



37^E CONGRÈS 2019, L'UNION DANS L'ACTION

DÉCLARATION D'ENGAGEMENTS

English
version

Conseil central
DU MONTRÉAL MÉTROPOLITAIN



**«The only way to make people free,
independent, and aware is to work collectively.»**

Michel Chartrand, October 1978, our translation.

Uniting in Action

Declaration of Commitment

The Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain–CSN practises a struggle-oriented unionism, accomplished through action carried out in solidarity. A number of struggles have marked the history of our organization, which is intended to be unifying and open to diversity, and which will reach the remarkable age of 100 years in 2020. We work tirelessly to align our work with our members' needs. Our demands are a reflection of their concerns. Our vision for society is set out in a declaration of principles that we will disseminate as widely as possible. We regularly reaffirm the need to form broad alliances with other union organizations, as well as with feminist, social, and environmental groups. Uniting with progressive forces in society is the best way to allay public cynicism. Regardless of the current context, our goal is always to support our members.

The gap between the public and the elite is widening, both here and around the world

There is a prevailing unease that exists in several societies, which we can describe as a feeling of being “fed up.” It is expressed initially by public discontent with politicians, as well as the media to a lesser extent. In France, the yellow vest movement is a good example of this public outcry. The dissatisfaction of the French was expressed during the presidential elections when the electorate ousted the old parties. Unsurprisingly, the Macron government was unable to listen to the public, which was being suffocated by tax reforms. During confrontations, law enforcement used violence to subdue the public, as well as journalists. Confiscation of protective gear by police officers, police brutality, and serious injuries impeded journalistic work and sparked public outrage.

In the United States, in 2016, Trump was elected president, leaving several political analysts stunned. During the campaign, Trump promised to make America great again. He went after the political establishment and the economic elite, as a real-estate mogul from the business world. He would be able to keep these people in line. The President has shown time after time that he is a liar, misogynist, homophobe, transphobe, crook, racist, and Islamophobe, yet he remains popular with his voter base. He shows no regard for the law and only plays by his own rules. He uses Twitter to openly express scorn for the media, personally slandering certain journalists in the

process. The gradual erosion of the middle class has contributed to fostering a sense of injustice that the right has capitalized on, while social divides deepen. Americans have never been more divided.

The examples in France and the U.S. seem quite far from our reality in Canada and Quebec. However, there are similarities that we cannot ignore. With the federal elections approaching, vigilance is required. The wave of Conservative governments elected in several Canadian provinces appears to be influencing federal voting intentions. Justin Trudeau has projected an image of a prime minister who champions transparency and social justice and who is a fervent defender of the environment, but this image could not be further from reality. In acquiring the Trans Mountain pipeline, the federal government has demonstrated its bias toward fossil fuels and thus broken its commitments related to the environment. When the government was finalizing its purchase in August 2018, the Federal Court of Appeal quashed approval of the pipeline project, finding that the government had not adequately consulted Indigenous peoples. The Trudeau government has also gone back on its promise to reform the voting system. More recently, the SNC-Lavalin crisis once again revealed the government's true colours. The Prime Minister's cabinet demonstrated such a lack of transparency at the start of this controversy that it plunged the government into a major crisis. The crisis has shaken public confidence, which poses a danger to democracy and leaves the door wide open for right-wing populism. It is too soon to determine its impact on the federal election, but other topics may be co-opted to fuel the discontent of Canadians. Groups have taken up the symbol of the yellow vest in Canada. Some have already gone after immigrants and denounced the carbon tax.

The results of recent elections in Quebec reflect the growing discontent. The old parties "bit the dust," so to speak, while political analysts were left speechless following a Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) landslide. Fortunately, the National Assembly will have a stronger progressive voice, since ten Québec Solidaire (QS) MNAs were elected. The CAQ promised change, which pleased the electorate. François Legault has also been able to adopt a populist tone to ensure that he continues to have the loyalty of a certain segment of Quebec voters. Since entering the National Assembly, the CAQ government has demonstrated that it is a laughingstock in environment. Minister MarieChantal Chassé quickly had to step down because she was unable to adapt to her duties, but, above all, she had absolutely no knowledge in this area.

Recently, the firing of whistle-blower Louis Robert, an agronomist who denounced

interference by the pesticide industry at MAPAQ¹ shocked the public. In March, general assembly delegates resolved to support the fight to reinstate Louis Robert and demanded a public apology from Minister Alain Lamontagne.

