

# CSQ

## MAGAZINE

### EXPLORING DIVERSITY

Health Plan -  
The personnel:  
THE priority

.....

Early childhood:  
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light on unions

.....



Centrale des syndicats  
du Québec

Fall 2022





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# LOOKING BEYOND THE SPIN

Earlier this year, we discussed the pivotal role that political action can play when advocating for the many issues that drive our organization and to demonstrate our leadership on matters that affect the day-to-day lives of the members we represent.

Labour shortages, inflation, education, early childhood, healthcare, higher education, pay equity, environment and economic transition, living conditions of our elders, Indigenous issues... These are but a few of the issues that we did not hear nearly enough about throughout the election campaign that just drew to a close. Unbelievable. But these issues will most definitely be central to our activities, our daily lives and our actions for the months ahead. Inevitably, they will also make the headlines and gain traction in the public sphere.

We all remember that education was among the previous election's priorities and that there was a broad social consensus on the issue's importance, right? Have things changed so very much in the past four years to explain how it failed to be as important this time around? I don't think so!

## POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT: MORE THAN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS!

It is very frustrating to see fundamental issues related to education—and the same could be said about healthcare and early childhood—be reduced to random ideas thrown about and the next media spin. Clearly, the CSQ's efforts to show the significance of our political involvement, both as an organization and as members, is worth pursuing and merits further exploration.

Strategically, the election campaign provided a great window of opportunity, but our political involvement is so much more. This was not an end in itself, far from it! It will take many forms, as circumstances warrant, and will take hold, slowly but surely, in our practices, becoming second nature. As it should be.

We need to keep in mind that our working conditions go far beyond the collective bargaining process and that we need to do more, and better, to make things happen! Political involvement means giving ourselves the necessary tools to take full responsibility of our role as a central organization.

## SHORTAGES: LIKE PUTTING A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE?

Staff shortages is the hot topic across all our networks as we begin the next round of public sector negotiations. Consultations are coming to an end in education, healthcare and at the college level, and we are set to table our demands. One thing is clear: we will need much more than recruitment campaigns to deal with these shortages.

As a matter of fact, these recruitment campaigns to attract new personnel—teachers, support staff and professionals—for our schools and centres will impact the staff's morale if they do not involve tangible solutions to truly acknowledge and promote their skills and professionalism as well as to attract and retain new workers across our public networks.

So no, shortages are not like putting a square peg in a round hole. But we do need a solid foundation: better working conditions. Members have clearly stated that attraction and retention issues lead to a heavier workload for current employees, which in turn discourages newcomers from applying and scares away too many colleagues. This is a vicious cycle that we need to break. And to accomplish that, we need further investments.

### AND WHAT ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS?

We have our work cut out for us as we start this new school year. But when comes time to speak up for our members, their needs, their demands? We are here! To improve working conditions for workers in the education, college and healthcare networks? We are here!

To provide services to the entire population of Québec, to take care of the little ones, of children, of the sick, of our elders? We are here! At school, in our hospitals, in home care, in CEGEPs, and to build Québec's future, we are here!

We need to do things differently in the next round of negotiations. There is just no reason to relive the drama of past negotiations. We believe in social dialogue and we hope it will take place when we finally meet at the bargaining table. Because the goal is to stop the hemorrhaging, draw in new employees across our networks and take care of our people.

At the CSQ, we are here!

Éric Gingras | CSQ PRESIDENT



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# OPENING THE WAY TO INCLUSION

Many workplaces have adopted policies on diversity and inclusion. Yet it is also the responsibility of everyone to take tangible action to welcome every individual, as they are, into their work setting.

Audrey Parenteau | CHIEF EDITOR

"Being inclusive means remaining sensitive to differences and to the fact that our reality is not the same as the reality of the person before us. There are as many life paths as there are individuals. The idea is to try to put ourselves in a posture where we make room for realities that are different from our own," says Pascal Vaillancourt, the General Manager of Interligne.

This is not always easy to do because everyone has cognitive biases, that is, unconscious prejudices that arise from shortcuts the brain creates based on personal experiences, influences or even from one's own culture. Thus, it's important to beware of them.

