

THE REVIEW

MARCH 2026

In this edition

- Understanding how unions work and the origin of the Rand formula
- Bill 3: And it wasn't enough...
- Interview with Pierre-Guy Sylvestre — Bill #3



THE Review

Journal of the Conseil provincial des affaires sociales
Volume 36, number 1
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Bulletin published by the Conseil provincial des affaires sociales (CPAS)

CPAS is the union coalition of the healthcare and social services sector within the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

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Printing : SCFP-Quebec's Printing Service.

Cover photo credit: Collectif 8 mars. Club Sexu. Illustratrice : Alex Bilodeau

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WORDS FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENT

Vigilance and solidarity in these times of transition

2026 is off to a flying start, plunging us all at once in the middle of major issues that will define the future of our movement and our society: political upheavals in Quebec City, attacks on union autonomy, and social emergency of violence against women, your union is already involved on all fronts.



A wind of change in Quebec City, but the struggle remains the same

The Quebec political landscape has just changed with the announcement of François Legault's resignation on January 14, 2026. This departure, followed by those of influential ministers such as Sonia LeBel and Geneviève Guillbault, marks the end of a cycle for the CAQ. However, if faces are changing, our concerns do not disappear. Beyond the personalities, it is the policies of this government that we have fought.

We must remain extremely vigilant with regard to those who will seek the leadership. For us, no matter who sits in the Prime Minister's Office, the urgency remains to respect public services, improve our working conditions and give real recognition to workers' purchasing power. The political transition must not become an excuse for inaction; we will carry our demands with the same firmness.

Bill 3: A step in the right direction, but the fight continues

Bill 3 on Union Reform was recently amended to adapt the audit requirements to the annual revenues of unions. Thus, organizations will have to produce, depending on their financial size, either a review commitment or a full audit. This relaxation is a victory for our pressures: it will prevent small unions from seeing their dues swallowed up by exorbitant accounting fees.

However, we remain strongly opposed to the "voluntary contributions" component. The vagueness surrounding the definition of the social or political activities subject to this choice, combined with the obligation of an annual secret ballot, is an open door to employer interference in our finances. We will not let the government weaken our autonomy.

Femicides: Another one, too many!

At the time of writing, we were already at the sixth femicide of the year. It is high time that measures against coercive control are fully implemented. We are also calling for the swift passage of "Clare's Law" to allow women who fear for their safety to ask the police if their partner has a history of domestic violence.

As union representatives, we play a pivotal role in prevention and support for victims. Thanks to recent legislative advances, we can help implement physical protection measures in the workplace and negotiate accommodations. We remain the first bond of trust offering a confidential space to those who need it.

The union is, and will remain, a protection against violence and injustice.

In solidarity,

Sonia Bureau
CPAS Acting President

WORDS FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY



2026 - A strong network with strong Unions!!

First of all, I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year! May 2026 be a gratifying year for all of you.

In the trade union world, usually, people react when the job is well done. This can be observed with the CAQ government; it is attacking union groups because they are strong - a collective force protecting the health and social services network. YOU are the ones keeping the wheels turning every day.

While trying to weaken our organizations, the government is directly attacking the workers who care, accompany, support, and protect the population. It is interfering with our solidarity allowing to avoid exhaustion due to lack of resources, and decisions imposed without respect for the workers.

Our network is strong because it is human. It is strong because it is unionized. Together, united and mobilized, we will continue to protect our working conditions, and the quality of services provided to the population. We will not divide those providing care to the Quebec communities.

Let's remain united, and let's anticipate the upcoming negotiation together, which you can rest assured, will be challenging.

Marie-Eve Desormeaux
General secretary

UNDERSTANDING HOW UNIONS WORK AND THE ORIGIN OF THE RAND FORMULA

JOSÉ CARUFEL
SCFP ADVISOR

Unionization is based on a democratic choice. In Quebec, a union can only represent workers if it has obtained the support of an absolute majority in a workplace, in accordance with the Labour Code.

The majority union then obtains a monopoly of representation, while leaving employees the possibility of changing allegiance or revoking certification at specific times. The presence of many trade union organisations also guarantees a real choice, which means that only organisations meeting the needs of their members can survive.

