

CSQ

MAGAZINE

INVESTING IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD

A STRATEGIC CHOICE



Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

Fall 2021

Education needs fresh air

.....

Meet Éric Gingras

.....

CEGEPS and universities:
what if we did better?



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LET'S TAKE CONTROL!

As the new CSQ president, let me start by telling you that I'm very happy and excited to undertake a new triennium with you.

It will be full of challenges... but at the Centrale, we're used to it. In the next few years, in a working environment undergoing deep transformation, we will face growing issues in which we will have an important role to play as a Centrale.

With more than 206,000 members spread across the territory providing day-to-day services to the population, the CSQ isn't disembodied from Québec society. On the contrary. The values and ideas carried by our organization are largely aligned with the will of a large part of the population. Gender equity, acknowledgement and valorization of work performed mostly by women, as well as work health and safety, are issues that are as relevant as they are current, and they affect everyone every day.

From early childhood to higher education, including the school network, education is part of the CSQ's DNA and makes our organization a key player in Québec when it comes to public services, not forgetting health. During my term, I intend to consolidate this foundation with the goal of highlighting the essential role of our members for the economy and society in the post-crisis period.

Thus, the upcoming negotiations will be critical to allow us to answer the growing needs on the ground, because the overload, lack of resources and undervaluing issues sadly continue to be linked to predominantly female jobs. It's the solidarity, equity and justice message we will all carry together!

In solidarity,

Éric Gingras | CSQ PRESIDENT

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ESSENTIAL AND UNIVERSAL

Investing in early
childhood is a strategic
choice for Québec.
Isn't the development
of our toddlers one
of our government's
responsibilities?

Florence Tison
CSQ ADVISOR

Nowhere else in the world can one find a public early childhood educational services network like the one we have here in Québec. Its positive impact on toddlers, particularly on the children's development and their educational success, has been demonstrated in no uncertain terms by countless studies.

For close to 25 years, Québec's family policy, the public network's building block, has helped more and more women go back to work after their pregnancy. The network also provides equal opportunities for all children so they can start their educational journey with a strong foundation thanks to the teachings of highly trained and competent educators.

It's undeniable: these \$8.50-a-day services have changed the lives of Québec families. Even Québec's economy is reaping the benefits!

FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Valérie Grenon, FIPEQ-CSQ¹ President, says: "Investing in early childhood is a strategic choice for Québec because going to a quality childcare service helps foster equal opportunities for our little ones. Among other things, it has a positive impact on the gap between children from less fortunate environments and those more privileged. All children must have a fair chance to access quality childcare services that will have a positive impact throughout their lives."

DESPERATELY NEEDED PLACES

But let's put away the pink or baby-blue tinted glasses: all is not well in the early childhood services world. Over 50,000 places are currently needed to meet the demand of our preschoolers and their families across Québec. This situation is a direct result of Liberal Party decisions, favouring the network's privatization, during their time in government.

During the last election campaign, Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) had promised it would create 50,000 throughout the network. Three years later, Minister of Families Mathieu Lacombe has yet to deliver on his commitment and mentions that 9,000 are to be created over the next two years, which is definitely not sufficient. The Minister has also announced the tabling of a white paper² as well as a bill on the early childhood educational services network this fall.

WORKING CONDITIONS NEED TO IMPROVE

"Current working conditions are partly to blame for the scarcity of places in our early childhood network," says Valérie Grenon. "We



Valérie Grenon

are dealing with significant difficulties when attracting and retaining childcare workers, as there is little appreciation for their expertise and the responsibilities they bear."

"Working conditions must reflect how important these jobs are for Québec's society," adds CSQ president Éric Gingras. "The government can't just abandon ship. Places in early childhood depend on better working conditions."

FOR A UNIVERSAL AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC NETWORK

At the CSQ and FIPEQ-CSQ, it goes without saying that educational services are not commercial commodities. A child's development is one of the government's responsibilities. "If left to fend for itself, the early childhood educational services network can't flourish. We have to look further ahead, invest, but most of all, innovate," states Éric Gingras.

The two union organizations recommend that the Educational Childcare Act guarantee the right of access to a quality place, on par with the right to an education or healthcare. "A modern Québec, one that holds the development of its children to heart, must go one step further and complete the network of early childhood centres (CPEs) and regulated and subsidized home childcare providers that Québec is famous for," adds Valérie Grenon.