Fortunately, the mobilization of the climate change group La Planète s'invite au Parlement suggests that public discontent can be channelled to support an essential societal project, the survival of the planet. These mobilization efforts are snowballing. The student protest movement to demand action on climate change shifted the balance of power to the people who support a revolution when it comes to fighting climate change.

The values that we are defending are universal and timeless.² They take shape in the resolutions that have been adopted over time during conventions. Several of these resolutions still resonate today and are the subject of our union and political commitments.

Commitments

Build a strong union movement, aligned with the needs of our unions, to counter prevailing cynicism and contempt for the elite.

Strengthen alliances on social, environmental, and political issues, to shift the balance of power in our favour.

Commit to strengthening the role of accurate, independent, high-quality information, a guardian of democracy.

UNITING IN DAILY UNION STRUGGLES

We support unions during the collective bargaining process by organizing the mobilization strategy. We mobilize in support of social justice and the improvement of life and working conditions. Our concerns with regard to work are the number of hours of work, the quality of work, fair compensation, and a minimum wage of \$15/hour, which reflect the context in which we are trying to improve working conditions. We adapt our strategies to changing conditions.

1 Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec.

2 Excerpt from the Statement of Principles. Introduction. p. 4.

Action against job insecurity

During its most recent congress in spring 2017, the CSN gave itself the mandate to call for a minimum wage of \$15. Answering the call, federations seized the opportunity to integrate this claim into a strategy to take action against job insecurity. Several unions have prepared their draft bargaining proposals with the goal of increasing purchasing power, and have included measures to improve work-family balance. In this regard, assisting unions in analyzing the balance of power is essential. Since the fall, some unions have been able to obtain increases, in order to have starting wages of \$15. This was the case for the STT de Volailles Marvid, which reached an agreement in February 2019 that included a pay scale starting at \$15.30/hour. The union paved the way for others in the private sector. In the community sector, the STT de l'Accueil Bonneau, affiliated with the FSSS, succeeded in obtaining a pay scale starting at \$15/hour when it signed its first collective agreement in September 2018.

Commitment

Continue our fight against job insecurity, commit to monitoring the progress achieved by unions, and support them in their mobilization efforts.

The current mandate began during the ninth round of coordinated bargaining in the hotel industry. To benefit from high levels of tourism, workers began a mobilization strategy that allowed them to obtain the best collective agreement. The working conditions in the hotel industry at the CSN are among the best in North America. The coordinated bargaining model in this sector has proven its worth.

Local struggles

Several other private-sector unions have negotiated the renewal of their collective agreements. No matter the federation with which they are affiliated, it is through determination and solidarity that they succeeded in pushing back unacceptable employer demands and making gains. More recently, in spring 2018, the members of the STT des CPE de Montréal et Laval went on strike for a series of days to oppose major steps back demanded by the Association patronale des CPE on the organization of work with regard to critical issues such as the application of seniority, the call-back list, and work schedules. The anger and outrage of the workers were channelled into mobilization efforts that pushed back employers on all of their demands. They led an exemplary fight by allying themselves with parents and the general public.

Members of the Syndicat des employé-es de magasins et de bureaux de la SAQ

(SEMB–SAQ) considerably improved working conditions for part-time employees. The union was also successful in reducing disparities in treatment and improving work-family balance. When issues to combat job insecurity are selected, all workers benefit from the gains.

Following the creation of megastructures from the merging of public sector establishments, CIUSSS and CISSS unions negotiated the 26 local matters³ within the context of the constraints of Bill 30⁴ and the contempt demonstrated by certain employers.

After having reached local agreements, the unions have to quickly prepare for the next round of public sector bargaining. The austerity measures from the Liberal era have had a serious impact on employee working conditions and the quality of public services across Quebec. What we had denounced publicly has come to pass. Megastructures in health and social services have led to the dehumanizing of services. Employees are exhausted, and often dealing with psychological distress and lack of recognition. The first steps that have been taken to prepare for public sector bargaining have led to a mobilization strategy focused, at its core, on members. The CCMM–CSN will focus on listening to its members to assertively engage in this round of bargaining.

Like the village of Gauls in Asterix, the CHU Saint-Justine community, with the support of the CSN central labour body, was able to push back the former Minister of Health, Gaétan Barrette, who wanted to impose a merger of the administrations of the Sainte-Justine hospital and the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM). Determination prevailed over arrogance and nonsense in this matter.

