases by at least 1.10 dollars.² This multiplying effect is of 1.25 dollars in education and of 1.22 dollars in health.

“More than ever, the public services are socially essential and economically profitable. We need to demand that they be at the heart of the postpandemic recovery!” concludes Sonia Ethier.



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FOR A JUST TRANSITION AND RECOVERY

In Québec, the *Front commun pour la transition énergétique* carries the Québec ZéN project, in which the CSQ participates. This initiative is one of social dialogue aimed to accelerate Québec’s transition towards a “zero net emission” society.

To learn more: pourlatransitionenergetique.org.

In Canada, hundreds of organizations are endorsing the Six Principles aiming for a just transition and recovery towards a sustainable economy.

To learn more: justrecoveryforall.ca.

¹ Québec public and parapublic service, federal employees working in Québec, municipal employees, government-owned businesses and universities’ employees.

² According to Statistics Canada data analyzed by the Institut de recherche et d’informations socioéconomiques (IRIS).

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