

VALUING
PROMOTING
PRESERVING
PUBLIC SERVICES

VPP Bulletin



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Entrenching FSSS leadership with the VPP campaign



Photo: Normand Blouin

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In the continuation of its VPP campaign, the FSSS-CSN demonstrates yet again its combative spirit and its determination to maintain and develop our public health and social services system – a task that becomes all the more urgent with the announcement of new mergers.

There have been actions in recent months to protest the cuts in health care and social services. Members' growing participation in these actions demonstrates that they are fed up with governments' political decisions.

The government's announcement of organizational mergers simply adds to their concerns. During the fall, the CSN will emphasize the need to ensure the sustainability of our public health and social services system, notably by opposing the Liberal government's austerity policies.

On the eve of negotiations in the public sector, better working conditions are also becoming a key issue for maintaining and developing our public sector.

A First Rendez-vous crowned with success!

The FSSS, which initiated the First National Rendez-vous on the future of the public health and social services system on June 16, stresses the key nature of the event. It was the first time that such an event was organized, bringing together the vast majority of organizations in the public system for a collective discussion of the issues and challenges we have to meet.

We don't make a habit of sitting side by side with our employers and other organizations in the system. An audacious challenge, you say? True! Despite some palpable scepticism at the outset, doubts soon faded away and the day was a great success. Did this first rendez-vous eliminate all differences of opinion among the organizations? Of course not! It did, however, show that it was possible to come together to consider and analyse issues that are common to us all.

It was very interesting to see that all those present share the same concerns about the future of our public services – their management and funding and the delivery of care and services. Confronted with the government's intention to go ahead with mergers that won't improve services to the general public, our approach and our work is more relevant than ever.

In December, we will meet again in a second Rendez-vous. At that time, we want to propose shared solutions. In the face of the successive waves of cuts and the absence of any vision for our public system, we have to work on coming up with solutions. Our members are present all across Québec. They are involved in their institutions, have an excellent understanding of their workplaces and can make a crucial contribution to the analysis of the situation and identifying solutions to improve their working conditions and services to the population.

Demonstrating the impact of poor funding

In the coming months, we and our partners in the Common Front and civil society will have opportunities to present concrete examples of how the funding of our public services is poorly handled. While the government continues to cut direct services to the population and wreak havoc on structures, it signs contracts with private firms that are more expensive than maintaining in-house expertise and refuses to put a stop to the disastrous P3s that are costing us millions of dollars.

The FSSS-CSN will be in the forefront of the work to instil the political will that is necessary to make the right collective choices for ensuring the preservation of our public services.

Our involvement and our knowledge of the issues in the health and social services system are the reason why we can help ensure its sustainability.

Enjoy this issue!



MYTHS TO BE DEBUNKED

Cuts to public services are necessary to revive the economy. Economic recovery depends on austerity.

Both the OECD and the IMF now recognize that the cuts to public services have had negative effects. Everywhere that austerity policies have been applied, they have made inequalities worse without stimulating economic growth.

The OECD now says that economic growth must go hand in hand with reducing inequalities¹. To stimulate economic recovery, the IMF is now calling for more public spending combined with increased government revenue through progressive taxation².

