



Liaison

L'ASSOCIATION PROVINCIALE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU QUÉBEC

In association with the Federation of Teachers of Jewish Schools

CONGRÈS 2001 CONVENTION

En collaboration avec la Fédération des instituteurs des écoles juives



Palais des Congrès de Montréal
November 15-16 novembre 2001

From the President's Desk



When something ceases to be a subject of controversy, it ceases to be a subject of interest.

The Québec educational scene will likely be a subject of interest (and controversy) for a long time to come. If we are to believe the study published by *Les Affaires* (see article on page 3), a substantial majority of Quebecers are:

- uninformed about the education reform;
- cynical about the potential benefits of the reform; and/or
- in favour of a return to more traditional school practices.

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From the President's Desk

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In attempting to thoroughly revamp the education system, the Minister should consider the importance of keeping the public on side. In a matter as fundamental as its school system, the public must be well informed. The all-encompassing changes proposed by the reform require the understanding and the support of the people.

In and of itself, the fact that public perception of the school system is at odds with the aims of the reform is not all that surprising. Not surprising, but potentially dangerous. On the issue of teacher evaluation, the study indicates that a whopping 96% of respondents favour this practice as a way to improve the schools. Minister Legault has recently floated several trial balloons showing his eagerness to move in this direction. Therein lies the danger.

Teacher unions are not opposed to a form of institutional evaluation that looks at the educational community as a whole. Teachers are essential, but many other factors (including other staff, financing and resources, parents and the students themselves) contribute to the success level of each school. The belief that all problems are somehow the fault of the teacher is simply not acceptable.

In the present context, we have parents who are demanding a return to a more traditional school, a Minister of Education who is pushing for change while looking for quick fixes (like teacher evaluation) and teachers who are stepping into the unknown of the curriculum reform. The potential for dissonance amongst the above is far too great. Teachers must not end up as the sacrificial lambs in the process. The Minister must be much clearer in articulating the goals and the means of the reform. All partners must minimally have the same basic information, understanding and direction as we venture forward in the implementation of the reform.



Pierre Weber

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What Parents Are Really Thinking

Poll Conducted for the Newspaper Les Affaires

Demand for More Traditional Schools

70% of Quebecers believe students should address teachers as “Mr., Mrs. or Miss.” They also want teachers to be evaluated, and classes to be smaller. Quebecers want more disciplined, traditional schools.

That is what is indicated by a poll on the education reform commissioned by the publication *Les Affaires* and conducted by *Ad hoc Recherche*. The poll was taken from November 30 to December 12, 2000.

Nine out of 10 people consider that, in general, it would be appropriate to improve discipline in schools. This proportion is higher (94%) among those over 55 years of age, but even among those from 18 to 34 years of age, it remains significant (82%).

Almost 7 out of 10 of those replying believe that students should use formal address (Mr., Mrs. or Miss) when speaking to adults in the school. It is also higher among those who have children (77%) than among those who do not (56%).

“The pendulum is swinging from a society that favours a relationship of equals, where we’re all friends and everyone is *tu*, to one in which the *vous* creates a certain distance,” notes Michel Berne, an associate with *Ad hoc Recherche*.

Another 83% consider that class sizes should be reduced. It’s all as if people yearn for a return to the master and the pupil, stricter standards, unannounced visits from the school inspector – in short, the one-room country school!

“What we see is a very traditional vision of the school, with formal address, the idea of performance, and greater emphasis on the responsibility of parents for their children’s success in school,” observes Mr. Berne.

This results from the fact that the survey went somewhat further, touching on the role of parents. Respondents were asked if they consider it appropriate to demand more responsibility of parents for school success, and a huge majority (94%) of them said yes. Forty eight per cent of them went so far as to agree that the way parents raise their children nowadays does not encourage school success.

Teacher Evaluation

What about evaluating the quality of teaching? Certainly, replied 76% of those polled. People are much more in favour of the evaluation of teachers than of establishments.

To the question “Do you feel it would be a good thing if teachers were evaluated?” – the direction in which minister

François Legault seems to be moving – 96% replied yes. Some 84% also think it appropriate that principals have more say in the selection of teachers. As for the ranking of schools as recently described in the magazine *L’Actualité*, 76% of those polled thought it was a good idea.

It would seem that not many people support the education reform proposed by François Legault to improve the quality of teaching. More than a third of the population confessed to never having heard of the government’s reform.