Trade unions are democratic organizations belonging to their members. They operate at both local and national levels, and sometimes at international level, in order to pool their resources and ensure effective representation. The large trade union structures make it possible to support costly actions, including litigation, and to share expertise. This democratic organization explains the diversity of the unions affiliated with FTQ, some of which operate exclusively in Quebec, while others are part of Canadian or international groups subject to separate legal frameworks.

Freedom of association is strongly protected in Quebec, both by the Quebec and the Canadian charters. The courts have recognized that this right includes unionization, collective bargaining and strikes. Historically, the legislator has chosen to limit state interference in the internal life of unions an approach that is consistent with the international commitments of Quebec and Canada, in particular Convention No. 87



of the International Labour Organization, which guarantees the autonomy of workers' organizations.

Union financing is part of this same democratic logic. In the vast majority of cases, union dues are not determined by the local certified association, but by representative bodies on which elected delegates sit. By joining a union, workers agree to contribute according to rules that are known and applied fairly to all members. Their power is exercised through participation in internal debates and elections, in the same way as in any representative democracy.

Allow me to recall the origins of the compulsory union check-off, also known as the Rand formula. This provision was included in the Labour Code by the Parti Québécois in 1977, with a view to guaranteeing industrial peace and avoiding long labour disputes like the one at United Aircraft in Longueuil a few years earlier.

The Rand formula stems from a 1946 arbitration decision rendered by Justice Ivan Rand in a dispute between Ford and the union. It is based on a set of compromises that were intended to reconcile the individual freedom of workers and their duty of solidarity. Justice Rand's decision was intended to ensure industrial peace, recognize the essential role of the union in collective bargaining and ensure stable funding, while respecting the individual freedom of workers.

The purpose is to recognize that collective bargaining benefits all employees but does not require them to be members of the union. For this reason, the judge proposed that all members of the same certification unit be required to pay union dues. The judgment also recognizes the importance of trade unions in industrial society and the need for these organizations to have stable funding. In return, Justice Rand recommended limiting the union's right to strike and imposing financial penalties in the event of an illegal strike. It is therefore a compromise that combines advantages and disadvantages for the unions.

This text is based on the FTQ's brief on Bill 3, which can be consulted at the following address: <https://ftq.qc.ca/memoire-pl3-transparence-syndicale/>



BILL 89: LETTING THE FOX GUARD THE CHICKEN COOP SOPHIE BIBEAU

Bill 89 was adopted on May 29, 2025 (Bill 14) by the government of François Legault. This legislation gives the Minister of Labour the power to control our right to strike, without considering essential services. You know... when a lawyer for the government, like the Minister of Labour, Jean Boulet, wants to amend the Labour Code, we are entitled to ask serious questions.

According to this government, the purpose of this law would be to

"better protect the population when there is a labour dispute."

Minister Boulet's argument is that Quebec is the undisputed champion of strikes in Canada. According to him, 91% of the country's work stoppages take place in La Belle Province. "It's troubling. Many strikes have unfortunate social, economic, or other impacts." he stated. However, it is important to point out that these statistics are completely false and were revised by Statistics Canada.

You will remember, this minister was not embarrassed to grant himself a 30% salary increase in June 2023, and now he is lecturing us. He did not have to picket on a sidewalk to get his salary increase, did he?

What a vision at the opposite end of the spectrum, my dear Mr. Boulet!

The unions believe that before the adoption of this law, the rules governing the use of strikes made it possible to maintain an essential balance in the balance of power between workers and employers. They argue that Minister Boulet has turned everything upside down in order to restrict the bargaining power of workers to the benefit of the bosses — his clients.

This new law will also have an impact on non-unionized environments. By weakening the balance of power among unionized workers, it will reduce the ability of all workers to obtain better conditions. Another step towards the impoverishment of the most vulnerable. We have to stop this CAQ madness!

Why resort to a strike when negotiations are stagnating for months? Because 2022 was the year with the highest inflation in the last 40 years. Workers are fighting to address impoverishment, for good jobs, and to prevent the privatization and outsourcing. There is nothing wrong with demanding a dignified, decent, and well-paid job.