This great project would also help guarantee that all children are able to make their very first school transition with as little vulnerability as possible. "Building on our early childhood network is taking responsibility!" says Éric Gingras. To highlight the childcare network, the CSQ and FIPEQ-CSQ will roll out a large revaluation campaign this fall on the theme: Essential and universal.

1 Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec.

2 Document submitted by the executive branch to the Parliament to outline a problem of public interest as well as legislative or administrative measures the Government plans to take to address the issue.

READY TO TAKE ON ANY CHALLENGE



Photo: Daniel Mallard

Eric Gingras begins his term as new President of the Centrale with a clear objective: assume leadership of the CSQ wholeheartedly and make sure that the Centrale's practices continue to meet the expectations of its members. He answered some questions from *CSQ Magazine*.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR

CSQ MAGAZINE: YOU BEGAN YOUR CAREER AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER. WHAT WAS THE SPARK THAT PROMPTED YOU TO GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR UNION?

Éric Gingras: I started teaching in 1996 and did so for eight years. In 1997, I got involved with my union and became a representative. Later on, in 2004, I was appointed Syndicat de Champlain interim coordinator to fill in for Monique Pauzé who was replacing Réjean Parent when he became CSQ President. I was elected Vice President of the Marie-Victorin Division in 2007, and began serving as President of the Syndicat de Champlain in 2013.

I've always been one to get actively involved, in student associations for instance. Raised in Côte-des-Neiges, a multi-ethnic and disadvantaged Montréal borough, I have always been aware of inequalities with a keen interest in social justice.

Unionism is well established in the teaching sector, so staying involved appealed to me.

WHAT WILL BE THE CSQ' BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE COMING YEARS?

We need to better explain, and with increased transparency, what we do, share why we do it and set our actions in the day-to-day. For instance, we need to take the time to explain to our members the reason behind our going before parliamentary committees to defend our values.

Technology helps us do just that. We're opening ourselves up to criticism, but that's ok. The more we share this information with people, the more they'll understand what we do. They'll be more



Photo Pascal Rathé

interested in getting involved and see that we aren't just a bunch of pencil pushers.

SO, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KEEP MEMBERS IN THE KNOW, EVEN DURING NEGOTIATIONS?

It's crucial. During our last negotiations, we kept our members informed like never before, but I think we can do even better.

New negotiations are set to begin. Letting our members know what is happening during this period will have to be part of our strategy. How will we accomplish that? I don't know. I need everyone's ideas. We'll consult both our members and the General Council.

We'll begin by taking stock of the last negotiations with our various union groups. We'll discuss CSQ communications and our way of doing things with our decision-making bodies. And we'll see what comes out of these talks. I don't

want to make any assumptions of what might be said.

What I am hoping is for people to get fired up and get involved. Negotiations are just around the corner! We need to get ready.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THE CSQ WILL HAVE TO TAKE ON IN THE COMING YEARS?

Currently, and throughout our society, people are calling institutions into question and, for our members, that includes larger labour organizations. Like all other central union organizations, the CSQ must be able to say why it is important. I for one know why, our delegates know why, but certain members aren't as sure because they can't figure out what a central organization can do for them.

In groups that are diverse, as is the case with central organizations, building a



sense of belonging is somewhat harder. People are looking to come together, to get involved in something where they could identify with one another. People tend to set up Facebook groups to defend themselves when the solution already exists within their central organization.

At the CSQ, there is much more that unites our members than divides them, and it's important that we showcase just that to them. We have to be able to bring people, our members, together, and to reach them in their day-to-day lives.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE CSQ IS VISIBLE ENOUGH?

If being present in the media entails people talking about us because of our



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outbursts, it's not a good idea. However, statistically speaking, our organization had the highest profile in the media throughout the pandemic.

As CSQ President, I want to make sure that our organization is proactive, by bringing specific issues out into the open rather than just react to the decisions of the government or other groups.

The CSQ must continue to be an important actor of social change!

SOME SAY THERE IS A SENSE OF UNEASE ACROSS QUÉBEC'S LABOUR MOVEMENT RIGHT NOW. WOULD YOU SAY THAT THIS IS TRUE?

The last 20 years haven't always been easy, it's true. Our advocacy work has met with limited success. Which explains why, nowadays, when speaking about anything else than renewing our collective agreements, people wonder why they should rally around a cause, like the environment for instance.

The last round of negotiations took place during a challenging social situation, in the midst of a pandemic, and the result we achieved is still rather amazing! That, to me, is a very positive step and that's what members need. They want a positive narrative. And that means that we have to put our accomplishments forward without necessarily saying that all is right with the world every day!

