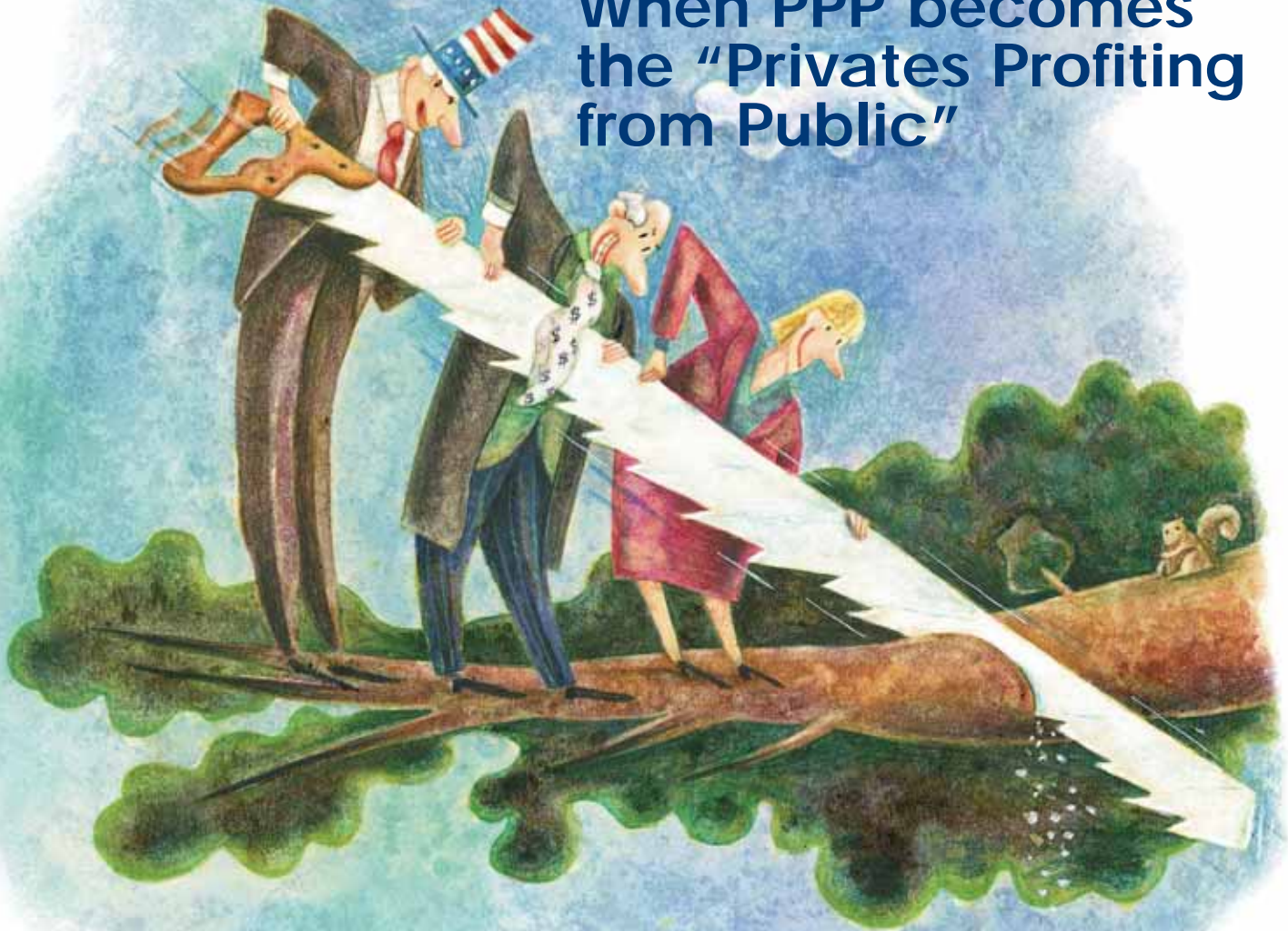


# CSQ News

November-December 2004

**When PPP becomes  
the "Privates Profiting  
from Public"**



**Bargaining time!**

**Union renewal at the FEC...  
We're taking care of business!**

# Extensive consultation on a constantly evolving education service

**Daniel B. Lafrenière**

Vice-président FPSS-CSQ

Last year, the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (CSQ), representing more than 19,000 members, undertook a comprehensive study involving 246 of its members working in school child-care services. Following the major operation, a discussion forum held on May 19-20, 2004 in Montréal and Québec City brought together more than 75 child-care supervisors and educators who met to discuss the various concerns of workers in this sector.