The unlimited general strike by members of the Syndicat des tuteurs et tutrices de la Télé-Université that began in early 2019 is a struggle in which the future of distance teaching is at stake for the entire university network, as well as that of CEGEPs. Maintaining jobs and recognizing the role of tutors in the education of students are also issues at the heart of this conflict, which has not yet been resolved at the time of writing. This struggle exemplifies changes to the labour market.

3 Legislation provides that a certain number of subjects in collective agreements in the health and social services network, 26 to be precise, be negotiated locally, since Bill 30 came into force.

4 The Act to modify the organization and governance of the health and social services network, in particular by abolishing the regional agencies; this Act modified the bargaining regime in the health and social services network.

Commitment

Commit to supporting unions in solidarity during collective bargaining.

Mobilization at the heart of our actions

The aim of mobilization work is to implement the best action strategy to settle collective bargaining issues. It is the job of union advisers at the CCMM–CSN to assist unions to define and establish the balance of power. An informed portrait of the union allows for strengthening bonds of solidarity and a sense of belonging among CSN members. It is also important to understand the context in which the round of bargaining will occur by learning the employer's situation. This work cannot be performed without listening to workers, aligning with them, involving them, and making use of their creativity. Autonomy, solidarity, and democracy are the three bases of union cohesion.

Commitment

Build on human and collective capabilities in a labour market that is subject to judicial control and individualistic. Commit to maintaining unity in our ranks and in the unions.

Our actions on the matter of climate urgency

The urgency to act to protect the environment also plays a central role in our commitment. In the 1980s, we committed to better understanding environmental issues, to put forward the concept of sustainable development, to fight against air pollution, and to reflect on the concept of degrowth. Gradually, we integrated environmental issues into all aspects of economic and social development. We put forward sustainable land use planning concepts to demand, among other things, the development of public and active transportation. We prepared briefs to guide government choices and took to the streets to denounce certain decisions. The space held by climate deniers in the public debate cannot be underestimated. Our economic system is overly dependent on hydrocarbons in industrial production and daily life. It is clear to us that the capitalist system is jeopardizing the future of humanity. Climate disturbances have reminded us of that. In northern Quebec, plants and wildlife have been affected, threatening the traditional way of life of Indigenous peoples. In Nunavik, melting permafrost continues to be a concern. The release of a

tremendous amount of CO2 sequestered in permafrost for millions of years will further exacerbate climate change. In the James Bay area, increasing numbers of forest fires have ravaged the boreal forest. Freezing rain and floods are extreme weather events that we will need to get used to. Climate urgency has led us to demand a radical change in our production and consumption methods. Workers are not immune to upheaval resulting from climate change. To deal with the challenges associated with transforming the economy, the union movement is demanding a just energy transition that would fully involve workers and communities.

Commitment

Defend the planet. Continue to act on matters of sustainable land use planning and public and active transportation development.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Our fight against neo-liberalism in the era of market globalization has been embodied in the fight against privatization and commercialization of public services and opposes unrestrained exploitation of natural resources. Job outsourcing, a phenomenon occurring here and abroad, has led us to demand better working conditions for all. The right to unionize, the right to collective bargaining, and the improvement of wages are at the heart of the demands made by the union movement in both the north and south. Coming together on World Day for Decent Work (WDDW),⁵ held on October 7 each year, reminds us that workers are still exploited and there are still battles to wage in order to fight this. We continue to demand more transparency and democracy when negotiating trade agreements and strengthened legislative powers in relation to social, labour law, and environmental protection policies.

We have forged alliances with unions elsewhere in the world, particularly in Latin America and the United States, and have developed bonds of solidarity with the anti-globalization movement. The World March of Women got off the ground thanks to the feminist movement, as well as the support of the union movement, particularly through the involvement of CCMM–CSN activists. Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO) placements make it possible to exchange with activists in other countries. The

⁵ An initiative of the International Trade Union Confederation, the WDDW is a day that brings together unions around the world to stand up for decent work.

impact of international solidarity is also embodied in concrete experiences that are highly informative about the realities of job insecurity and the exploitation of workers.