We have to be honest and tell our members what is really going on even when it isn't what they would like to hear. It comes back to our needing to be transparent.



WHY WERE YOU HOPING TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE CSQ?

To take on all these challenges! I believe in an organization like the CSQ. I believe in the CSQ. I want to take on this leadership role wholeheartedly and get people involved!

I know that only a few presidents, as was my case, were not part of the CSQ Executive Committee before being elected. However, I believe that my 20-year experience within the labour movement will help bring in new ideas.

I still have things to learn about the organization but I can count on my wonderful colleagues in the Executive

Committee and on our team of advisors across various services to help strike a balance between introducing new ways of doing things and keeping what's working well.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS?

In healthcare and education, we've seen a lot of changes during the pandemic. They will definitely impact our workplaces as we move forward. To that effect, our demands will focus on improving and supporting these work environments, regardless of the employment category or the job. The next three years will be interesting!

THE START OF A NEW TRIENNIUM

The 43rd CSQ Congress, which was held last June, marked the end of an eventful triennium. It also kicked off a new period with new orientations for the Centrale.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR



Photo Pascal Ratthé

The 43rd CSQ Congress was streamed online on a web platform from a recording studio.

Union activism in a transformed work environment was the theme of the last Centrale's congress which took place June 28-30, 2021. Streamed online on a web platform from a recording studio, the event was a success.

NEW ORIENTATIONS

The Congress being the supreme authority of the Centrale, it's during this event that the CSQ's major goals, priorities and action outlines are defined for the next three years. Grouped under four themes that tackle the union and social values of our organization, many important decisions were voted.

1. WOMEN'S RIGHT TO TRUE EQUITY

The pandemic hits the public services hard, hitting at the same time the women who occupy a large part of the jobs. Yet, their contribution is essential to get through the crisis.

Over the next triennium, the Centrale commits to continue its work in pay equity matters to make known and defend the full and fair value of the predominantly female jobs—notably those involving care and support—and to acknowledge and defend the essential nature of those jobs and of the work that these women accomplish for the whole of Québec's society.

The CSQ will continue to exert political pressure on the government for a revision of the Pay Equity Act to give a real decision-making power to the employees during audit processes. This law must impose reasonable legal delays to settle the resulting disputes.

In the care and support working environment, our organization will work for the acknowledgement that many work stoppages should be treated as medical leave and professional occupational injury, not personal ones.

2. THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN THE CENTRE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The health crisis exacerbated the catastrophic effects of the chronic underfunding of the public, parapublic and community sectors for decades. It also highlighted the fundamental importance of the tasks and functions carried out by the members of the CSQ, particularly in this crisis context.

The current economic model, which is essentially oriented towards the private sector, needs to be re-examined. The CSQ wishes the recovery to include all the professions of the public, parapublic and community sectors as well as their workers. It must be focused on a fair transition and on a major reinvestment in the public services.

3. LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY LAWS ADAPTED TO THE NEW REALITIES

The job market is changing and the resulting needs for social security as well. The social laws and the labour laws, at the provincial and at the federal level, need to be updated to be coherent with the new job market realities.

The issues regarding telework and the increased digital use, like the right to disconnect and the right to privacy, are a priority. For the CSQ, it's essential that laws be created to oversee those. It commits to raise members' awareness to the risks of continuous connection and claims that mental health must be recognized as being as important as physical health.

4. ACTIVISM IN A TRANSFORMED WORK ENVIRONMENT

How to exercise our activism in a working environment that changes and gets more and more complex? During the next triennium, the Centrale will explore and put in place non-traditional activism avenues to reach members so they can take action around its collective project.

It will be important to promote a better collaboration and a greater internal union cohesiveness to highlight the CSQ and its affiliates' interests. Among the Congress decisions, it was voted to create a day of appreciation for union activism, to promote it and invite members to participate.

EDUCATION NEEDS FRESH AIR!

After 18 months of turmoil marked by school and classroom closures, the school network staff need the right conditions to teach and support students in their learning and development.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR



Éric Gingras

The 2020-2021 school year took place, in large part, virtually for a great number of students across Québec. The failure rate at the high school level surged due to the pandemic. When comparing the previous year's rate for certain subjects, it even doubled.

The 2021 school year began without seeing sufficient measures introduced to bolster educational success or support students with special needs. This is of great concern for the CSQ and its federations in the school network. "The few additional resources show a lack of consideration from the Ministry of Education regarding what the consequences of the pandemic will be on our young people's success," says CSQ president Éric Gingras.