The formula for better schools, according to Quebecers:

The evaluation of schools and the publication of their rankings	
Yes: 76%	No: 24%
Evaluation of teachers	
Yes: 96%	No: 4%
Increasing the number of instructional days	
Yes: 44%	No: 56%
Reduction in class sizes	
Yes: 83%	No: 17%
Specialised personnel for students in difficulty	
Yes: 95%	No: 5%
More money for the best teachers	
Yes: 39%	No: 61%
Smaller schools	
Yes: 48%	No: 52%
Formal address (Mr., Mrs. or Miss) of adults in schools	
Yes: 70%	No: 30%
More discretion for principals in selection of teachers	
Yes: 86%	No: 14%



Judgement of the Court of Appeal: *Part-Time Contracts*

The Québec Court of Appeal has recently confirmed an arbitration decision concerning the beginnings and endings of part-time contracts. This decision will end a practice by school boards that deprived many teachers of a portion of their salary, even though they, in fact, were performing their full workload.

The original grievance contested the school boards' practice of beginning certain part-time contracts subsequent to the professional days in August and concluding them prior to the professional days at the end of June. The result of this was that the teacher performed a full workload while receiving less than the full salary to which he or she was entitled. This enabled some school boards to save as much as a thousand dollars or more per teacher.

The decisions of both the arbitrator and the Court of Appeal drew the same conclusions: the practice is illegal and is nothing more than a device for circumventing the collective agreement.

In sum, the employer must respect the provisions of the collective agreement when hiring staff on part-time contracts. It may not suppose that there is a management right to reduce the remuneration of an employee who is performing all the duties that are assigned to him or her.

Summary of the situation

1. When a school board has posts to be filled by part-time contracts *at the beginning of the school year*, whether for replacement of absent teachers or for workloads of under 100%, the contracts must begin on the first working day of the year, including any professional days at the beginning of the school year.

The moment an absence for the beginning of the year is foreseen, replacement contracts must begin on the first day of the work year, i.e., on the first professional day.

2. A part-time contract which is not a replacement contract must end on the last day of the work year, including the professional days at the end of the school year.

3. A part-time replacement contract to replace an absent teacher may terminate automatically and without notice on the return of the person being replaced or on the last day the students are present.

4. A part-time replacement contract must always consist of the full workload of the person being replaced.

The right to a part-time contract when replacing an absent teacher is determined by the duration of the absence and not by the duration of replacement as decided by the school board.

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The GATS: Why Teachers Should Be Concerned

by Harvey Weiner, Deputy Secretary General
Canadian Teachers' Federation



The world is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and the importance of international trade agreements and their potential impact on the future of public services such as education should not be underestimated. CTF's objective is to ensure that education is kept off the table by Canada in the current renegotiation of the 1994 General Agreement on Goods and Services (GATS), under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The number of jobs dependent on international trade have increased dramatically over the past years. Our challenge as teachers and Canadian citizens is to ensure that the expansion of trade does not infringe on the Canadian government's right to act in the national interest and its obligation to protect public services from those who preach the ideology of the marketplace as the solution to every issue.

The notion of treating services as tradeable commodities is relatively new. The GATS was concluded in April 1994 and is the first broadly based international agreement on trade in services. The objective of the GATS is to liberalize trade in services as quickly as possible.

The service sector is the fastest growing sector in international trade with health and education considered the most attractive and potentially lucrative markets to be exploited. Estimates of global expenditures on those two services range between 5 to 6 trillion dollars. Education represents over a third of that total. It is therefore not surprising that countries with a highly developed education infrastructure, like Canada, are interested in accessing that export market.

Approximately 30 countries made specific commitments on education services in the 1994 GATS. These apply to a range of services from primary to adult education.

Such commitments oblige these countries to give foreign competitors equal access to providing the services specified. Canada has not made any specific commitments on education services and a major CTF objective is to ensure that none are made in the current round.

In the United States, a number of voucher schemes are in operation and some school boards have seen services contracted out to corporations. There are new disturbing signs that such initiatives are beginning to take hold in Canada. A recent example is a school board initiative in Vancouver, British Columbia that now offers user-pay kindergarten classes to parents who can afford the fees. These initiatives, if we are not careful, could open the door to international corporate interests hungry for market access to public education in Canada.

