

On 34^e congrès
manque pas
de FRONTS!



Conseil central 
DU MONTRÉAL MÉTROPOLITAIN **CSN**

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

THE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERLIE OUR WORK

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We, the members of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain–CSN,¹ founded this organization of workers grouped together in unions on a regional basis covering the Island of Montréal, the territory of Laval and the unions in Québec’s Far North. Its democratic workings are guaranteed by this Statement of Principles and its Constitution and By-laws, drawn up to reflect our values. The central council is affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux.

Our chosen purpose is to advocate for the interests of workers and the working class. Our unionism grows and flourishes in action and solidarity. Our union struggles are aimed at expanding our rights, improving working and living conditions and defending the common good. They oppose all forms of exploitation, here and elsewhere. Our action is linked to the struggles of the Americas and the rest of the world.

This is why the central council engages resolutely in social, economic and political struggles to build a democratic society that is more just and fair, in a world that is inclusive and respectful of our values.

It defends the fundamental values of justice, solidarity, equality, freedom, democracy and peace.

It stands for combative trade-unionism that strives for unity, solidarity and democracy, unions that listen to their members, are sensitive to human distress and promote solidarity in the face of inequalities.

Its practices are based on support from and mobilization of its members to establish bargaining leverage to advance their common demands. It considers labour unity to be vital, because it is also the tangible sign of workers’ determination to build new social relations.

It builds its union action through its struggles as part of coalitions; it develops the broadest possible alliances with other union organizations and progressive social movements. It

¹ In what follows, the term “central council” is used instead of the full name.

mobilizes on various fronts, such as the anti-poverty struggle, the integration of newcomers into the labour market, more rights for non-unionized workers and access to unionization for atypical workers.

It asserts that in the dominant context of a globalized economy and global markets, it is all the more necessary to respond with genuine globalization of workers' rights. This is why it advocates indispensable solidarity among peoples and support for the struggles of union and social movements in all countries to improve democratic, social and cultural rights everywhere.

Our social combat is multi-faceted and diverse. The central council encourages and supports those excluded from the sphere of work as well as various women's, indigenous, cultural, international solidarity and environmental movements, and movements focusing on regional development and urban life. It wages the necessary war on war and stands for peace and lasting improvements in the living conditions of all peoples of the world without exception.

Our union action is independent of employers, political parties, governments or any other group that is foreign to our interests.

WE WANT THE CENTRAL COUNCIL TO ACT

The central council defends democracy and asserts that only a democratic political system can guarantee freedom and fulfilment for citizens. It considers it necessary to reiterate that economic, social and cultural democracy are integral to political democracy. Moreover, the democratic process is improved by incorporating genuine proportional representation in the electoral system.

The central council works for the renewal of democracy. It believes that we must overcome the democratic deficit of our current political system and all work together to build a new democracy that will inspire us, safeguard our rights and ensure our future – a democracy that is representative and participatory, that motivates the population and that stimulates its desire to contribute to the organization of society. Naturally, this democracy must also be asserted in the workplace.

The central council believes that a democratic State must provide the population with services whose public character is the only guarantee that they will be universal and accessible. To safeguard the mission and autonomy of government organizations and agencies, the cen-

tral council is opposed to business or private foundations being involved in funding them. Furthermore, this model of government asserts its separation from religious institutions; it is therefore secular.

The central council has the conviction that all social progress is rooted first in an individual and collective desire for freedom, emancipation and autonomy. Collective rights, in particular the right to organize, the right to free collective bargaining and the right to strike, lend support to this desire for freedom. Thus, collective rights are a guarantee of individual rights.

The central council calls for a truly egalitarian society this is why it undertakes to promote equality, but also solidarity and all forms of diversity. The central council combats all forms of discrimination on the grounds of language, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, marital status, age, religious convictions, handicap, background or social condition. It asserts the equality of women and men and combats sexism, homophobia, racism and all forms of harassment.