SKYROCKETING NEEDS

It is important that we take stock of the pandemic's repercussions on academic achievement and learning, from primary school to adult education, to reach students from all sectors more effectively. Once we've ascertained the current situation, we can implement appropriate measures, such as the adoption of specific intervention plans designed for young people and adults who attend school.

"To improve our interventions, we need to establish a clear diagnosis of the pandemic's repercussions and find out what needs fixing at ground level," says Éric Gingras. "And that has to lead to a coherent action plan."

FPPE-CSQ¹ president Jacques Landry agrees: "We're seeing too many students with faltering mental health. We need to give them a little breathing room, a renewed sense of hope. It is necessary to put in place a school network-specific mental health action plan to address rising anxiety and rekindle student motivation. We need to listen to them, take preventive action and guarantee access to psychosocial resources."

Two areas in particular would provide students with some breathing room: fostering their presence at school as much as possible, while following public health guidelines, and ensuring equal opportunities by helping young people and adults who dropped out go back to school, with a special focus on more vulnerable students.



Jacques Landry

1 Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation.

HOW ABOUT SOME FRESH AIR?

After months of upheavals, the school network personnel need to catch their breath. “Faced with labour shortages at all levels, the existing personnel needs the space, time and means to carry out their work properly,” says Éric Gingras.

“We need, now more than ever, a long-term vision in education and sufficient resources to make up for lost time and to meet the needs of our students,” adds FSE-CSQ² president Josée Scalabrini. “Teachers must be able to count on both the Ministry of Education and management teams to give them preparation time and time to support their students.”

Support workers across the school system need some breathing room too, according to FPSS-CSQ³ president Éric Pronovost. The Federation’s survey, carried out a year into the pandemic, revealed that 86% of respondents saw their tasks increase (52% significantly and 34% slightly).

And the labour shortage in the school network hasn’t helped. But solutions do exist, says Éric Pronovost: “Offering permanent full-time positions would make education a more attractive field and would ensure some kind of stability for students who build relationships with us.”

SAFETY FOR ONE AND ALL

“It is essential to protect the education staff’s health and safety to keep schools open, and make sure we don’t end up going through constant adjustments and resorting to distance teaching again,” says Stéphane Lapointe, FPEP-CSQ⁴ President.

Better air quality is crucial to guarantee the health and safety of students and staff. And when it comes to ventilation in our schools, the CSQ and its federations are rather sceptical about the government’s plan.

Even though carbon dioxide sensors to measure air quality in schools — therefore reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission — are essential, installation had not been completed when the school year began. It will only be completed later in the fall of 2021.

“It is not normal for our staff not to be able to know if their working conditions comply with minimum standards,” sums up Éric Gingras.



Josée Scalabrini



Éric Pronovost

2 Fédération des syndicats de l’enseignement.

3 Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire.

4 Fédération du personnel de l’enseignement privé.

WHAT IF WE DID BETTER?

After more than a year and a half of upheaval in CEGEP and universities, it's time to really give ourselves the means for a positive and engaging return to activities on campus, despite persisting uncertainties because of the pandemic.

Claude Girard | CSQ ADVISOR

Catherine Huart | CSQ ADVISOR



Éric Gingras, Valérie Fontaine and Vincent Beaucher

The last months have been difficult as much for the students as for personnel. "The needs related to mental health exploded, but we had seen strong trends before the pandemic," claims FPPC-CSQ¹ president Éric Cyr. "Resources were already insufficient and we had serious professional personnel attraction and retention problems."

FEC-CSQ² president Lucie Piché adds that "the extent of the data reveals that we will be facing cohorts fragilized in their learning and in their journeys. We will need to motivate, supervise and support them more."

1 Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges.

2 Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep.

START FRESH

The return to campuses is an opportunity to rethink ways of doing things to put the students' and personnel's wellbeing at the centre of concerns in cégeps and universities. "The next phase on our campuses shouldn't be a step backward, a simple return to previous conditions. In many regards, those were already unacceptable and harmful to the workers' and students' wellbeing," argues CSQ president Éric Gingras.

According to him, the pandemic forces us to stop and take note of the alarming problems that poison the working and studying environments. "Restarting must be the opportunity to do better," he adds.

FIVE PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW

To ensure wellbeing on campus, the CSQ higher education federations—FEC-CSQ, FPSES-CSQ,³ FPPC-CSQ and FREUQ-CSQ⁴—claim that five principles are vital to start fresh. We need:

1. Human scale campuses;
2. The necessary means to support learning;
3. The dynamisation of student life;
4. A real access to mental health services, for everyone;
5. The valuing of a collaboration and listening culture.