### Key points

More than 221,000 children benefit from school child-care services in Québec, and the primary observations of this study tell us that overwork is a real issue, but also that about 37% of educators work fewer than 15 hours per week, and that this lack of job security is much more pronounced in the regions. For example, in Mauricie, the proportion climbs to 71%. These statistics do not even include on-call educators, who do not have a regular schedule.

As for child-care service supervisors, the results show that there is significant work overload, particularly in urban centres. In fact, we note that about 49% of supervisors state that they cannot assume all the administrative duties alone and that they are obliged to delegate a portion of them. In 80% of cases, this overload is borne by educators who perform work for which they are not credited.

The data tend to indicate that training is often insufficient or poorly adapted, that ratios are often significantly exceeded and that the school boards still hesitate to guarantee adequate work hours and resources to meet the needs

of the environment. For children receiving special education and children with learning problems who attend child-care facilities, the necessary resources (for instance, special education technicians), appear to vanish into thin air after class.

### Alternative solutions

A number of options were discussed at the forum, and they will serve as the basis for a series of recommendations that will soon be tabled at a meeting of the Federation. Various aspects of these options have already been taken up with the province-wide employers in the draft collective agreements currently being negotiated. Nevertheless, a genuine examination of the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in this environment will be followed up after the forum, and in addition to the staff directly concerned, school principals, governing boards and the Ministère de l'Éducation will have to be informed of the concerns that were raised.

### Keep striving!

Throughout several rounds of questioning, it was underscored that school child-care services are often perceived as cash cows for schools, rather than an educational service in its own right. In some cases, schools tap monies directly from child-care services (10% or 30%, for example:) in order make purchases for the



GRATIEN TREMBLAY

Lana Boulianne, member of the professional issues committee on school child-care services.

school or to cover deficits. We have to keep striving to win recognition and respect for this educational service.

The Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire will ensure that child-care service supervisors and educators are heeded so that the service can evolve and so that the "wrinkles" all too often imposed by the system can be ironed out.

The FPSS-CSQ wishes to thank Sébastien Bouchard, CSQ Advisor, Joanne Quévillon, Vice-President, FPSS-CSQ, Réjeanne Brodeur, Annie Boly and Lana Boulianne, members of the professional issues committee on school child-care services.

# Bargaining time!

Luc Allaire

Discussion has finally resumed at the Common Table for negotiations. For the first time since the month of June, an official meeting was held on October 21. An entire army of government representatives—from the Conseil du trésor and each of the employer's negotiation committees for school boards, CEGEPs and health and social services— set out for the occasion to meet the CSQ-CSN-FTQ Common Front.

First of all, union representatives questioned the budgetary framework submitted by the Chair of the Conseil du trésor, Monique Jérôme-Forget, at a press conference in June 2004. This budgetary framework limits per-unit remuneration increase to 12.6% in all public and para-public sectors over the course of the next six years.

In response to questions, the employer recognized that this offer does not provide for anything during the first year of the collective agreement, from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004. "It's as though that year did not exist," said Yves Lanctôt, assistant coordinator for province-wide negotiations. On the other, the Conseil du trésor representative explained that the budgetary framework did not include system costs or costs related to increase service to the public, whether such an increase is determined by the government (e.g., 90-minute increase in teaching hours for elementary school students) or agreed upon within the framework of negotiations (e.g., a decrease in the number of students per class or an increase in the number of professionals in the college system).

The second series of questions dealt with the topics submitted by the Common Front, but that had not been

addressed in the employer offer of June 18: premiums, vacation, reconciliation of work and family life, parental rights and insurance.

The employer specified that it would analyze premiums in terms of three criteria: relevance, the link with pay equity and whether or not the intended objective purpose of the premium is fulfilled. Briefly, all the premiums and allowances—night, isolated post, availability and danger premiums, etc.—may be called into question. This will certainly be a contentious issue, given the demands that the Common Front has formulated to add bonuses for certain groups.

As for vacation and insurance, the employer has rejected union demands and is proposing the status quo. The Conseil du trésor planned a complete revision of the entire regional disparities plan in its offer of June 18.

As for reconciliation of work and family life, the employer states that it is waiting for a policy or a law to be adopted and that it is still considering parental rights, as it wishes to conduct a comprehensive appraisal of family and parental leave. "We indicated to them that we did not have to wait for the passing of legislation to begin discussion," states Brent Tweddell, coordinator of province-wide negotiations. "There are enough issues on the table

CSQ members demonstrated on October 1 in Québec City to deplore dragging negotiations.

