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## PUBLIC SERVICES FIRST YES

The electoral campaign is in full swing even if the public didn't want an election. As citizens, we don't have any other choice but to be interested in it. In fact, several important issues are being debated by the leaders of the different parties. But what are their commitments to public services and those who carry it on their backs? When all is said and done, public services make up the backbone of our society. Quebec would not be the same without public services and without those who work in it.

In order to stir up the debate, the SISP proposes three issues related to public services. It is like the electoral platform of the most important group of workers in the public and parapublic sectors. We ask that you learn about it and consider it when you go to vote. For us, one watchword : public services first YES.

### The presidents of the SISP



## REINVESTING IN PUBLIC SERVICES

ISSUE # 1

Everywhere in Quebec, public services are deprived of the resources necessary to guarantee free, quality services that are easily accessible. Women and men working in health and educational institutions and in the offices of government departments and agencies have a strong desire to offer the public better services and respond to their requests quickly. But in the current state of underinvestment, it is impossible to achieve this goal.

Consequently, the members of the SISP are calling for a major reinvestment in Quebec public services, for all sectors.

### Increase in health-care investments to reach the Canadian per-capita average

The SISP is calling on the next government to increase investment in the public health system, so that Quebec reaches the Canadian average per-capita investment in health care. In this regard, the President of the FIQ, Lina Bonamie, points out that Quebec is one of the provinces that allocates the least resources per capita for public funding of health care: \$3,135 in 2007, compared to the Canadian average of \$3,436, a gap of \$301 per capita. In 2007, the shortfall in Quebec represented about \$2 billion.

The health-care budget, once it is adjusted to the Canadian average, must continue to grow at a rhythm of about 6% per year, the average growth rate over the past few years, to be able to meet the population's growing needs.

### \$1.5 billion to catch up in education

The SISP demands that the government end the chronic under-financing in education. Simply to reach the Canadian average, 700 million \$ more must be allocated to the primary and secondary school network. Moreover, 800 million \$ more per year must be allocated to higher education and to financial aid for students. According to Réjean Parent, President of the CSQ, these investments would lead to a decrease in the number of students per class, provide quality professional and support

services, particularly to favour the success of children in difficulty, and ensure financial and geographic accessibility of higher education, thus preventing the waste of talents necessary to the development of our economy. Reinvestments are also essential to allow institutions of higher education to stay on the cutting edge of progress.

### Increasing public service staff levels

The SISP is calling for a massive reinvestment in all other government departments and agencies. It demands the abandonment of the policy of non-replacement of retiring employees, which is a major obstacle to maintaining quality public services. It also wants an overall increase in the authorized staff level budgets of 5,000 full-time equivalent positions to equip the departments and agencies with the staff levels (workers, public servants and professionals) from which they benefited before the Charest government took power in April



Photo : Gunther Gamper

• The SFPQ recently released a documentary titled *L'Etat que nous voulons*. On this occasion, Lucie Martineau, General President of the SFPQ, claimed that the documentary produced is particularly pertinent during an electoral campaign in which the economy seems to be the main theme. It is a must see video before voting. The video is available at [www.sfpq.qc.ca](http://www.sfpq.qc.ca), YouTube and Facebook.

2003. The General President of the SFPQ, Lucie Martineau, considers that such an increase in the number of employees could be achieved at a relatively modest cost by redirecting the budgets allocated to outsourcing, which have increased sharply in the past several years, to the departments and agencies.



Photo : Sandra Gagné

• According to Lina Bonamie, President of the FIQ, public services, such as healthcare, education and civil services, play a significant part in social cohesion, in the well-being of the general population. Their contribution is also sizable compared to the competitiveness of companies in the marketplace. In addition, the men and women who provide these services do so in the name of the common good and not with the purpose of profitability.

# THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS NOT THE ANSWER TO ALL THE PROBLEMS

Far from being the promised solution in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, the introduction of the private sector into the public sector appears to have acted as a hindrance to the quality of services, particularly because private enterprise is expected to show a substantial profit margin. This pursuit of profit, which does not exist in the public sector, contributes to the increase in the global cost of services.

## Public-private partnerships

The President of the APTS, Dominique Verreault, states that the famous PPP so dear to the Charest government fuels confusion over who is responsible for providing services. It also allows for public indebtedness to be disguised as well as costing more due to interest rates paid by the private sector being higher compared to those in the public sector. Also, long term commitments do not in any way take into account the needs of the public over a long period. Who can predict what the needs will be 20 years from now?

## Outsourcing

Outsourcing is another formula used to get rid of public manpower. In the government departments and civil service agencies, there is a dramatic rise in the costs of outsourcing due to the policy of not replacing one out of every two civil servants who

retires. Lacking manpower, management has no other choice but to turn towards the private sector. It's absurd and costly.