“Human scale campuses are campuses where the participation of all is fully appreciated. For support personnel to contribute to everyone’s wellbeing, starting with the students, they must be given the means,” underlines FPSES-CSQ president Valérie Fontaine.

She adds that “the support personnel are competent and involved, and they know their environment well. They answered the call during the pandemic and will continue to do so if management chooses to show faith in them instead of calling on the private sector.”

³ Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur.

⁴ Fédération de la recherche et de l’enseignement universitaire du Québec.

DISTANCE LEARNING: NOT AT ANY COST

To continue teaching during the pandemic, CEGEP and universities put emergency measures in place, like distance learning, which allowed students to continue their learning.

In the college environment, space problems due to overpopulation now push some cégeps to want to continue distance learning to mitigate the lack of space. For Lucie Piché, “it’s unacceptable to compensate the lack of material resources by resorting to distance learning.”

For his part, FREUQ-CSQ president Vincent Beaucher estimates that if universities now want to promote distance learning, it has to be by injecting the necessary resources. “We most of all need to take the time to discuss it, notably with the lecturers and training officers, who are often completely overlooked, so that the decisions are made in collaboration.”

In short, “it’s urgent that the government’s announcements translate into concrete improvements on the ground,” concludes Éric Cyr.



Éric Cyr and Lucie Piché

SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

“My job is a bit like going to school every day but never having any exams,” chuckles Olivier Blais.

Anne-Marie Tremblay
COLLABORATION



Olivier Blais

Olivier Blais, a French Quebec Sign Language (QSL) interpreter, is the intermediary between deaf or hard-of-hearing students and the subject matters—whether accounting, drama or physics—they learn in school. A profession he means to promote, and defend, by getting involved with his union.

Already interested in languages, he discovered QSL while working in a restaurant as a student. “Some of our customers were deaf and I wanted to communicate with them,” he remembers. “So I hopped on the Internet and taught myself a few food-related signs.” It was love at first sight!

Olivier Blais decided to take the plunge during an optional course as he worked toward his bachelor’s degree in sexology. He registered to CEGEP du Vieux Montréal’s *Programme communication et études sourdes* (Communication and Deaf Studies Program) to earn an attestation of college studies (AEC). And that’s where he discovered both a fascinating world and a vivid language.

“Many of our teachers were deaf and had French QSL interpreters with them. It was when I saw them work that things really clicked into place,” he says.

A JACK OF ALL TRADES

The interpreter took on that same role at the Centre collégial de soutien à l’intégration de l’ouest du Québec in 2016. Even though this service is affiliated to CEGEP du Vieux Montréal, he can support college and university deaf or hard-of-hearing students who need a helping hand.

Olivier Blais is in the classroom with the student. He places himself in front of their desk and interprets the subject matter simultaneously, as well as any student questions or videos without subtitles. For CEGEP or university courses, interpreters work in teams, and in turn, given the demanding subject matters.

During the pandemic, Olivier Blais worked online. He would meet up with the student on Zoom or Teams, and then the course in QSL appeared on the latter’s screen. For asynchronous content, he also makes recordings that he then transfers to the student.

Interpreting seems to be tailor-made for this young man that is keenly interested in a great many things. Not only is he passionate about languages, he is also a classically trained singer and a musician in his spare time. He can be called on to interpret arts, sciences or history during any given day. And each instance involves a lexical field and concepts in need of clarification. Quite a challenge. You can't simply walk into a chemistry course without a basic understanding of the fundamentals!

"A certain portion of our schedule is set aside to make sure we're well-prepared. To have a better understanding of the subject, we ask the teacher to provide us with relevant information, like study material, books or links to videos or films shown in class," explains Olivier Blais. He can even be called on for foreign language courses, such as Korean, where he partners up with a note taker who has a thorough knowledge of that language.

INTERPRETER AND EXECUTIVE COUNSELOR

In December 2019, Olivier Blais was appointed executive counselor to the Syndicat des interprètes professionnels (SIP-CSQ), a Fédération du personnel de soutien de l'enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ) affiliate.

"My role is to provide advice to our members. I am free to choose different topics and teach myself certain specific subjects so workers can come to me if they have questions or are facing certain challenges."

For the time being, Olivier Blais would like to make the most of his knowledge in sexology and specialize in matters related to sexual harassment or diversity in the workplace. This endeavour proceeded at a slower pace during the pandemic. "I don't have a specific role yet because I am still in training," he explains.