The central council recognizes that family-work-study balance is an important condition for social equality between women and men.

It recognizes women's right to accept or refuse motherhood and demands proper services that allow them to exercise this right. These include abortion rights won thanks to women's mobilization.

The central council considers that the family in all its forms is a kind of collective wealth. The family is a place of special importance for exchanging views, imparting values and expressing solidarity between generations, and is entitled to have its responsibilities fully recognized.

The central council calls for an economy that serves the common good and therefore combats the prevailing capitalist ideology and defends a fair distribution of wealth. It asserts the responsibility of government, acting in citizens' stead, to intervene in economic affairs and regulate them to foster the common good, equality, social justice, labour-market integration, job protection and the environment.

The central council demands that local and foreign businesses assume their social responsibility. It is up to government to establish the necessary procedures for monitoring and

transparency in this regard. Employees must be informed about companies' financial situation and development strategies; there must be limits on and if necessary regulations governing mass layoffs and the transfer of corporate activities to other locations.

The central council also urges workers and their unions to fight for more democracy in their workplaces. It strongly encourages them to demand the right to participate in decisions about the direction of the business or institution, training for employees, occupational health and safety and responsible environmental practices.

The central council supports social and solidarity-based economy initiatives and projects that respect union rights. Jobs created in this sector must not compete with jobs in the public sector. Fair trade, responsible consumption and sustainable development are extensions of union action. The central council demands that trade respect human rights, social rights and basic labour rights, in particular the right to organize, and contribute to reducing our environmental footprint. Changing consumption habits contributes to building a society that is more just and more respectful of the environment.

The central council demands the right of every person to work that is decent and well-paid. The right to work is part of the right to human dignity. This is why the central council demands a minimum wage that really allows a person to overcome poverty, a genuine right to organize and an easier procedure for unionization. It calls for respect for the right to free collective bargaining and the right to strike in order to obtain working conditions that allow workers to live full and fulfilled lives. It also demands a shorter work week.

The central council fights for equal treatment of women and men workers. It calls for specific social protection for all forms of atypical work and therefore better protection for non-regular, casual or isolated workers, who must be able to join together to defend their rights and their demands.

The central council demands the right to health, which is a corollary of the right to life. Government must guarantee access to health services for the entire population. This is why the central council asserts the need for a public health-care system that is free, universal and democratically controlled. It is totally opposed to any privatization, even partial, of Québec's health-care system.

The central council also points out that workers' health is still all too often ruined in sweatshops or factories with dangerous working conditions. It therefore demands that employers,

overseen by government, provide good working conditions and a healthy environment and promote safety and prevention through concerted action.

Le central council asserts the right to a genuine quality of life and for that, workers must have a real say in their living and working conditions. These include the right to a wholesome environment – one that is safe, healthy and free of discrimination, harassment and all forms of violence – that enables people to develop fully and that safeguards their physical and psychological health.

For the central council, development can no longer be seen in purely economic terms today. It must integrate two other components of sustainable development, namely social development and ecological development. Moreover, to be sustainable, development must also be viable. It must meet the needs of today without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet theirs. This is why the central council is fighting on new fronts to protect air and water quality, guarantee food security, protect green spaces in urban areas, encourage and develop public transit, protect biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gases.

The central council condemns the commodification of water, an irreplaceable resource that is a vital element of the quality of life.

The central council defends the right to education for all, young people and adults alike. The right to education must also encompass intercultural education, education on citizenship, health, the environment and the economy, and job-related training. Education must be accessible, universal, public, free and of good quality.

For the central council, education is also a condition for democracy in practice. It must be aimed at respecting rights and freedoms. It is an instrument of social justice, emancipation and individual and collective development.

The central council advocates a single, integrated, non-denominational public school system that fosters all forms of learning aimed at the fulfilment of human beings. It is in favour of the continuation of co-ed schools. For the central council, education is a way of learning French, the official language and common language of Québec society.