"We need to become aware of our own prejudices, try to put them aside, stay curious about others, respond when a situation of discrimination arises in order to support LGBTQ+ persons, and never presume a person's gender identity despite their appearance or the way they express themselves," says Pascal Vaillancourt.

## SPEAK IT AND WRITE IT

According to Pascal Vaillancourt, "to be inclusive, you have to be proactive!" And that begins with the use of neutral vocabulary. Best to set aside gendered expressions like "madam, mister," "girl, boy," "mother, father" and use

formulations that include everyone. For example, when greeting the members of a group (students in a classroom, colleagues in a meeting or an auditorium), saying "Hello, everyone," or "Hey, folks" is preferable to using the expression "Hello, ladies and gentlemen."

If you don't know the gender identity of the person you are addressing, use their first name. According to Pascal Vaillancourt, using the word "person" is also a good approach.

He also suggests adapting your vocabulary to the preferences of the person by using their first name and the pronouns of their choosing (he/him she/her, they/them). In the same way, mentioning your own pronouns lets you show your openness. "Introducing yourself by saying 'Hello, my name is Pascal and here are my pronouns: He/him' flows and it's easy. When I do that, I am sending the message that I am open and aware that there are different gender realities. It also allows

the people around me, who might not feel at ease [about mentioning their pronouns], to understand that they are in an environment that is safer than they may have thought at the outset.”

He adds that “developing your interpersonal skills in your exchanges requires practice. However, you must take the time to listen to the other person, ask for explanations if needed, and show respect and empathy. This can make a big difference in building a relationship of trust.”

## WHEN MISTAKES HAPPEN

Everyone messes up, but if you make a mistake, “simply tell the person that you didn’t know. It’s useless to offer an intense apology,” advises Pascal Vaillancourt. “It has to stay natural otherwise everyone becomes uncomfortable.”

All the same, it is important to recognize your responsibility for your actions and to show humility and openness if someone corrects you. “We must not minimize the impact that words can have. Some words may be trivial for one person, but be very violent for another person,” he explains.

Showing understanding toward more reactive behaviour and avoiding gaslighting are other attitudes to be adopted. “If someone tells a joke and one person says they don’t think it was funny, it might be because that person has just been subjected to a micro-aggression. Answering that: ‘Oh come on, it’s just a *joke*,’ is dismissive and transfers guilt to that person. A sense of humour has its limits. When we are talking about a person’s identity, it’s not something we should joke about,” says Pascal Vaillancourt.



**Pascal Vaillancourt**

Other attitudes should also be avoided, for example:

- Making a person feel that they are making things up, exaggerating, or twisting words
- Telling a person to change their tone, because in fact, this may be concealing an emotion
- Making a person feel guilty for who they are and for asking for respect

## SHARE THE WEIGHT OF CHANGE

An organization that wants to undertake a process of inclusion in the workplace must ensure that everyone feels they are involved and pitches in. “We often tend to turn toward people who live a different reality to help us change our work setting, but they might not feel they want to. Instead of setting them aside, we can explain our process and ask them which role they would like to play, or to what extent they wish to be involved,” explains Pascal Vaillancourt.

Getting informed, educating oneself and turning to LGBTQ+ organizations that provide information or awareness-raising programs, rather than always asking the same people to answer our questions is another way of sharing the weight of change.

## TOTALLY INCLUSIVE?

Despite all the efforts put into an inclusion process, it can never be completed, according to Pascal Vaillancourt. “We can be more inclusive than we were before, but we can’t be 100% inclusive because we don’t know all the realities and because the issues evolve so quickly. Inclusion is the sun we are navigating toward. We may want to get as close as possible, but we can never touch it,” he concludes.

## INTERLIGNE: MORE THAN A HOTLINE

In addition to providing a help and information service for people affected by LGBTQ+ issues, Interligne offers a legal clinic and a variety of programs, including *équiferté - Inclusion gets to work*, for organizations that want to undertake a process of inclusion. The program offers a variety of services, including training and support to drive workplace change.

For more information:  
[interligne.co](https://interligne.co).