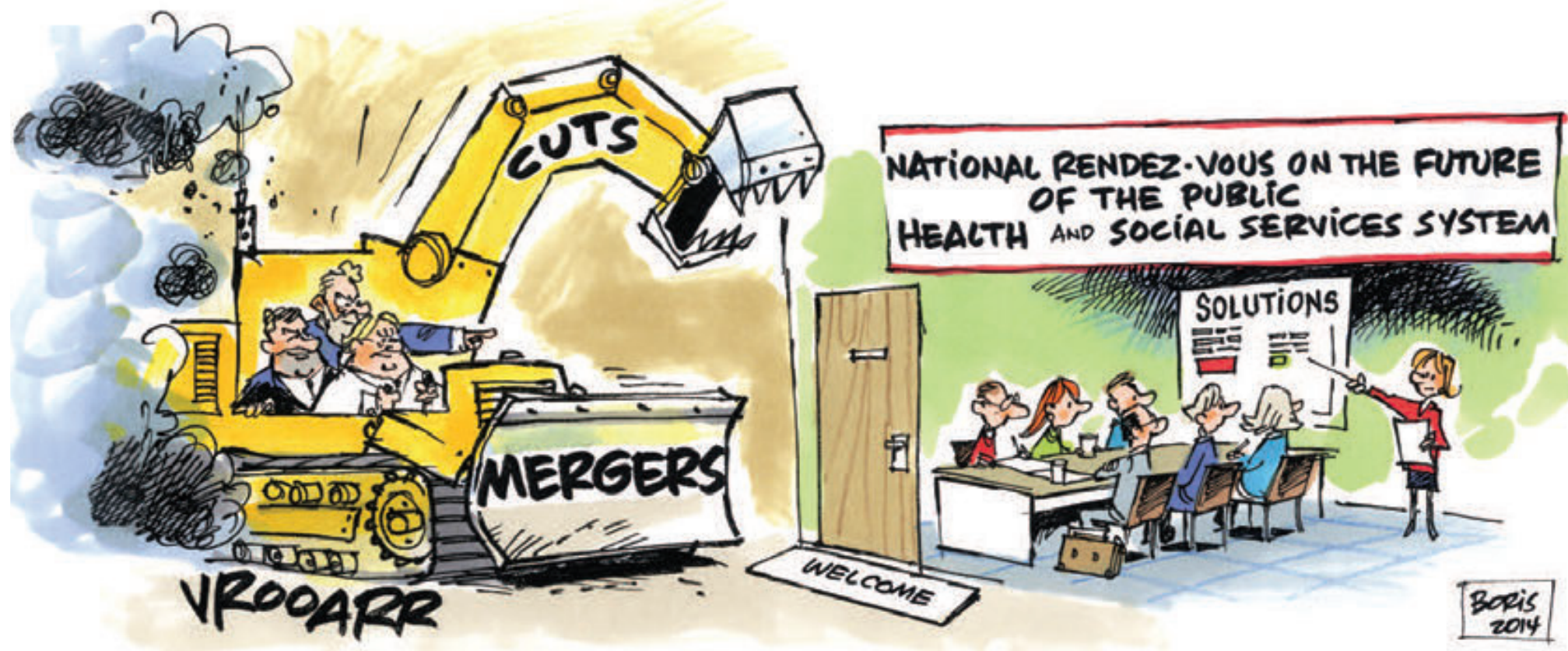
Québec should follow Canada's example to revive its economy.

According to the OECD, 37% of income growth in Canada from 1981 to 2012 went to the wealthiest 1%, who now pocket 12.2% of the country's annual income³. It is now established that greater inequalities are an obstacle to economic recovery.

If the government sticks to its policy of austerity, everything suggests that it will plunge Québec into a downward spiral that will doom us to weak economic growth combined with social and economic instability.

1. www.oecd.org/fr/eco/croissance/lessincomeinequalityandmoregrowth-aretheycompatible.htm
 2. www.ledevoir.com/documents/pdf/fmi_taxing_times.pdf
 3. <http://affaires.lapresse.ca/economie/canada/201404/30/01-4762383-ecart-du-revenu-le-canada-parmi-les-pires-estime-locde.php>

In the next issue, some more myths about the health-care system.



Procurement:

The public mustn't lose control

Each year, institutions in Québec's health and social services system buy more than \$5 billion in goods and services. Purchases are made either directly by institutions or through joint procurement groups that give institutions a stronger bargaining position. These groups already make \$1.6 billion in purchases and the volume of joint purchases is growing. The amounts involved are substantial, and it is worth considering whether they are managed effectively.

There is already good reason to worry about the concentration of purchases made from the same few firms. For example, from July 2011 to July 2014, Cardinal Health won more than 68% of calls for bids in which it participated, for a total of more than \$80 million in contracts.

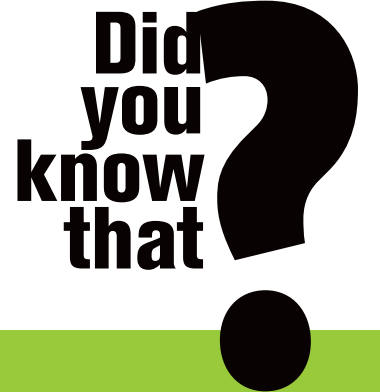
When it comes to procurement of goods and services, it's important to avoid "WalMartization," a phenomenon whose eventual result is to weaken competition and greatly strengthen the control of multinationals, with the notable effect of driving up costs. It is also important to ensure that contracts are awarded in accordance with the rules and free from any undue influence.

As well as purchasing goods and services, institutions also have to have solutions for storing and distributing supplies. At a time when the network is under pressure to come up with substantial savings, the number of regionalization projects is growing, with pressure for more privatization.

Yet there is nothing to suggest that regionalizing or privatizing procurement is a good solution. The best way of making efficiency gains would be to work on internal processes in public institutions. When it comes to freeing up nursing personnel, avoiding waste, modernizing information systems, ensuring better control of purchases and invoicing, or standardizing processes and the equipment and materials used, all this is done at the local level. Regionalizing these activities leads to neglecting factors like the environmental costs of using centralized warehouses and a "just-in-time" approach for far-flung territories, and time and energy is invested in the wrong place. And then when these activities are privatized, the public literally loses control, something that can ultimately be disastrous.