The central council defends the right to information and freedom of expression because access to independent, critical information is a cornerstone of democracy, along with freedom of expression. Government has the duty to regulate to guarantee

the dissemination of information through media that are independent of private interests or government intervention. It must allow access to information and the media, protect privacy and encourage freedom of expression, creativity and original productions.

The central council is opposed to the concentration of the media and encourages the emergence of alternative media that provide a voice for all forms of diversity and a mix of different opinions.

The central council asserts the right to culture and freedom of creativity because these are essential dimensions of collective life, just as social and economic aspects are. The central council demands access for all to the cultural life that lies at the heart of our society. The diversity and originality of culture is expressed in different social and artistic forms. Cultural spaces for creation, production and dissemination must allow for the fulfilment of creators, producers and the population as a whole.

The central council defends the right to full urban life and citizen participation because the territory on which it is active is bursting with rich and varied economic, cultural and ethnic life. It therefore encourages greater convergence among various interests for the purpose of furthering the common good.

The central council wants a green and inclusive city in which democracy is practised in daily life, where citizens have a say in local life and where their thirst for social justice cannot be ignored. Development on the Island of Montréal and the territory of Laval should foster urban life on a human scale, based on sustainable development principles and urban development that allows for inclusion, social interaction, social justice, diversity and participatory democracy.

The city must combat social inequalities by remaining a place that is accessible for everyone who wants to live there, regardless of income. There must be enough good-quality social housing, reasonably priced rental units or affordable homes to house individuals and families with low incomes.

The central council wants residents of its territory to have genuine access to collective and active transportation and therefore demands development of the metropolitan network. It demands that public decision-makers at all levels of power reinvest in public transit and encourage the reduction in greenhouse gases.

The central council calls for respect for cultural differences, in accordance with the Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. This means equality in employment, non-violence in intercultural relations and active opposition to all forms of discrimination, prejudice and racism.

The central council invites us to participate in democratic life, to get involved in neighbourhood life and to make life in our city ours.

The central council defends a genuine Aboriginal presence in Québec society, because Aboriginal people are the first occupants of the territory.

The central council's vision of an economy that serves the common good cannot be developed without the collaboration of Aboriginal nations. The development of the territory must be thought out together with them, in a spirit of respect for the environment and a context of sustainable development.

Regarding social development, the central council is convinced that in the rich past of their communities, Aboriginal people have the necessary keys to recreating the social fabric of their people. All that is missing are the levers to use them. The central council therefore supports the demand for autonomous governments for Aboriginal peoples and recognizes the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination. The construction of harmonious relations of co-operation in Québec must be based on the fundamental and indispensable principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The central council also wants to make the reality of Aboriginal people in urban areas better known; this constitutes a real challenge in Montréal.

The central council wants to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal people in the social and political structures of Québec's public institutions. Furthermore, it encourages their active involvement in union life at all levels.

The central council calls for the sovereignty of Québec and therefore the patriation of all the powers characteristic of a modern State. It is convinced that sovereignty can only be achieved through a truly democratic process, the only way it can fully assume its role as the State of women and men in Québec. French is the official common language.

Workers have the right to work in French, and its use in all workplaces and other spheres of life is necessary to ensure the survival of French-language culture and to assert our right to be different in North America.

The central council engages in political action an essential tool in the struggle for recognition of workers' rights and one that ensures social development in accordance with its fundamental values. It therefore encourages the development of critical social thinking among its members.

It considers that autonomy, meaning the ability to freely decide on and organize its action, is an indispensable condition for fully achieving its goals.

It encourages the emergence of credible political movements or parties capable of fostering and furthering a progressive social debate focused on the common good. It may also give ad hoc support to candidates and political organizations that share its values or to their programmes, on the basis of its analyses and its demands.

**THROUGH US, THE CENTRAL COUNCIL CONSIDERS, PROPOSES
AND ACTS.**

**TOGETHER, WE ARE WORKING FOR THE SOCIETY
OF THE FUTURE!**