FRANÇOIS BEAUREGARD



# When PPP becomes the “Privates Profiting from Public”



CLEMENT ALLARD

## Luc Allaire and Nicole de Sève

But is the union movement justified in manning the barricades? In fact, the union movement opposes PPPs mainly because they have become a tool that the Charest government is using to reduce the size of government.

As Gérard Boismenu, political science professor at UQAM explains, “the Charest government is obsessed with the State, its size, weight, costs and its sprawling and obese nature,” as the PLQ’s 2002 platform intimated. An anachronistic government that “dates from another era.” A government whose “operation must be restored” and which must put “in tune with globalization.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the Charest government has adopted the conservative slogan “Less government is better government.” The CSQ’s opposition to this obsession with “less government” consists in demanding “better government,” rather than “more government,” because, while it is true that government operations can be improved, it is false to claim that the Québec model should be scrapped.

On the contrary, as professor Jean-François Lisée has shown,<sup>2</sup> Québec has

filled in the gap with average-ranked industrialized countries. Better yet, he says, “Québec now ranks favourably with respect to the average position of the 30 OECD countries. From 1992 to 2002, Québec moved up from 17th to 10th spot among industrialized countries. Only Ireland made more progress.”

Strangely enough, while people speak of the Irish miracle, “the Québec model is accused of doing disservice to Quebecers whereas in fact, it has never been this efficient in closing historical gaps and in showing a better performance than its neighbours,” Mr. Lisée adds.

However, the size of government is not the only issue in the rationale for opposing PPPs. There is also the way in which the government is implementing this agenda.

The CSQ analyzed Bill 61, *An Act respecting the Agence des partenariats public-privé du Québec*, tabled by the Chair of the Conseil du trésor, Monique Jérôme-Forget. It also submitted a brief<sup>3</sup> to the Commission des finances publiques on October 28, in which it opposes the creation of such a public-private partnership agency for several reasons.

Before setting up such an agency, extensive public debate should have

Since the Charest government began talking about public-private partnerships, the notorious PPPs, the union movement has revolted, describing them as “Privates Profiting from Public” or “Patronage, Partisanship, *Petits amis*.”

occurred, and a report should have been made on experiments elsewhere in Canada and around the world so that Quebecers could have made an enlightened choice.

In addition, the agency proposed by the Conseil du trésor has a conflicting, two-sided mandate: judge the appropriateness of various public-private partnerships while at the same time taking responsibility for promoting them as a key aspect of government machinery. Should it really be believed that the Agency will be “ethically” able to avoid any conflict of interest between its role in promoting PPPs and its role in negotiating contracts on behalf of the government with private businesses?

## Public bodies will be affected

Another concern is that the legislation governing PPPs could affect all public bodies, specifically government departments, CEGEPs, school boards, public institutions in the health and social services system, including new agencies, municipal bodies and “any other body designated by the Government” (Section 7, Chapter II).

If any uncertainty about the invasion of public services by the private sector remained, this section of the bill removes all reasonable doubt.

Before going ahead with PPPs in the public, para-public or semi-public services, it is relevant to note that in the United States, a return to public services and traditional bidding has been observed. American municipalities have become increasingly sceptical and are contracting back in several services that had been contracted out. From 1992 to 1997, 88% of American public administrations had contracted back in at least one service that had previously been contracted out, and 65% of administrations had contracted back in more than three services.<sup>4</sup>

The Conseil du trésor should also attentively study the failure of the experiment conducted in Nova Scotia's school community. The program initially got off to a good start. It involved building about 30 PPP schools by the end of June 2000. In 1999, the primary promoter of PPPs in Canada, the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships, granted its first annual award to the P3 school of Halifax. However, in 2001, students and staff in the school were still drinking bottled water, twelve months after arsenic was discovered in the school's well water. So the question became: who was responsible for providing drinking water to students, the school board or the school's corporate owners? This painful incident is merely one example in a long list.<sup>5</sup>

## Privatization of public heritage

The implementation of public-private partnerships basically aims to put Québec in step with its trading partners. It is the government's preferred tool in complying with liberalized trade agreements that presuppose a substantial reduction in the size of government and increased trade in public markets. As in the case of reassessing contractual relations with the private sector provided for in the Modernization Plan 2004–2007, the introduction of public-private partnerships does not constitute minor reform, but in fact an in-depth overhaul of the

way government does things as well as the weakening of Québec's identity.