# “EDUCATION MUST BE A CENTRAL PRIORITY”

The personnel shortage issues that affect the public education system have repercussions on student services.  
How can this situation be addressed?

Audrey Parenteau | CHIEF EDITOR

Childcare facilities that ask parents to leave their children at home, special needs students left in the lurch, classes without teachers at the start of the school year.

While labour shortages in education were an issue of concern before the pandemic, they have only worsened over the last three years, according to the President of the CSQ, Éric Gingras: “This problem has given rise to increasingly worrisome situations in the school network, has caused overwork for the staff on the job and threatens the quality and accessibility of services provided to Québec’s students.”

## STUDENTS WITHOUT SERVICES

Although the Education Act stipulates that students with special learning or adjustment needs are entitled to receive educational services, the Québec Ombudsman revealed in his report, published in June 2022, that children are still not receiving services that reflect their real needs. One of the findings of the investigation: “school organizations (school service centres and school boards) do not have the staff required to respond to the needs of all students.”



## CLOSE THE DOOR TO PRIVATE AGENCIES

"We are so short of professionals in the schools that the Ministère has left the door wide open to private agencies," states the President of the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ), Jacques Landry. "Yet school professional staff are obviously in the best position to offer and provide adapted services."

## GIVE STAFF BREATHING ROOM

To improve the quality and accessibility of student services, education must be restored as a central priority. "Staffing needs are urgent, but that's not new," says Éric Gingras. "To replenish the staff in our schools, we have to value the work, the skills and the professionalism of school personnel and make all the jobs in the network more attractive and more competitive."

If we want to motivate people to work with students in the classrooms and to remain on the job, we must offer better conditions for teaching, believes the President of the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ), Josée Scalabrini. In her view, teachers are clear: "They want class sizes to be adjusted to the needs of the students and they want more balanced classes. They are asking for a lightened workload so that they can devote their attention to helping students succeed."

## END EMPLOYMENT INSECURITY

"Despite the shortage of school support staff, many school service centres continue to offer a large number of jobs under 25 hours per week," says the President of the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (FPSS-CSQ), Éric Pronovost.

"How can anyone think we are attracting school support staff this way when people are faced with the rising cost of living?" he asks. "The solution requires boosting the number of hours, so that school support staff can prevent problems rather than be subjected to them."

## URGENT NEED FOR ACTION

The public-sector negotiations getting underway is an opportunity that the government must not miss, says Éric Gingras. "It has to fully assess the situation and transcend the traditional confrontational approach. We have solutions to propose to breathe new life into our public education system, and it starts at the negotiating tables!"



Josée Scalabrini, Éric Gingras, Éric Pronovost and Jacques Landry

# SUCCESS FIRST



Marie-Josée Dallaire, Éric Gingras and Stéphane Lapointe

Work overload and staff shortages also affect private establishments.

In the face of the numerous pedagogical challenges, four actions can make a difference.

Audrey Parenteau  
CHIEF EDITOR

"No personnel categories working in private education establishments spared any effort to accompany and support students in their learning, during the pandemic and when returning to the classroom. The number of tasks and workload largely exceeded the regular working schedule, which generated significant tension and fatigue. It's time to come back to a more normal and acceptable situation," claims the President of the Fédération du personnel de l'enseignement privé (FPEP-CSQ), Stéphane Lapointe.

## BACK TO BASICS

To achieve this, establishments must refocus on their primary mission: students' success. Despite all the efforts made during the two-year health crisis by the teaching, support and professional staff, notably with the implementation of online education, the exceptional circumstances in which teaching continued were not always ideal.

"The crisis forced all of us to adapt and experiment with new pedagogical



approaches. Experience showed us, however, the limits and weaknesses of these approaches,” says FPEP-CSQ vice-president Marie-Josée Dallaire.

Stéphane Lapointe adds that many students now show pedagogical deficits. “We want the management of establishments to take the necessary actions to better accompany students in dealing with those difficulties they continue to experience,” he adds.

## FOUR ACTIONS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The FPEP-CSQ asks private schools to put in place concrete measures that would allow students to develop their full potential, by focusing on support and success. Four simple actions could make a real difference, as much for these establishments’ students as for their personnel.

