

38<sup>e</sup> CONGRÈS  
2022

# SOLIDAIRES, À TOUTE ÉPREUVE

# STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES





# Introduction to the statement of principles

**The statement of principles is the fundamental text of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain–CSN.** It reflects the values of justice, solidarity, equality and freedom that have guided our organization's union action since its foundation. The tone of the text recalls the activist and mobilizing tradition of our union practices.

This statement presents our social project, a true alternative to capitalist ideology. We want this text to be read, disseminated and discussed in affiliated unions. We want activists to be inspired by the ideas contained within it.

This is a new edition of a text first written in the 1970s under Michael Chartrand, then revised in 1990 and 2010. We have taken great care to preserve the principles and union legacy associated with it.

Moreover, new battlefronts have emerged due to the evolving situation, such as environment and climate change, as well as other concerns such as right to the city, right to housing and citizen participation. The rise in conservative

ideas has required us to reaffirm the principle of the right to abortion. We have devoted a significant space to the urban dimension as we work mainly in the metropolitan area. In addition, we have placed particular emphasis on the reality of Indigenous peoples in Nunavik, in Eeyou Istchee Baie-James, on the Island of Montréal and in Laval.

The values presented in the statement of principles have a universal reach. However, their wording reflects the convictions and aspirations of a specific time and place; this is why they need to be regularly revised. The 2022 version of the statement of principles fulfills this role. The Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain believes that future generations of activists will always be better positioned to consider the plurality of social movements and workers to build a better inclusive and cohesive world together.

# Statement of principles

## The principles that underlie our work

We, members of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain–CSN<sup>1</sup>, adhere to the principles of this organization of workers grouped together in unions on a regional basis covering the Island of Montréal, Laval, Nunavik, and Eeyou Istchee Baie-James. 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 the workers and of 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, fighting against all forms of discrimination, systemic and otherwise, from an intersectional perspective, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, the term “central council” will be used instead of the full name.

This is why the central council engages resolutely in social, economic, environmental, 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 and unions that listen to their members, are sensitive to human distress, and promote solidarity in the face of inequalities and discrimination.

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 and engagement as part of coalitions; it develops the broadest possible alliances with other union organizations and progressive social movements. It mobilizes on various fronts, such as the anti-poverty struggle, the integration of everyone into the labour market, regardless of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or

beliefs, 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, especially those of Indigenous peoples.

Our social combat is multi-faceted, diverse, and inclusive. The central council encourages and supports those people marginalized or excluded from the sphere of work as well as various feminist, Indigenous, LGBT+, cultural, anti-racist, environmental, international solidarity, regional development, or urban life movements that share its principles. 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 its citizens the freedom and opportunity to achieve their potential. It considers it necessary to reiterate that economic, social, and cultural democracy are integral to political democracy, as is the proportional nature of its voting 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 government 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 central council opposes the participation of business or private foundations in the funding of government bodies. Furthermore, this form of



State asserts its separation from religious institutions and is thereby 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 not only equality, but also solidarity and all forms of diversity. The central council leads the fight against all forms of discrimination, systemic or otherwise, on the grounds of language, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, religious convictions, handicap, background, or social condition. It asserts the equality of people and combats colonialism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and all forms of harassment.

The fight for true equality and against all forms of systemic discrimination must include challenging institutional inequalities and routine practices that reproduce unequal treatment. It is a matter of recognizing and combatting the fact that economic, social, political and cultural

life is organized in such a way so as to favour the accumulation of disadvantages for groups experiencing systemic racism and discrimination. It also requires recognition of the fact that Quebec and Canada had organized slavery and colonialism, and this past served as a model for institutions and practices by perpetuating those norms, categorizations and hierarchies that generate and reproduce the systemic character of discrimination, particularly in relation to access to high-quality employment and public services.

The central council recognizes the right of women to accept or refuse motherhood and demands proper services that allow them to exercise this right, without leading them to fall into hardship. These include abortion rights won thanks to women's mobilization.

Finally, recognizing the right of women to control their own bodies also requires denouncing and fighting forced sterilizations in Quebec, the rest of Canada, and the world. Furthermore, the central council denounces genital mutilation; it must end.

It also recognizes that family-work-study balance is an important condition for social equality.

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 the 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 the government to establish the necessary procedures for monitoring and transparency in this regard. Employees and all workers, regardless of their employment relationship, must be informed about their employer's financial situation and make decisions related to production and organization of work.

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, the fight against discrimination in the workplace, 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. They must receive all the necessary support, with regard to both finances and training, to be of high quality. Fair trade, responsible consumption and sustainable development are extensions of union action. The central council demands that trade respect human rights, social rights, and fundamental rights at work, 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 have access 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 truly allows a person to overcome poverty, have a genuine right to organize, and have access to 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 workers of all genders. 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. The 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 Quebec'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 the government, provide good working conditions and a healthy environment and promote safety and prevention through concerted action.

The central council asserts the right to a genuinely good 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 cannot be seen in purely economic terms. It must integrate two other components of sustainable development, namely social development and ecological development. Moreover, to be sustainable, development must also be viable and respect the rights of Indigenous peoples. It must meet the needs of today without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. This is why the central council is fighting on new fronts to protect air and water quality, combat climate change, 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 an essential element for life.

The central council defends the right to education for all, youth and adults alike. The right to education must also encompass intercultural education, education on citizenship, health, the environment, 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 fulfillment of human beings from early childhood to university. 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 Quebec society. The central council recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to control their education systems, including their languages and cultures. It also demands that curricula be revised in the provincial education system, in collaboration with Indigenous authorities, to better address Indigenous realities.

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. The 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 media ownership 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 fulfillment of creators, producers, and the population as a whole.



The central council defends the right to full urban life and citizen participation. 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 where 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, and affordable homes to house low-income individuals and families.

The central council wants residents of its territory to have genuine access to collective and

active transportation and therefore demands that public transit systems be developed. It demands that public decision-makers at all levels of power reinvest in public transit and encourage a reduction in greenhouse gases.

The central council advocates respect for cultural differences, in accordance with the *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*. This implies equality in employment, non-violence in intercultural relations, and the fight against all forms of prejudice, discrimination, and racism, systemic or otherwise.

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 advocates the full participation of Indigenous nations in Quebec society, with respect for their autonomy. It therefore recognizes the inalienable right to self-determination of peoples. The building of harmonious co-operative relations in Quebec must be based on essential principles found in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the recommendations of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.

The central council's project of an economy at the service of the common good can only

be developed through agreements negotiated with Indigenous nations, based on the principle of sharing, respecting the right of Indigenous peoples to development, and based on their free and informed prior consent. It is with them that it wants to imagine the occupation of the territory while respecting the environment.

The central council recognizes that the right to protection and development of various Indigenous cultures must be ensured by engaging society as a whole in the process of reconciliation, as requested by Indigenous peoples. The reconciliation process must necessarily be undertaken in collaboration with Indigenous peoples through the education of the entire population, through decision-making at the political and organizational levels. It also involves a process of reparations for wrongs suffered.

Furthermore, the central council wants to increase awareness of the realities of Indigenous peoples.

The central council wants to facilitate the participation of Indigenous peoples in the social and political structure of Quebec's public institutions. In addition, it encourages their involvement in union life at all levels.

The central council calls for the sovereignty of Quebec and therefore the patriation of all the powers characteristic of a modern government. 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 government of Quebecers. The march toward sovereignty requires negotiation with Indigenous peoples in accordance with all their rights.

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 programs, 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!**

*Conseil central*

**DU MONTRÉAL MÉTROPOLITAIN**



**CSN**