Commitment

[Continue our commitment to international solidarity.](#)

The return to power of the right in many countries is concerning. In Europe, particularly in Poland, Hungary, and Italy, but also in Latin America, the right has returned to power. It has gained power by uninhibitedly talking about its anti-immigration leanings and has denounced the globalized elite to set itself apart and gain favour with the electorate. In reality, these governments are not a far stretch from the economic elite, and opt for an ultraliberal, anti-environmental trade approach. It was in this spirit that the Trump government forcibly reopened NAFTA, resulting in a new trade agreement, the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). Canada had to make concessions to reach a new agreement with the Americans. It eventually gave up part of the supply management market to the Americans. They also obtained better intellectual property protection, which will lead to an increase in the cost of prescription drugs in Canada. Even though the cultural exception has been renewed in the new agreement, Canada's refusal to regulate digital giants like Netflix, Google, Facebook, and Apple, poses a real threat to the production of Canadian cultural and information content. The current difficulties for our media reflect this. The removal of Chapter 11, which establishes the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, is an important victory for the anti-globalization and union movement. This chapter allowed businesses to bring action against governments by means of private tribunals.

From NAFTA to CUSMA

It is still difficult to fully determine the impact of this agreement, but one thing is for certain: the governments did not renounce the trade model that favours businesses to the detriment of populations, which we have denounced since the 1990s. The CCMM-CSN will monitor this issue closely, as the U.S. Congress is expected to ratify the new version of the trade agreement in 2019. In addition, the tariffs on steel and aluminum have not yet been lifted, despite this agreement, which remains an issue for Canada. In April 2018, we took a stand on this issue at our general assembly, by adopting principles to be respected in the aftermath of the NAFTA negotiations. These principles will serve to measure the impact of the agreement on our working

and living conditions, and to allow us to intervene with the government accordingly. Moreover, by strengthening our alliances with the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT; Authentic Labor Front), an independent union with workers in, among other places, maquiladoras⁶, and United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE), an independent American union, we will be able to mobilize workers in all three CUSMA signatory countries. We will also continue to participate in Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO) placements with Mexico. It is a unique opportunity for activists to go meet with the people and groups that defend both labour rights and human rights.

Commitments

Commit to mobilizing unions around issues related to trade negotiations and “free trade” agreements.

Continue our involvement with the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO)

Support our allies in the United States and Mexico.

UNITING IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SERVICES

In defending public services, the CCMM–CSN is supporting networks that have been developing since the Quiet Revolution, even though they have had a rough ride over time. Since the 1990s, the neo-liberal vision of the governments has taken precedence over the common good in our society.

The CCMM–CSN has fought alongside its affiliated unions and allied progressive groups to preserve public services and improve working conditions in establishments in the education and health and social services networks. The Inuit and the Cree have their own demands to improve public services that we also support.

In action to support a public health and social services network

The Charest and Couillard Liberal governments weakened public services, particularly in the health and social services network. The two waves of reorganization and mergers

6 Tariff-free zone. This term refers to factories that benefit from tariff relief to produce merchandise that is assembled, transformed, repaired, or developed from imported parts at a lower cost; most of this merchandise is then exported [our translation].

of establishments, in combination with major compressions, fostered the emergence of the private sector, for the benefit of those who can afford it, laying the groundwork for social PPPs⁷ and philanthropy to allay the government's disengagement. Missions of establishments have been sacrificed to create strictly administrative entities. CLSCs have been weakened, while family medicine groups have multiplied. In 2016, CLSC activities and professional staff were transferred to family medicine groups. A medical-oriented approach is being pushed instead of an interdisciplinary intervention carried out by CLSC teams. Peter was robbed to pay Paul at the expense of a public service approach rooted in communities and focused on prevention. CHSLDs, for their part, are in a pitiful state of disrepair. The shortage of staff jeopardizes services for seniors who are already in a vulnerable state. Public criticism does not call into question staff dedication. It is clear that orderlies and nurses, as well as the rest of the staff, are doing their best in a resource shortage context. Minister Blais promised to improve services for seniors, but no time frame was specified. One thing is for certain—the government must allocate more financial and human resources to improve health care for seniors. Only the public sector is capable of handling this challenge competently, so as to ensure that social status and income do not become barriers to access.

In Nunavik and the James Bay area, the health and social services network is limited to front-line interventions, while specialized health services are provided in Montréal. In the aftermath of the reforms and compressions, we also supported the unions in their struggle to push back against the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux, in particular during the merger of laboratories.