### 1. End abusive differentiated instruction

“We have nothing against some form of differentiation, but we are against exaggeration. We must remember that a private school teacher isn’t a private teacher, says Stéphane Lapointe. We can’t demand individualized teaching for 35 to 40 students in a class, it’s unrealistic. This burns out personnel and makes them less able to really help students.”

### 2. Stop forcing online education deployment

Online learning makes for a poorer pedagogical relationship, according to a study by the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), at the behest of the FPEP-CSQ. This type of teaching leads to negative consequences on the relationship between the teacher and their students, in the cognitive, affective and social aspects.

The study reveals that this type of teaching notably creates in students a loss of motivation and of the appreciation of effort. As for teachers, they need to adjust their teaching strategies, while personalized interventions are more limited.

Yet, pilot projects in the form of hybrid teaching (teaching simultaneously offered in-person and online) are in progress. “It’s the worst option, an unacceptable pedagogical compromise,” claims Marie-Josée Dallaire.

### 3. Stop overloading the schedule with non-pedagogical tasks

Time is already limited for education personnel wanting to concentrate on what they do best: help students. “We must give them time so they can fully focus on their profession and stop filling pedagogical days with useless meetings, training that aren’t adapted to the needs,” explains the Vice-President.

### 4. Trust the personnel

With a strong school team, the learning environment is enhanced and disparities between students are limited. According to Marie-Josée Dallaire, catching up on the gaps caused by the pandemic is a beginning project.

“Let the experts decide the pedagogical strategies that are most adequate to bring students on the path to success,” she concludes.

## DISTANCE LEARNING: WELL-DOCUMENTED EFFECTS

The FPEP-CSQ is taking an interest in the impacts of this type of teaching and conducted studies on the matter, including one in collaboration with UQAM.

The report *L’écran nous déconnecte* [Screens disconnect us], whose results were published in May 2021, presents 10 revealing observations on the consequences of distance learning on students and education personnel.

The results of a recent study on the different forms of online teaching and the reasons explaining the decline in pedagogical quality will be known soon. The document *Radiographie de l’enseignement en ligne* [Online teaching X-ray] however, presents the highlights.

To learn more, visit the website [fpep.lacsq.org](http://fpep.lacsq.org).

# CEGEPS TO COMBAT SHORTAGES

Like for all educational institutions, the college network is suffering from labour shortages. Attracting workers is all the more important because CEGEPs educate a significant portion of the most highly sought-after employees on the job market.

Audrey Parenteau | CHIEF EDITOR

“We can’t ignore the importance of the college network for combating the personnel shortages because that is where future workers are trained in the areas where there is great demand,” says the President of the Fédération de l’enseignement collégial (FEC-CSQ), Yuri Blanchet.

“We don’t want the college network to be overlooked in the conversation taking place about shortages,” adds the President of the CSQ, Éric Gingras, reminding the government that implementing its own action plans for student success and the mental health of youth cannot be achieved without sufficient personnel.

## RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

In a CEGEP, when a person experiences a problematic situation, it is often with the help of a member of the teaching, support or professional personnel that they persevere and get their diploma. Thus, maintaining the quality of services offered in the institutions will help boost the college graduation rate, according to the President of the CSQ.

Youri Blanchet agrees. He thinks that “it takes more resources to foster student success. If there is a shortage of staff in the network, CEGEPs cannot adequately function or



Youri Blanchet



Éric Gingras





**Valérie Fontaine**

provide the services that the student community has a right to expect.”

The President of the FEC-CSQ explains that it is important to be able to rely on sufficient numbers of teachers, because many students will be impacted for a considerable time to come by the pandemic. “In many programs, the personnel’s workload must be reviewed to make classes conducive to success. That requires the hiring of new people.”

## OFFER COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE CONDITIONS

To attract and retain personnel, “the first step to be taken is to improve working and salary conditions,” says the President of the Fédération du personnel de soutien de l’enseignement supérieur (FPSES-CSQ), Valérie Fontaine.