To counter this law, the labour organizations are now turning to the courts. It seems clear to us that the limits imposed on the right to strike will not stand up to the legal test. The Canadian and Quebec charters, as well as the Supreme Court's decision in Saskatchewan, are unequivocal on this point. The right of association and the right to negotiate one's working conditions are an integral part of fundamental rights.

LET'S TALK A LITTLE ABOUT US

SOPHIE BIBEAU

During the last round of negotiations, the Inter-Union Common Front in Health and Education, fought hard. We went on strike for eleven days, while respecting the essential services approved by the Administrative Labour Tribunal, in the middle of winter.

It is important to point out that this battle has only maintained our working conditions and provided wage increases that barely keep up with the cost of living: 17.4% over five years.



Is this abusing the right to strike? Why did this government force us to go out for 11 days to get to this point? The real abuse isn't that we have been forced to do so.

A brief comparison of Wage Increases in previous Collective Agreements

2020–2023

- 2020 : 2 %

- 2021 : 2 %
- 2022 : 2 %

2016–2020

- 2015 : lump sum (\$0.30/hr)
- 2016 : 1.5 %
- 2017 : 1.75 %
- 2018 : 2 %
- 2019 : lump sum (\$0.16/hr)

(Lump sum = no wage increase, only a one-time amount)

2011–2015

- 2010 : 0.5 %
- 2011 : 0.75 %
- 2012 : 1 %
- 2013 : 1.75 %
- 2014 : 2 %

2006–2009

- 2 % per year

With the last negotiation, we obtained an increase that is at least in line with the consumer price index. However, we have not recouped the salary adjustment/catch-up we are entitled to.

And now they want to take away our main means of pressure?

REALLY?

BILL 3: AND IT WASN'T ENOUGH...

SOPHIE BIBEAU

And as if it were not enough, this same government added its famous Bill 3, allowing the government to interfere in union affairs. Why not, coconut? While we're at it...

Is it normal not to be able to have a decent place to live because the rents are too high?

Is it normal to pay \$10 for butter or deodorant?

Is it normal to wait four years for a family doctor?

Is it normal to live from one paycheck to the next, with the constant fear of not having enough to pay the bills?

With Bill 3, the attempt is to destabilize the "bad unionists" by imposing an optional union dues component, in other words, by splitting the dues in two: a mandatory part and an optional part.

What is that all about?

Boulet, again, claims that union members should decide where the dues money goes...

Yet unions are among the most democratic organizations. The majority of positions are elected. Power is divided between the general assembly, the union council, and the executive. The main orientations are discussed and voted on in general assembly, which remains the supreme authority.

Each jurisdiction (Locals, CPAS, CUPE) has rigorous accountability mechanisms. Each year, the budget forecasts are presented and voted, and the balance sheets are tabled and approved. Independent trustees (auditors) audit the books and send their reports to the national union. Major expenses must be authorized at a general meeting, and any member can consult the financial records and minutes on request.

Take an interest in your unions.

Ask questions.

Get involved.

There is always room for those who want to contribute.

The "optional component" of the contribution touches on three fundamental dimensions:

- Legal remedies to challenge legislation, particularly in the area of pay equity;
- Awareness and information campaigns, which the government never hesitates to use to influence public opinion;
- Social struggles: housing, minimum wage, social justice, occupational health and safety, reproductive rights, etc.

None of these struggles are optional. They are all an integral part of the trade union role.

François Legault has done his soul-searching and resigned recently. His strategy of attacking and targeting everything that moves has somehow tarnished his credibility.

In your opinion, without François Legault, will the party be able to get back on track or will it follow the the same path?

One thing is certain: checks and balances are more necessary than ever, and the labour movement will remain an essential pillar of a healthy democracy, regardless of what the CAQ and some of its friends in the big business group say.



INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE-GUY SYLVESTRE – BILL

#3

KATIA IDIR ET PATRICK HALLÉ

The filing of a memorandum by FTQ related to Bill #3 has generated several questions within our organization. To better understand the issues and potential implications, we reached out to Pierre-Guy Sylvestre, an economist and advisor at CUPE. A specialist in research, negotiations, and public affairs, he offers his insight into this controversial reform.