The impetus to dismantle the institutions that helped shape Québec's difference amounts to undermining Québec's originality. "There are many people here and elsewhere in Canada who think that Québec is the most advanced province in many areas, particularly in terms of its social programs. There are also many people who think that eliminating 20% of the public service, resorting to private business to deliver public services and privatizing public assets are not really synonymous with modernity,"<sup>6</sup> wrote Vincent Marissal.

## A Public Interest Secretariat

The Centrale des syndicats du Québec is calling on the government to establish a public interest secretariat, in place of the Agency of the PPP, whose role would be to analyze any public infrastructure renewal project and to improve the quality of services provided to citizens. This secretariat would come under the jurisdiction of the National Assembly, which would thereby ensure that the democratic institution would prevail over executive powers. Its role would be to take inventory of the "social assets" essential for "community life" in Québec, so as to make recommendations to the government concerning the means of protecting these assets and to keep them out of liberalized trade agreements.

The CSQ's proposal seeks to suggest answers to the following questions: How can the public interest be served and not the special interests of a few businesses? What criteria must underlie the analysis of government action from a cost-benefit perspective? How can we ensure that economic drivers do not prevail over values such as human dignity and human rights, justice, equality of opportunity and minority rights? How can government action be guided so that it abides by the Charter of Rights while improving transparen-



CLEMENT ALLARD

The president of the Conseil du trésor, Monique Jérôme-Forget, asked many questions to Rejean Parent, about CSQ's brief on PPPs.

cy and the democratic nature of services?

Briefly, the CSQ's proposal is designed to make the concept of public interest the cornerstone of discussion and of building Québec society with a view to improving community life.

For more information, read the brief tabled with the Commission des finances publiques, *Partenariats public-privé ou Promotion du patrimoine public*, on the CSQ's Web site [[www.csq.qc.net](http://www.csq.qc.net)].

- 1 Gérard Boismenu, *Ambitions libérales and écueils politiques*, Éditions Athéna, 2004.
- 2 Jean-François Lisée, *Un mauvais procès au modèle québécois*. [<http://www.vigile.net/ds-lisee>]
- 3 CSQ, *Partenariats public-privé ou Promotion du patrimoine public?* Brief tabled with the Commission des finances publiques at public hearings on Bill 61: *An Act respecting the Agence des partenariats public-privé du Québec*, September 2004. The brief can be consulted on the CSQ's Web site.
- 4 CUPE Research Branch, *The Drive to Privatize. Why Public Is Better for our Communities... and For Local Business*, 2002.
- 5 CUPE, *CUPE Annual Report on Privatization*, 2002.
- 6 Vincent Marissal, "La révolution PPP," *La Presse*, May 6, 2004, p. A5.

# Union renewal at the FEC... We're taking care of business!

### FEC Executive

#### Responsibilities of renewal

One of the significant challenges that a union organization must meet consists of ensuring the renewal of an active membership. In 2000, it was estimated that employees aged 50 or over represented 41% of college teaching staff. Although renewal involves more than the age issue, this information indicates that many members will soon be retiring, taking with them years of union activism. Thus they will leave a void that will have to be filled.

Over the past year, the Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégeps (FEC) has expanded efforts in order to foster renewal and the active participation of its members, thereby making renewal a constant concern. More than one hundred members participated in a process (discussion or workshops and surveys) designed to gather information on their perceptions of unionism.

#### Perceptions of new members

For many new members, unionism is secondary to professional, family and personal considerations. When we examine their assessment of unionism, this perception is easily understood. According to some, "the union does not reflect the values of younger people. Rather, it reflects corporatist values that prevail in the union world, those of permanent staff on the verge of retirement." While they feel unions have made social gains, they don't feel they reap any of the benefits. "Nothing seems to indicate that the union is serving those who have no job security," they add.

Lack of job security is at the root of the problem of union renewal.



Combined with increasingly heavy teaching loads, job insecurity is a barrier to union commitment. "When you start out, work eats up 100% of your time. You are constantly preoccupied with ensuring your basic survival." Their professional commitment comes before any involvement in union affairs. In addition, they feel that "the unions should seek better teaching conditions instead of demanding salary increases." In a context of renewing collective agreements, some believe that "public sympathy could be the strongest benefit in negotiations. In this view, what should be promoted is the idea that teachers are not asking for high salaries but resources to provide better education."