The federations of the college network are also demanding that the government swiftly tackle the problem by offering its workers attractive, competitive conditions.

“For CEGEP professionals, working conditions are not worthwhile when compared with what’s on offer with other employers. In our view, this partly explains the staff shortages in our settings. We are calling for commitments that will make it possible to change things so that we have the means to achieve our ambitions for college professional services,” states the President of the Fédération du personnel professionnel des collèges (FPPC-CSQ), Éric Cyr.



**Éric Cyr**

## PROMOTE A TRULY COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Providing a more fulfilling work environment is another means of attracting and retaining personnel in CEGEPs, according to Valérie Fontaine. “People who hold jobs in the college network are those who contribute every day to the smooth operation of our institutions and to the success of students,” she emphasizes. In her opinion, we need to favour more participative management models, in which staff expertise and autonomy is recognized. The teaching, support and professional personnel must be consulted so that they can continue to contribute to the sound functioning of the institutions.

Éric Cyr asserts that the current management methods in the CEGEPs often do not offer much flexibility and have a rather negative impact on retaining personnel. “Our members want modern, competitive conditions. They want the value of their skills and their work to be recognized, but they also want to have greater professional autonomy so that they have the leeway they need to fulfill their mandate,” he says.

As a new round of negotiations begins, the context is conducive to improving the college network, assert union leaders. They also want the next Minister of Higher Education\* to be a person who is more committed, present and able to drive forward their issues during Cabinet meetings.

\* At press time, the name of the new Minister of Higher Education had not been announced.



## HEALTH PLAN

# THE PERSONNEL: THE PRIORITY!

Make no mistake: without personnel, any reform plan is destined to fail. The biggest challenge facing the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux is to rebuild confidence in the government.

Lise Goulet | CSQ ADVISOR

Coming out of the global pandemic, which shone a spotlight on the weaknesses of our healthcare system, the government is proposing a comprehensive plan to launch “a major shift in the organization of healthcare and health services in Québec,” healthcare that it hopes will be more humane and more efficient.

But have we learned the right lessons from the pandemic? Will we have the wisdom to better prepare for the imminent climate crisis? And will we be able to take care of the most vulnerable in our society and of healthcare personnel? The time has come to make choices!

### THE BIG PROJECTS

The Health Minister plans to take immediate action on what he considers the four foundations of our health system:

- Personnel
- Access to data
- Information technologies
- Infrastructures and equipment

His plan contains 50 measures in nine sectors deemed critical to improving the access, quality and efficiency of the services:

- Six areas deemed dysfunctional are targeted: the front line; emergency and specialized care; seniors and vulnerable people; mental health; youth protection; prevention and epidemic preparedness.
- Three projects aimed at transforming the network will focus on efficiency issues: innovation, funding, governance and performance.



The Dubé plan is an outline for the major shift in culture that the government wishes to see. But is it really reasonable to rush into another reform of the healthcare system now, instead of focusing on the priority issues on which there is consensus?

## DO NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE ESSENTIALS

A number of international organizations<sup>1</sup> are urging governments around the world to strengthen healthcare and social safety nets. Crises of the scope of COVID-19 require rapid intervention from public authorities, a response that only well-established and properly funded public health and social services can orchestrate.

## THE PRIORITY: HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL

The Minister acknowledged it: the significant reorganization of services and the reallocation of many activities during the pandemic put inhumane pressure on the personnel constantly on the front lines.

“Now, catching up with the many backlogs accumulated in the various sectors will also bring its own set of challenges,” says the President of the Fédération de la Santé du Québec (FSQ-CSQ), Isabelle Dumaine. “The personnel will continue to be under pressure for several months, or even for several years. In such a context, the issues of burnout and workforce shortages remain extremely concerning.”

## MORE THAN STRENGTH OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Minister says he needs the collaboration of all his partners – the strength of his plan’s implementation, in his own words – for the plan to be successful.

“We agree that we have to change a number of our practices. And more than ever, we need global, fair and sustainable solutions to convince personnel to remain in or recommit to our public health and social services network. The future of our public services must include improved working conditions. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux must make this its priority,” emphasizes the President of the CSQ, Éric Gingras.