In the healthcare field, the use of agency personnel continues to rise as well as the number of billed hours. The Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal-Centre (Montreal-Centre Health and Social Services Agency) counted 6,5 million dollars in hours worked by agency personnel in 2007-2008, for a total of nearly 203 million dollars paid from the budgets of public institutions. This is much more than these same services would have cost if they had been provided by public sector employees. In other cases, institutions outsource surgeries, as is the case since the contract was signed between Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur de Montréal and the Rockland Medical Clinic MD. In this case, in addition to providing the surgeons and anesthesiolo-

gists for free, the hospital pays 9 000 dollars a day for rent from its own budget.

## Privatization

Privatization is another special route to install the principles of re-engineering. Bill 33 authorizes duplicate private insurance for three surgeries (hip and knee replacements and cataracts), and creates specialized medical centres where more than 50 surgeries can be performed. This law constitutes one of the master pieces in the privatization of healthcare. And what else will these new locations for providing healthcare bring to citizens seeking services? The benefits are minor, when, with a shortage of manpower, private clinics will pilfer the human resources in the public sector, which will have a negative effect for users of this sector in terms of accessibility of care and in an increase in global costs for the general population.

Photo : Günther Camper



• For Réjean Parent, President of the CSQ, the fight against school dropouts is shown through a reduction in the number of students per class; the offer of professional services and quality support services in sufficient quantity, and this, from pre-school to university through adult education and professional training. He also thinks it is necessary to go over again how children with difficulties are integrated in order to better define the limits and possibilities.

Therefore, the SISP demands that the next government install the necessary measures in order that the services offered by the State are accessible, designed by and provided by employees of the State in all regions of the province, and this, in order to specifically guarantee the health of the general population, public safety, accessibility, confidentiality of personal information, accountability and the sound management of public funds.

# RESTORING THE RIGHTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

As soon as this election campaign began, Jean Charest hastened to say that he was no longer the same politician as in his first term and that he had learned the lessons of the 2007 election. In short, after *Beaujolais nouveau*, Quebec would now be entitled to the "new Jean Charest".

But can we really talk about a "new Jean Charest" when the discriminatory laws of the old Jean Charest continue to apply with their worst effects for workers?

## Sadly famous laws

The rights of free association and negotiation are inalienable. But we must remember that Bill 30 forced the merger of union certification units in the health and social services sector and imposed the matters to be negotiated at the local level. This law was invalidated by the Quebec Superior Court on November 30, 2007, but the Charest government wants to appeal the decision.

In December 2005, this same government also invoked closure to force the adoption of Bill 142, abruptly terminating the public sector negotiations and suspending several union rights of that sector's workers. Gilles Dussault, President of the SPGQ, recalls that this antidemocratic legislation was strongly condemned by the International Labour Office (ILO) in spring 2007.

• For Dominique Verreault, President of the APTS, in healthcare as in the other sectors, the priority must be to consider the employees of the public system. "Key to our healthcare system vault, essential to its proper functioning and its improvement, the employees are far from getting the recognition they deserve. Quite the opposite, the system failures lead to the deterioration of their working conditions".

The same scenario happened with Bills 7 and 8, adopted in 2003, under which the government withdrew the right to unionize for 25,000 workers in home child-care services, as well as in intermediate resources and family-type resources. Once again, these two laws were struck down by the Court last October 31.

Jean Charest's arrogance has been denounced repeatedly. The judgments rendered by various courts confirmed that this arrogance was combined with contempt for the fundamental rights of people working in public services.

## The right to the same treatment as all other employees

In fact, workers in the public and parapublic services demand that they be recognized the same rights as all other employees in society. This is not the case when the government takes away their right to negotiate their working conditions and salary conditions.

Given that the Quebec Labour Code recognizes the right to negotiate salaries, it is not

normal that this right is thwarted in the public sector, as has been the case too many times in the past.

The SISP calls for a real right to negotiate and the restoration of a balance in the exercise of bargaining power at the bargaining tables. In short, public service workers want to be respected and especially want their work for

the well-being of Quebec society to be recognized at its fair value.



Photo : Les photographes Rainville



• Gilles Dussault, President of the SPGQ, is of the opinion that the reduction in personnel is nonsense in a system where the needs for public services are more and more striking. According to him, the workload for those who remain is heavy and could have counter-productive effects such as absenteeism. Moreover, a study conducted by the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor in 2005 revealed that the rate of absenteeism for illness, for all job categories, was more than 14 days per person per year in the civil service, and this tendency is increasing.

Photo : Denis Germain



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