The government justifies this project in the name of transparency in union governance. What, in your opinion, does not hold water in this argument

The unions are already transparent with their members, what the government is aiming at is to make the union structure more cumbersome and to destabilize it.

In your opinion, what is the real objective of Bill #3?

Attack union check-off by dividing the revenues related to dues. Alberta and U.S. states have used such reforms in the past, and the result has been lower unionization, lower wages, and higher workplace injuries and fatalities. Article 47 of the Labour Code is the result of trade union struggles and allows trade unions to be financed by stable incomes. Forcing unions to divide their revenues related to dues into a

main and optional part will create discord and confusion among members, while exposing locals to fines that can run into tens of thousands of dollars.

FTQ says that this is an interference in union democracy. Do you share this statement? Why?

Indeed, I do. The unions are private organizations; they have no public funding. They are beholden to those who contribute to the union. CUPE local constitution, by-laws and internal affairs belong to its members.



Who asked for this bill, who was consulted

The minister claims that he consulted the unions, but that is not true. No union would have asked for such a bill, it's absurd. The law is illegal and the groups that support it are the Conseil du patronat, the Montreal Economic Institute and other conservative business groups. Fundamental rights must be respected; several lobbyists have ignored them.

What risks do you see for industrial peace and the equity of the Labour Code?

The provisions of the bill, which will probably be amended when the House resumes, provide that votes at meetings can no longer be held on the spot, and that all members will have to vote on the topics presented at these meetings, from 3 to 30 days after the meeting. This could make it more difficult to accept a tentative agreement because, according to union experience, a tentative agreement must be explained at length to be understood. There could be more labour disputes and more difficult settlements to obtain.

Why is the division between the main contribution and the voluntary contribution considered problematic?

Members are already voting for budgets that are detailed. If a union participates in a social movement, advertises or challenges the legality of a law in court, it will have to hold a meeting and have all the members vote for that specific budget. Then, the union will have to inform the employer to separate the contributions collected. This process must be done at least once a year, or whenever there is a change in the union's agenda. The employer will then have to adjust the amount collected for the voluntary contribution and for the main contribution. Imagine all the Unions at Santé Québec changing their % of dues every year. Now imagine those same unions changing the percentage of each of the dues (principal and optional) once or several times per year. A disaster in the making.

What would be the concrete consequences of this reform for the financing and capacity of the unions to operate?

Members are already voting for budgets that are detailed. If a union participates in a social movement, advertises or challenges the legality of a law in court, it will have to hold a meeting and have all the Members who are dissatisfied with the categorization of the shares into principal or facultative could ask the Court of Québec to sue their union to determine whether the main dues were wrongly used to finance an optional expense. The union will have to defend itself. Another member could then ask the Court of Quebec to sue his union if the defense is assumed by the main dues revenues and so on.

How would the new requirements for annual votes and referendums be bureaucratic or unenforceable?

Employers would have a hard time keeping up and members would be demobilized by having to constantly come back to assemblies when they voted on a budget.

The bill restricts the use of union funds to challenge laws or government decisions. Why does the FTQ consider this dangerous?

Yes. The separation of powers is important and guarantees the well-being of the population. A Prime Minister cannot decree what he wants or cannot adopt laws that would go against the Charters of Rights and Freedoms, and that is why the judiciary exists.

What consequences could this have for the defense of workers' fundamental rights?

It would be weakened.

Is there a risk that the unions will be unable to act as a democratic counter-power?

This is the main issue here.

The bill imposes mandatory 24-hour votes. How can this harm deliberative democracy in assemblies?

The unions can have these compulsory votes adopted; it is their prerogative. We are denouncing the interference here.

Does this measure open the door to employer interference in union decisions?

Yes, the employer will have time to start fear campaigns and make threats.

If this project is adopted, what will the unions have to do to adapt or resist?

Contest in court because this law is illegal!

What should the government do if it really wants to improve transparency?

Mind its own business!

What alternatives or modifications do you think would be acceptable or constructive?

None!

The FTQ is calling for the complete withdrawal of the bill. Do you share this position?

Yes!

THE "RIGHT TO WORK" LAWS

SOPHIE BIBEAU

Despite the progressive character that the title of this type of law may suggest, it is rather a management strategy being used to weaken unions, allowing the wealthiest in our society to acquire even greater wealth, thus causing the impoverishment of the working classes i.e. the majority of the population.