In his eagerness to simultaneously work on several fronts – certain areas of change could monopolize human resources on a large scale – is the Minister running the risk of losing sight of the essentials?

“If the Minister wants to ‘provide care on a human scale,’ as he says, and to establish a new dialogue, we call on him to read the Déclaration du 26 avril 2022 – Un appel pour retrouver plus d’humanité en santé!, in which nurses, licenced practical nurses, respiratory therapists who are members of the FSQ-CSQ, along with citizens, make an urgent appeal to the government,” says Isabelle Dumaine.



Photo François Beauregard

Isabelle Dumaine



Photo Félix Cauchy-Charest

Éric Gingras

<sup>1</sup> Public Services International (PSI), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations (UN) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

# EARLY CHILDHOOD THROWING SOME LIGHT ON UNIONS

We need to better communicate  
our unions' purpose to  
attract younger members,  
say two new recruits.

Mathieu Morin  
FIEPQ-CSQ ADVISOR

Vicky Goyette, President of the Syndicat des intervenantes en petite enfance des Laurentides,<sup>1</sup> has noticed that her role as union leader is not always perceived as something positive. "Some tell me I must love to gripe and complain when nothing could be further from the truth! Saying you're involved with your union is still frowned on."

She believes that this may discourage certain people from getting involved. She freely admits that until quite recently, she was not all that interested in her union's actions either. She only started paying closer attention last year, when employees interested in joining the CSQ got the ball rolling. The general assembly presentation convinced her to run for the executive committee. "I was bitten by the union bug then and there, so I raised my hand. It was all quite spur-of-the-moment!" adds with a laugh the early childhood educator, a 19-year veteran at CPE Les petits trésors de Boisbriand.

Things went a bit differently for Josée Robichaud. When she told her loved ones about her plan to become a union representative, the news was well received. "Given all we achieved in the most recent bargaining rounds, I only got positive feedback," says the regulated and subsidized home childcare educator. Media coverage of the tremendous solidarity among educators, of their demands and what they achieved clearly demonstrated the importance of unions in the early childhood sector.



Vicky Goyette

<sup>1</sup> The union is affiliated with the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIEPQ-CSQ).





**Josée Robichaud**

## DOING OUR PART TO SHIFT PERCEPTIONS

For Vicky Goyette, getting involved was an opportunity to help move her profession forward. Throughout her career, she has seen her union focus much too often on the individual representation of its members. “We were told that the union would represent us to the bitter end, regardless of the reasons,” she notes. But what the members were hoping for was greater recognition of their profession and of what an educator’s professional life entails.

Both circumstances and mindset have changed a great deal since her union became affiliated with the CSQ, she adds. Things are more positive, and discussions now focus on professional recognition rather than individual rights. “And that is what grabs members’ attention!”, she argues.

## SOLIDARITY EQUALS STRENGTH

Josée Robichaud admits that just a few years ago, she saw herself as more pro-management. But over time, she discovered that unions have much to offer.

She got involved in her union rather inadvertently. At the time, the private home childcare service that she had been operating since 2008 had just been recognized by a Coordinating Office. As she was struggling with certain forms, her union provided her with support services. And that got her thinking about getting involved herself. “I figured that if I was having problems, other people were certainly having problems too!” she explains.

In next to no time, Josée Robichaud was taking part in many of her local union’s activities where she was welcomed with open arms. “It was really super easy,” says the early childhood worker. A few weeks later, she was invited to the Next Generation Camp organized by the Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec (FIPEQ-CSQ) and was blown away by the strength of the group. Seeing what each of the union’s decisions involved and the very real concern for a democratic process only strengthened her resolve.

During her local union’s next meetings, Josée Robichaud will be stepping up and getting more involved. Support measures for children with special needs are of great interest to her and she thinks that her union could be a wonderful vehicle toward better quality services for these kids.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT

Vicky Goyette and Josée Robichaud both agree that there is still much to do communication-wise to get the younger generation involved in their unions. Everyone can find a reason to get involved whether to work toward personalized services or better recognition for the profession.