That being said, he is as motivated as ever. "Before I took this job, I hadn't realized that there were people supporting us and defending our rights, that nothing was a given. But now, I know that without our union, I wouldn't have the same working conditions."

By getting involved, he will be able to raise awareness about his profession and work toward getting interpreting recognized, adds Olivier Blais. "And it's with our union that this can happen." He can't wait to kick things off!



"Before I took this job, I hadn't realized that there were people supporting us and defending our rights, that nothing was a given. But now, I know that without our union, I wouldn't have the same working conditions."

FOOD AUTONOMY

INTRODUCING AGRICULTURE AMONG THE ATIKAMEKWS



Photo: courtoisie Émilie Parent

How can we help an Indigenous community that has traditionally engaged in hunting and gathering achieve self-sufficiency and food security? Anthropologist Émilie Parent knows how.

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR

Émilie Parent is a project manager at the CEGEP de Victoriaville affiliated Centre of Social Innovation in Agriculture (CISA) and is currently working with some of the 2,400 members of the Atikamekw community of Opitciwan, located 280 kilometres west of Roberval, on the north shore of the Gouin Reservoir. Her role? Helping the community reach food self-reliance through agriculture.

In this region, produce available at the grocery store are quite expensive given the population's income. And after enduring a long journey to reach their destination, the fruits and vegetables often are banged up and bruised, and not particularly appealing. No wonder people don't buy them!

Agriculture is one interesting solution to this problem. But growing fruits and vegetables is not as common as hunting and gathering

in the Atikamekws' day-to-day lives. Many residents leave Opitciwan during the summer months to hunt across their vast territory.

Which means that introducing agriculture in the community is rather challenging. "Plants still need to be watered even though some people are gone in the summer time," says Émilie Parent.

A LOVELY EXPERIENCE FOR MANY PARTICIPANTS

Émilie Parent's project¹ with the CISA involves teaching agriculture to those who stay in the community in the summertime. Eight gardening spaces were created in the past few years, including an educational greenhouse, to help residents increase their food self-reliance.

A great number of people are enthusiastic participants in this yearly gardening experience. They grow, among other things, potatoes, cucumbers, zucchinis, lettuce, carrots and squashes, which all do very well close to the vast Gouin Reservoir.

"Outdoor activities are extremely popular among the community, particularly in areas where there isn't that much to do," explains the project manager. "And taking care of a living thing is very appealing for those involved."

This project also attracts CEGEP de Victoriaville anthropology and agriculture students. These young adults are hired by the CISA and given the opportunity to live in the Atikamekw community throughout the summer. Relationships are established

and they become "on-site ambassadors," so to speak, says Émilie Parent.

ADJUSTING TO ATIKAMEKW REALITY

"We [the CISA team] are working hard to adapt our way of doing things to better suit the community and its vision, and to answer its needs," explains the project manager. "There are cultural differences, such as the way we perceive time, organize group activities and the role work plays in our lives."

In the summer of 2021, two anthropology students working on a new research project joined the adventure in Opitciwan. Funded by the Ministry of Education, this project aims to work on engagement methods and to incorporate the ways of Indigenous communities. The experience was a success, particularly with the community's high school students who were invited to participate.



Photo Mathieu Girard

Émilie Parent

CISA, NEWLY-UNIONIZED WITH THE CSQ

The Centre of Social Innovation in Agriculture (CISA) at CEGEP de Victoriaville is the only college centre for technology transfer (CCTT) focusing its research on social issues in the agricultural sector.

In 2020, its thirty workers joined the ranks of Syndicat des professionnels du Cégep de Victoriaville, which is affiliated with the FPPC-CSQ.¹ Émilie Parent, an executive advisor with the union, believes that being part of the union really makes a difference. We need people from our group to get involved, because our reality as researchers is different from that of other professionals. That way, we can have a proper conversation!"

¹ Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges.

¹ This project with the CISA was made possible thanks to the support of Ernest Awashish, economic development officer, and Marie-Soleil Weizineau, Opitciwan community development manager.

A RIGHT WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR

The Pay Equity Act is turning 25... Despite some advances, the wage gap between women and men persists. How to remedy the situation?