This is why the FSSS's work currently involves examining how goods and services contracts are awarded, on the one hand, and how the performance of the overall logistics of procurement can be improved, on the other. It is already clear that full public control over the entire chain is needed if we want to make long-term gains in performance. It is quite clear that the basic performance gains will come from institutions working on their local processes jointly with the unions and their members instead of relying on regionalization projects or, even worse, abandoning this important area to the private sector.

1. <http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/reseau/affaires-reseau/>
 2. SEAO



The FSSS has filed a brief with the government's permanent program review committee, known as the Commission de révision permanente des programmes? The Fédération explains that tackling social inequalities should be the government's priority. You can consult the brief on the FSSS web site: [www.fsss.qc.ca/download/vpp/FSSS_memoire_com_prog\(2\).pdf](http://www.fsss.qc.ca/download/vpp/FSSS_memoire_com_prog(2).pdf)

The FSSS opposes Bill 10, which would merge CSSSs and abolish health and social service agencies? The FSSS continues its work preparing for the Second National Rendez-vous on the future of the public health and social services system. Note that structural reform is not identified as a viable solution by any of the system's components.

The CSN will fight austerity by mobilizing workers and working to establish the broadest possible alliances? The government is about to create upheaval in our public services and organizing the resistance has already begun.

The FSSS has launched a campaign called "Grandir dans la dignité" (Growing with dignity) focusing on the situation of vulnerable young people in youth centres? The FSSS is calling for a moratorium on the cutbacks and an Estates-General on the situation of vulnerable young people. You can visit the campaign web site at: www.fsss.qc.ca/grands-dossiers/vpp/#grandir_dignite



VPP PROJECTS IN THE REGIONS

News about some regional issues

Montréal ▶ On June 12, CSN members in the Montréal demonstrated in front of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Montréal to voice their discontent with the announced budget reductions and cuts in the system. Members of four union executive committees (SEE du CMR, STT du CRDI Montréal Est, STT du CSSS Pierre-Boucher and STT du CSSS Champlain-Charles-Lemoyne) described the pernicious effects that the cuts are having on the daily work of employees in these health-care institutions and denounced the privatization of services and cuts to the number of people working directly with beneficiaries. These cuts inevitably lead to a loss of expertise and a lower quality of the services that each and every one of us has a right to expect. With the upcoming mergers, there is good reason to think that the situation won't get any better. Unions in the Montréal will be in action to protest the impact of these mergers on services.

Workers in the Montréal threw themselves into the "Thanks to you" campaign, which was a big success. Beneficiaries, supervisors and members of bargaining units affiliated with other unions proudly took part in the campaign to highlight the importance and quality of services delivered throughout our health and social services system. *Thank you!*

Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean ▶ Unions in this region are very active in documenting the impact of optimization and budget reductions in the health and social services system. We know that these are resulting in bed closings, closures of services, closures of RACs (ressources à assistance continue – continuous assistance resources) and abolitions of positions. Unions are currently doing field work to continue to demonstrate the impact of austerity measures on services to the population.

In reaction to the announced mergers of CSSSs and the abolition of the agencies, unions in the region will reach out to the population to ask people how they see the future of public health and social services. We can certainly demonstrate the importance of defending our public services. This work is all the more important given that we are faced with decision-makers who focus solely on the spending column and who have no compunction about destroying our public services.

Côte-Nord Basse-Côte-Nord ▶ In November 2013, management at the CSSS de Sept-Îles announced an umpteenth reorganization in two of its departments. The objective? Slashing budgets. How? By eliminating 32,000 hours of work.

Made wary by a previous reorganization, the union nonetheless opted to gamble on participating with the employer in this reorganization. After a number of meetings, an analysis done by MCE Conseils, various discussions, suggestions and warnings from the union, the employer once again decided to go ahead with its initial plan, ignoring our ideas.

As the union had predicted, the departments concerned – the new unit of medicine, surgery and transition, the emergency department and intensive care – are now overworked.

Not surprisingly, management's objectives will not be achieved... The private agencies are still there, overtime doesn't seem to be declining and the overwork and general work climate mean that the proportion of employees off sick won't be going down either... Not to mention that the quality of services the CSSS provides to its older clients often puts employees in very awkward or even distressing positions.

There is an operating deficit of \$2.5 million even before the Liberals' cutbacks are implemented. And the employer continues to turn a deaf ear to solutions proposed by its employees! We can already imagine what's coming. Unfortunately, history will in all likelihood once again repeat itself...



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