Both educators say that getting involved in their union helped them discover a democratic and supportive movement which they now actively promote. “Getting new people, especially women with children, interested and involved is challenging given current staff shortages, says Vicky Goyette. But what’s heartening is that once our members get involved, they stay involved in the union movement for many years.”

## REFERENDUM IN CHILE

# HOPE REMAINS DESPITE DISAPPOINTING RESULT

Nearly 62% of all Chilean voters rejected a new draft of their Constitution, put forward during a national referendum held on September 4, 2022, to replace the text imposed by the Pinochet dictatorship.

Luc Allaire | CSQ ADVISOR



Juan-José Fernandez, President of the Fédération des syndicats de l'action collective (FSAC-CSQ), Luc Allaire, advisor and head of international relations at the CSQ as well as President of the Fondation Salvador-Allende de Montréal, and Anne Dionne, CSQ Vice-President, were in Chile for the referendum. They are pictured here with Isabel Allende (third from the left), daughter of former President Salvador Allende.

A new Constitution, based on the work of the Constituent Assembly elected in May 2021, was submitted to a national referendum open to all Chileans voters. As soon as the results were announced, Chilean President Gabriel Boric stated his intention to relaunch the constitutional process begun following a plebiscite with an 80% majority in October 2020.

The CSQ was on hand during this historic event as a tangible expression of Québec union organizations' solidarity with the Chilean people. It joined delegations from several other countries including Uruguay, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, France, the United States, Colombia and Spain.

## FOR A FAIRER CHILE

On September 1, a few days before the referendum, a great gathering in support of *Apruebo* (I approve) saw some 500,000 people gather in Santiago. Personal accounts were shared, recounting key events leading to the referendum: Gabriel Boric's election as president, the referendum to change the Constitution supported by 80% of Chilean voters as well as the election of a joint constituent assembly that provides representation for Indigenous peoples. This assembly submitted a draft Constitution which would lead to a more dignified, united, environmental, community-minded, joint, fairer and plurinational Chile.

The road to a more democratic and fairer Chile has been strewn with obstacles throughout its history, including armed conflicts as was the case in the September 11 Coup in 1973, as well as lies and disinformation, as we have seen in recent months. Through the right wing's media manipulation, powerful oligarchs and the sectors now serving the interests of the wealthiest 1% in Chile have succeeded in upholding, for the time being, the Constitution imposed during the dictatorship.

As democrats, and despite it all, progressive forces in Chile have bowed to the decision of the majority.

## MISLEADING CAMPAIGN

Democrats are now faced with the task of keeping an open dialogue with citizens who chose to reject the proposed Constitution. Some among them voted without even reading

the draft while others fell prey to the right-wing media campaign, based on lies and intimidation.

The right-wing propaganda campaign used several sections of the proposed constitution to stoke public fears. It used the section stating that dignified housing would be provided to all Chileans to emphasize the fact that the right to private housing was not mentioned. This situation led to many citizens fearing they would lose their own house.

The right also used a section on animal rights to claim that farmers would no longer be able to ride a horse. It also kept repeating that the recognition of Indigenous peoples could lead to the partition of the Chilean territory. In a country where the right to abortion is only recognized in the event of a rape or when the life of the mother or fetus is at risk, right-wing supporters have condemned the recognition of this right.

Given that Chilean media is controlled by the right and that right-wing parties had substantial amounts of money allocated to publicity, they were successful in convincing most of the population to vote *Rechazo* (I reject).

## LOOKING FORWARD

The objective of progressive forces is now to resume the constitutional process adopted during the plebiscite put forward on October 25, 2020. As 80% of Chilean voters supported drafting a new Constitution, the process to replace the dictatorship's Constitution once and for all must go forward.

The hope awakened by the Constituent Assembly for a more dignified, united, environmental, community-minded, joint, fairer and plurinational Chile cannot be extinguished, regardless of the instrumentalization of lies or any distortion of truth.

Progressive Chileans share the conviction that they are on the right side of history and that Chile, in the near future, will build a different society, where neoliberalism—the reason why it is currently one of our planet's most inequitable societies—will no longer be as influential.



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