Florence Tison | CSQ ADVISOR

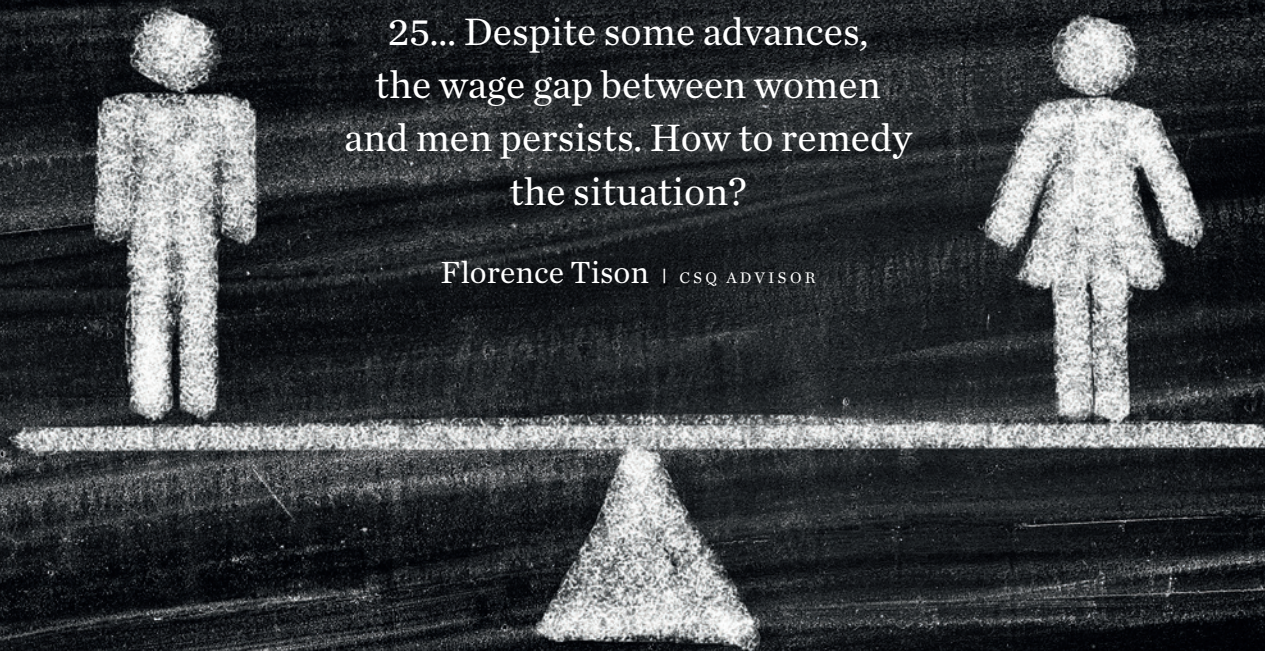


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On November 21, 1996, the Pay Equity Act was adopted by the 88 MPs present at the National Assembly when the vote was held. The Act answers the demands articulated by the 800 participants of the Bread and Roses March which took place in June 1995.

Since then, the Act has had direct positive effects on the public and parapublic sectors. It requires that businesses with 10 or more employees perform a preliminary pay equity exercise, conduct a pay equity audit every five years, post the audit results and report on the implementation of the Act in the business.

The Act enabled to reduce the wage gap between 1997 and 2018. Yet, it didn't completely erase the inequities. Women are still subject to systemic discrimination based on gender. As proof: men still earn 10.2% more than women, according to Statistics Canada.

\$2,96/HOUR

**WAGE GAP BETWEEN WOMEN
AND THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS**

This situation is inadmissible, says CSQ president Éric Gingras. "Pay equity is a seminal principle of our society, a fundamental right. Those disparities have no place in a society like ours," he denounces.

A NEVER-ENDING FIGHT

In May 2018, after a long fight, led notably by the CSQ and the other labour unions, the Supreme Court invalidated some sections of the Act and forced the Québec government to amend it. Canada's highest court stated that the salary adjustments had to be retroactive to the moment when discrimination appeared, instead of when the pay equity audit is conducted (every five years).

Other amendments were made to the Act in 2019, but they didn't solve the issues. Instead, they generated other problems. The CSQ and other union organizations pursued legal action to challenge the provisions that are discriminatory and that don't allow women to gain full salary adjustments, among other things.

AGREEMENTS, BUT PENDING COMPLAINTS ALSO

Many major agreements were concluded in 2021 in regards with the pay equity maintenance of 2010.

Those agreements apply to many predominantly female job groups, including education professionals (librarians, rehabilitation counsellors, speech and hearing correction officers, guidance counsellors) and support staff (school and centre secretaries, as well as daycare technicians).