Nevertheless, many members of the upcoming generation believe in union activism. At the FEC Congress last June, one delegate expressed such a commitment as follows: "We want to act on behalf of a cause, not an organization."

#### Ensuring renewal

At the initiative of the Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Cégep de Bois-de-Boulogne and through the work of the FEC's committee on renewal established one year ago, we were able to gather this information. Based

The theme of the 17th Congress of the FEC was "Ensuring union renewal."

on it, a number of actions were proposed and undertaken. One of the major accomplishments was undoubtedly the organization of our 17th Congress, with the theme of ensuring union renewal.

One of the first impacts was the number of upcoming members who attended to debate Congress proposals and issues that referred to the perceptions cited above. The open debate in workshops gave rise to a summary and to the implementation of a reception, recruitment and training plan for new union members designed to "update" our union organization. The plan recommends activities, tools and changes to our ways of doing things that we hope will enable us to ensure union renewal.



MARTINE DOYON

## Beyond lies, a government is crippled

**Réjean Parent**  
President

Aware that its fiery and shameless approach has not won public acceptance, since the spring the Liberal government has moved into communications mode, after having noticed the impact of its fall escapades on its popularity. Taking inspiration from Voltaire's aphorism "Lie, lie, there will always be something left to lie about," the governmental strategy is dramatizing the state of public finances and population shifts in order to justify government reengineering.

The CSQ, like many other components of the Réseau de vigilance, is not at all fooled by this governmental masquerade which would have us believe that Québec is bankrupt and that population decline is the after-shock hurling us down into the abyss. There were hundreds of us outside of the Forum des générations telling this government that we do find the rationale it is using to justify government disengagement from certain public services at all convincing. We will not allow it to hand our social gains over to private businesses.

As for Bill 61, establishing the Agence sur les partenariats public-privé (PPP), we have continued to convey our message to the Commission des finances publiques and the Chair of the Conseil du trésor. These partnerships have not demonstrated their effectiveness at all in other parts of the world. They constitute a subtle form of contracting out, where there is not concession or outright privatization. As PPPs would require creating a profit margin to compensate the major multinational entrepreneurs, it is very likely that such profits will be based on increased fee structures and on the deterioration of the working conditions of workers in all sectors.

We do not want any part of such misappropriation of public taxes by private interests! We don't want any part of a Québec increasingly profitable to a minority of businesses to the detriment of public well-being! We abhor the line on making our collective agreements more flexible, which conceals transferring out jobs and contracting out! We demand that democratic institutions retain control in preserving the public interest!

This is going to be a tough battle because we are being attacked from all sides, and both as workers and as citizens, but our solidarity will prevail over a government that wants to strip us of our public heritage.

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NORMAND BLOUIN

Andrée Blouin

## Librarians, an essential yet endangered professional service

**Jean-Philippe Fortin**  
Independent Journalist

Underfinanced libraries with ageing collections and book culture in decline - this is not news. Moreover, the future of the profession of the librarians isn't much rosier than the state of libraries.

Pierre Bouchard, President of the Fédération des cégeps professionnelles and des professionnels de l'éducation (FPPE), deplores the extent to which they have been discredited. He feels, with regret, that the profession is "on life-support," and endangered.

Andrée Blouin, who for 32 years has animated the library at Ecole secondaire Daniel-Johnson in Montreal, concurs: "When it's time for me to go, I don't know who will replace me."

"When I started out, there were five of us. Now, I'm here in the mornings, and a technician, who does the same work, is here in the afternoons," observes Carol Richard, who has 32 years of experience. Mr Richard also assumes the role of arts and culture education consultant at the Charlevoix school board, which covers three secondary schools and 16 elementary schools over 168 km. He also points out that book purchasing budgets have not kept up with the times.

Quoting data from the Ministère de l'Éducation for 2003-2004, Pierre Bouchard indicates that there are no more than 26 librarians for... 2,500 elementary and secondary schools! "That means that many school boards do not have any librarians. What happens when professionals are not assigned to these tasks? Either no one is there to do the work, or technicians, with all due respect for their work, strive to ensure the survival of libraries," he explains. "In elementary schools, there are often parent volunteers." What's more, no one is there to supervise all these "substitutes" motivated by good will.

In the context of the reform and the renewal of teaching staff, one wonders how schools will manage without this essential professional service.



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\$35,001 to \$55,280	\$20.00	\$6.00	\$7.68	\$6.32
	\$50.00	\$15.00	\$19.20	\$15.80
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