In action to maintain the education network

In education, the situation is just as dire. Budget compressions in universities, CEGEPs, and at the elementary and high school levels have compromised the quality of public services. It is incongruous that governments do not attach a higher value to education. All societies dream of a network of daycare services and a school system in which children can grow and achieve, from early childhood to adulthood. However, reality paints a far different picture. The CAQ's plan to make pre-kindergarten available to all four-year-olds threatens the network of CPEs and recognized home childcare providers. The network has proven itself and has everything it needs to provide four-

7 Partnerships that allow a private foundation to interfere in the area of social policy.

year-olds with an environment that is well suited to meeting all of their needs, on both the emotional and learning levels. In addition, the antiquated state of elementary and high schools led to several closures. The situation is such that the Commission scolaire de Montréal had to open 91 modular classrooms, which were installed in schoolyards, the equivalent of five schools, at a cost of \$20 million. Priority should be given to obtaining additional professional and support resources for students, as well as to the space shortage. The increased number of students explains why the Liberals had to loosen their purse strings at the end of their mandate. However, it was too little, too late, since they were unable to play catch-up with infrastructure projects, due to austerity policies applied in education. This does not even include job cuts that had an effect on the daily lives of students. Like their colleagues in the health network, school board employees are experiencing work overload and are at the end of their rope.

The CEGEP network, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2017, is also in need of some respite. A massive post-austerity reinvestment is being demanded as we move into the first CAQ budget. The mission of CEGEPs has also been under pressure for a number of years. Employers are requiring more alignment between education and labour market needs, but teachers are concerned about the consequences on the quality of the degrees in a labour market that is constantly evolving. If courses were to be about the current specific needs of businesses, the skills learned would be difficult to transfer to other workplaces. Workers are more vulnerable to economic upheavals. CEGEPs are also, in our eyes, places to develop and learn about citizenship and culture.

The university funding method remains an important issue for the future of the public university network in Quebec. In addition to compressions incurred on the heels of austerity, the funding method pits institutions against each other to compete for students, since it is based on the number of students admitted. In December 2018, Minister Roberge committed \$7.5 million to five regional universities in the Université du Québec network; however, a long-term commitment is instead required if we wish to improve university teaching and focus on the economic and social development of Quebec society. The context of competition has led to a commercial view of teaching, particularly in higher education. In such a context, it is important to assert the value of the role of professors and lecturers in transmitting knowledge and guiding students throughout their academic careers.

The Cree and the Inuit each have their own school board. Elementary and high school education are offered, as well as vocational training courses for adults. If young people wish to continue their studies after high school, they have no choice but to head South. Some CEGEPs have developed approaches and programs adapted to Indigenous peoples, such as John Abbott College, located in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.

Commitments

Continue our commitment to defending public services associated with the various areas of responsibility of the government.

Demand a massive reinvestment in public services.

Public finance crisis!

The public finance crisis context that resulted in public service compressions and increased fees has led us to demand more progressive taxation, which would allow for funding of public services associated with the various areas of responsibility of the government. As a result of our alliances with, among others, the Coalition Main rouge and the Refusons l'austérité collective, these demands are widely shared. The CAQ government decided to reinvest the \$2.3 billion surplus in the health and social services sector, as well as in education. However, there is reason to question its priorities. The announced investments will improve public sector infrastructure, but too little has been set aside for providing care to Quebecers. The budget increase in education will mainly serve to build pre-kindergarten classrooms for four-year-olds; however, the amount should have instead been spent on building new schools, especially in Montréal. Investments should also have been made in direct services to students and in services to provide assistance in relation to academic success.

In the health and social services network, reinvestments will serve to hire additional staff, a well-deserved respite for all those who work with the public on a daily basis. Among other things, the government plans to create a number of spaces for seniors in seniors' homes, while very little funding was allocated to improving accommodations in the CHSLD⁸ network.

8 Centre hospitalier de soin de longue durée [hospital centre for long-term care].

For the moment, the government has given up on tax cuts, which, in any case, would only benefit the wealthiest. We will nevertheless continue to demand fair, progressive taxation that calls on the wealthiest to contribute and puts an end to tax evasion and avoidance.

Commitments

Commit to continuing the fight for tax fairness, which will allow for funding of public services associated with the various areas of responsibility of the government.

Continue to provide political education to increase unity between union and social forces that support this demand

In the current context, it is important to strengthen our union action and join forces. The mobilization of the public and students on the matter of climate urgency inspires us. The #MeToo movement, which emerged out of the reporting of sexual assaults around the world and here in Quebec, has propelled the women's movement that demands an end to violence against women. This strengthened our political action on status of women issues in particular, but also on LGBT+ issues. The CCMM–CSN joined in the action without hesitation, by taking part in these mobilization movements. It is with determination that we are committing to unite union forces and add our voices to the chorus of social movement supporters.

“Uniting in Action” expresses the balance of power that we are in a position to exert. It is what has characterized the commitment of the CCMM–CSN since its founding

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