"Despite these positive agreements, we continue our interventions to settle thousands of other maintenance complaints that are still pending," states Éric Gingras. "We also continue to urge the government to conduct a substantial review of the Act, because equality between women and men isn't negotiable."

25 YEARS OF FIGHTING AND MORE TO COME

The Act is 25, but the fight still isn't finished. "The fight we thought we'd won 25 years ago is still underway. We thought we had gained pay equity for women, but we're still waiting for it. We need to do everything to avoid any type of setback and continue to go forward," adds Éric Gingras.

"We will make sure that women get respected through the Act. We can't wait 25 more years for pay equity to finally become a reality. Action is needed and the Act has to be reviewed right now,"


– CSQ president Éric Gingras

To commemorate the Act's 25th anniversary, the CSQ intends to conduct a campaign that will highlight the Act's repercussions on its members. The Centrale intends to make sure that everyone understands this fundamental issue, promote the Act and call on the MPs to increase the awareness of its importance and put forward the acknowledgement of predominantly female jobs.

THE PAY EQUITY ACT IN A NUTSHELL

Pay equity refers to the fundamental right to obtain an equal salary for an equivalent job. The Pay Equity Act aims to "redress discriminatory differences in compensation suffered by persons who occupy positions in predominantly female job classes." All businesses with 10 or more employees in the public and private sectors are required to comply with the Act. The Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST) is responsible for the administration of the Act.

"We will make sure that women get respected through the Act. We can't wait 25 more years for pay equity to finally become a reality. Action is needed and the Act has to be reviewed right now," concludes Éric Gingras.



CALL TO ACTION FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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The commissions and inquiries on racism and discrimination problems against the Indigenous peoples were numerous in the last decades. Now, it's time to make things happen!

Charles-Antoine Bazinet-Piette
COMMUNICATIONS TRAINEE

The death of Joyce Echaquan and, more recently, the discovery of hundreds of children's bodies on the land of former residential schools sadly remind us how much racism and discrimination against the Indigenous communities are present.

To better understand their realities and find potential solutions, the Québec and Canada governments have held numerous commissions and inquiries over more than 20 years. The solutions are known, and according to the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL),¹ it's high time for action.

¹ The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is a political representation organization acting on behalf of the ten Québec and Labrador Territory's First Nations, since 1985. This assembly regroups elected chiefs of 43 First Nations communities.

867 CALLS FOR ACTION AND JUSTICE

The multiple commissions and inquiries concluded with 867 calls to action and justice. Yet these demands to change laws, notably among the justice system, in health and social services and in education, have yet to be put in place.

For many groups, including the AFNQL, the time has come to apply concrete measures. The organization claims that we need to offer Québec's population concrete, simple and realistic actions to influence government action.

However, Indigenous communities need the support of the whole society. Changing things "is a question of commitment," said AFNQL chief, Ghislain Picard, during a Web conference held in June 2021.

BECOMING ALLIES

According to the AFNQL, union organizations can undertake different actions to support the Indigenous communities, like amplifying the multiple awareness campaigns and making the outlines of the current issues known.

At the CSQ, several initiatives have been put in place to promote dialogue. For example, guides and a platform raising awareness to the Indigenous realities and cultures were developed for the education personnel working in the North.

The CSQ general council also adopted the Joyce Principle. This important initiative is an ultimate "call to action" asking the governments to provide safe and reassuring access in the health

The AFNQL claims that we need to offer Québec's population concrete, simple and realistic actions to influence government action.

and social services system for the First Nations and Inuit members.

AND ON AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL?

To support the Indigenous communities, everyone should get informed and share the information on the Indigenous communities' realities, claims the AFNQL. Promoting their initiatives, including their contribution to the Québec economy, for example by supporting Indigenous artists and artisans, is another way to work towards living together better.

TO KNOW MORE

The CSQ created two professional integration guides for those who wish to work in the North. They are available in electronic format.

*Living and working in an Inuit community and
Living and working in a Cree community*

[Lacsq.org](https://lacsq.org) ► [Dossiers](#) ► [Éducation](#)

The AFNQL website is filled with information. You will find, among other things, the Assembly's Action Plan on Racism and Discrimination: apnql.com/en.

20 YEARS OF CALLS TO ACTION AND JUSTICE

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996): 400 calls to action
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015): 94 calls to action
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019): 231 calls to action;
- Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec (2019): 142 calls to action

Not forgetting the inquiry on the death of Joyce Echaquan, which was held in May and June 2021. At the time of writing, the process still wasn't completed.

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