Indeed, this tactic comes straight from our neighbours to the south; this anti-union trend has been used for several decades now.

The right to work

In 1935, the Wagner Act was passed, implemented by the administration of American President Roosevelt, which gave American workers more or less the same trade union rights as the Rand formula. On the other hand, this progressive law was short-circuited in 1947 by the Taft-Hartley Act, which stipulated that the states were not subject to the Wagner Act if they applied the right to work - the worker was not obliged to pay his dues to the union that represented the workers of a company.



Naturally, this weakens the union's balance of power with the employer, which loses significant funding and compromises collective bargaining on working conditions. Since the implementation of this law, 25 states (out of 51) have adopted a 'right to work law'.

The last state was Wisconsin in 2015 despite a strong mobilization of workers. This law has reduced the rate of unionization, thus causing a considerable impoverishment of the working classes; Union-backed research has concluded that these laws have eroded wages, led to higher debt, and more precarious health.

In conclusion, when Jean Boulet refers to certain union abuses (abuses occurring in other types of associations and organizations, or even in CAQ ministries) and wants to allow union members to have access to more transparency with his Bill 3, we quickly realize when we put things in context, that it is a subterfuge and that, in fact, the real purpose of this bill is to give more power to employers and to favour the wealthiest in society. In light of the facts that the minister does not seem to consider, Magalie may not have been wrong to say that he is naive...



2025: 26,964 NETWORK EMPLOYEES ON SICK LEAVE

PATRICK HALLÉ

Is the good health of health and social service workers a priority?

The report published by the Ministry of Health and Social Services¹, dated December 27, 2025, indicates that 26,964 employees of the network are on sick leave due to disability (CNESST or other agencies).

Using an average annual salary of \$68,000, this represents more than \$1.8 billion in costs related to this high level of disability-related work stoppages, not considering the care and services that are not provided to the population.

This corresponds to 2,634 more employees on sick leave since the creation of Santé Québec, an increase of 10.83% in one year. Disability-related absences now affect 7.8% of workers in the network, nearly double the Quebec average of 4.3%, according to the inactivity rate related to illness or disability published by Statistics Canada for the year 2024².

Meanwhile, the site also indicates a reduction of 2,746 people employed by Santé Québec over the same one-year period.

It is sad to note that, despite the mission of the health and social services network to take care of the population, when it comes to taking care of its own employees, Santé Québec cuts a poor figure. This is the perfect illustration of the theory of the poorly shod shoemaker.

It is all the more surprising to hear the CEO of Santé Québec, Ms. Geneviève Biron, say on the program Le Bilan, on January 12, 2026 on LCN³, that the situation is "stable", "under control" and that there is "no dramatic rise", when the figures clearly show the opposite.

In total, there are about 5,300 fewer employees serving a constantly growing Quebec population. If Santé Québec's management remains in denial and nothing is done quickly to curb this vicious circle, the situation is likely to worsen in the coming months and years.

¹ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiOTFmZjc4NzAtMTBkMS00OTE5LWE4YjQtZTlzOTc5NDZjNmZlliwidCl6jA2ZTFmZTI4LTVmOGItNDA3NS1iZjZlWFIMjRlZTFhNzk5MjI9>

² Table 14-10-0390-01 Absence from work among full-time employees, annual, not in the labour force

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410039001-fra>

³ <https://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2026/01/12/financement-en-sante-les-besoins-sont-tres-grands-quasi-illimites-affirme-la-pdg-de-sante-quebec>

When the work overload becomes unsustainable due to chronic staff shortages, it is not an aggressive management of absenteeism, neither by the attendance department nor by the human resources department, that will solve the problem. Instead, we need to hire more personnel, with better working conditions, reduce the overwork, and recognize the importance of the workers' physical and mental health, by making prevention an operational priority.