CTF's objective is to keep the federal government's feet to the fire. Transparency is critical to achieving that goal. CTF has demanded that the Canadian government provide full opportunity for all to make their views known on any requests Canada proposes to make of other countries during the "request-offer" stage of the GATS negotiations. It has also asked Minister Pettigrew to provide details of requests made by other countries as well as an assurance that broadly based consultations will take place prior to responding.

All Canadians are entitled to quality, adequately funded and accessible public services, including education. Unfortunately, this right cannot be taken for granted. Teachers and their representative organizations have a special responsibility to strive for conditions that will strengthen and enhance public education and to oppose measures that weaken and undermine that purpose. That is why teachers should and must be concerned about the GATS.

Survey on Governing Boards in Québec Schools. Get Ready!

A joint study involving the Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), the CSQ, the Federation of Central Parents' Committees of Quebec (FCPCQ) and the MEQ is currently taking place. This study is addressed to voting members of governing boards in elementary and secondary schools in the form of two questionnaires, one prepared for parents and the other for members of staff.

This research is primarily intended: to identify the motives for participating in the activities of the governing board; to ascertain people's perceptions regarding the training they have received and the general functioning of the governing board; and to study the interaction between the various groups on the GB with a view to identifying any possible modifications.

All elementary and secondary schools will be asked to participate in the study.

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Who will fill out the questionnaire?

In elementary schools:

1 parent + 1 member of the school staff

In secondary schools:

2 parents + 2 members of the school staff

The chair of the governing board will receive the questionnaires along with instructions for choosing who will complete them.

The questionnaires are already being distributed. Completed questionnaires are to be returned before the end of April.

The results will be available in the fall of 2001. We will be receiving results particular to the English sector.

Please communicate this information to the chair of your governing board and take whatever time is necessary to ensure the questionnaires are completed. The results will be only as good as our participation.

New Teachers and Retirement Plans

In spring, a young man's (or woman's, for that matter) fancy may turn to love, but for many of us, income tax, RRSPs and pensions come to mind. In the matter of the latter, we may contemplate collecting three different pensions at various points in our lives.

These pensions are:

- The Régime de retraite des employés du gouvernement et des organismes publics (RREGOP);
- The Québec Pension Plan (QPP);
- The Old Age Security Pension of the federal government (OASP).

In planning for retirement, you should keep in mind that these three pensions are not just added together. The contribution rate of the RREGOP is lower than the maximum provided for in the law to take into account the compulsory contribution to the QPP.

Consequently, I do not qualify at age 65 for the maximum pension under the RREGOP, since I do not make the maximum contribution. **What are the implications of this on my pension revenue when I reach 65?**

In the next issue, we will deal with this question and describe a number of possible pension scenarios at age 65.



Is optional coverage available for hazards/risks that are not normally included in my homeowner's policy?

Yes. For example, if you are worried about water damage from a blocked drain, you might want sewer back-up coverage.

What are some items that might require additional insurance?

The dollar limits to replace stolen cash, or garden tractors, watercraft and computer software are relatively small. Coverage limits may apply also if the following are stolen:

bicycles; jewelry, watches and furs; coin, stamp and card collections. Note that there are no limits on bicycles or card collections in policies in Québec. Reasonably priced supplementary insurance is usually available. This supplementary insurance, often called "riders" or "floaters", provides extended coverage for these specific items.

Is there anything I can do to get a discount?

Many insurance companies offer discounts to policyholders who have newer homes, who have installed safety features like smoke detectors and burglar alarms, and who have made no claims for a certain period of time. Some are even giving discounts to non-smokers! Whatever the case, make sure you get all the discounts to which you are entitled.

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Springboards 2001

ATEQ, The Association of Teachers of English in Québec, presents its annual conference, Springboards, on Friday, April 20, 2001 at the Education building of McGill University. This year, professors, classroom teachers, story-tellers, authors, student teachers and community activists join keynote speaker, Eleanor Wachtel, host of CBC Radio's "Writers and Company," in Telling Tales out of School! Take part in their offering of 40 Sessions.

Conference costs:

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For further information contact:

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Friday April 20, 2001

**TELLING
TALES**
OUT OF SCHOOL

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Telling Tales Out of School Registration Form

Please print your name as you would like it to appear on your conference badge:

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Occupation: _____

Name of School: _____

School Board: _____

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Fax: _____

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