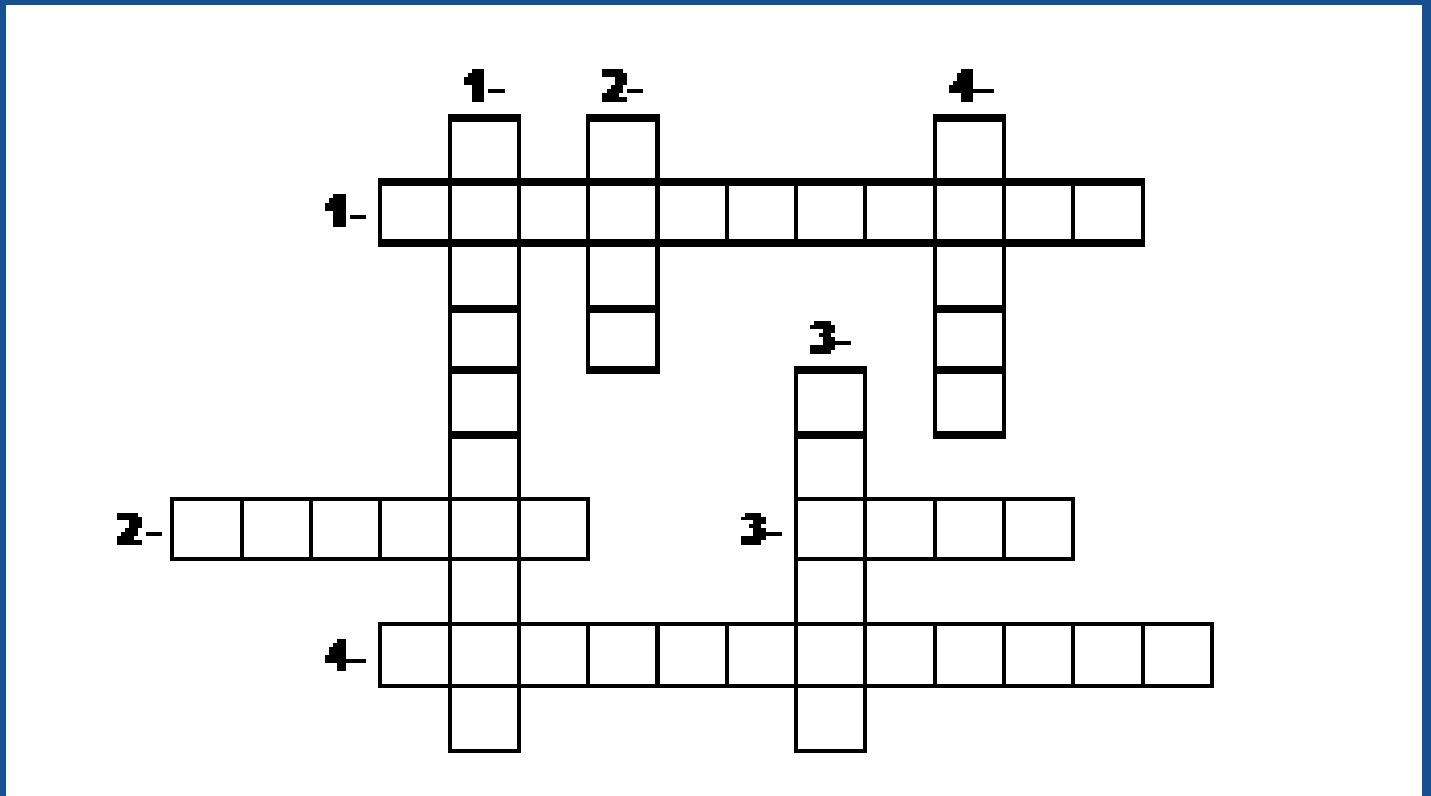
UNION CROSSWORD

Vertical

- 1- The period of life after leaving the workforce
- 2-A collective decision made by choosing an option.
- 3-A plan outlining income and expenses.
- 4- A controversial piece of legislation affecting unions.

Horizontal

- 1-Discussions between a union and an employer to reach an agreement.
- 2-Money earned from work.
- 3-Regular payments made by union members.
- 4-Undue involvement in union or workplace affairs.



Vertical
 1 - retirement
 2 - vote
 3 - budget
 4 - Bill 3
 Horizontal
 1 - negotiation
 2 - income
 3 - dues
 4 - interference

UNION CROSSWORD (SOLUTION)