



Special ADR Edition

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Why I Support Leaving FAC and Joining FNEEQ*

by: Maryann Farkas (History/Classics)

I have been on the DTU Executive Council for most of my 12 years at Dawson. For the past two years, I have been on the Executive. In all those years, I have been to many FAC Assemblés fédératives (AFs), decisional all-union assemblies. During this time, I have developed my belief that we should be in FNEEQ.

I did not attend the just-ended AF, because it was made clear, formally in letter from the FAC president, that I, or anyone who had come out in favour of leaving FAC to join FNEEQ, would not be welcome. This deprived Dawson of our full delegation at this important meeting, and it also deprived us of our democratic right to choose our delegates.

Unity, not isolation

Why do I believe we should be in FNEEQ? It's not very complicated. In the union movement, historically and now, the greatest possible unity of our forces is our main strength. Thirty-seven of the 59 Cegep teachers' unions are in FNEEQ. Why would we not want to be with the majority of Cegep teachers in the province? Some people may find small, intimate organizations comforting, but I would argue that common sense, and history, have shown that when it comes to the trade union movement, large groupings are the ones that have been most successful. In my experience, small can be beautiful, but it can also easily be ignored.

I find it unfortunate that some people at Dawson would want to maintain their isolation in FAC, and isolation it is. Currently FAC is outside the Common Front that is growing around the upcoming negotiations. FAC and its supporters continue to maintain that having a third alternative to the other federations, FNEEQ and FEC-CSQ, is healthy for the union movement, but they fail to convincingly explain or to demonstrate how this is so. The fact that two unions, Valleyfield and Lionel-Groulx, have recently left FAC, and several others are now considering such a move indicates to me that the idea of this third way is losing credibility even among FAC's members.

Some people apparently worry that we would be in the same federation as private school teachers and university sessional lecturers. First, as has been explained before, the Cegep group is autonomous inside the federation. The Cegep group decides on all issues relating to their collective agreement. However, I see it as an advantage to be able to meet with teachers of other sectors to discuss broader issues of education, such as the educational reforms, questions of governance, etc. While maintaining our autonomy on contract issues, we would be able to share insights on concerns regarding education that are common to us all. And, dare I say it, I think that being

part of the CSN, which represents many public sector groups in Quebec, is a good thing. It would, and does in fact, provide strength in numbers and the possibility of understanding and supporting each other's causes.

Better services?

I would like to directly address some of the points made in recent comments in the Owl Hoots ADR Specials. First, I have some comments on the question of services provided by FAC. The labour relations experts in FAC are very sincere, very hard working, and it is clear that they are very attentive to our needs at present. However, last year, before we made it clear that we were considering disaffiliation, we did not always get a reply to our phone calls the same day, the same week, or even the following week. Would we return to that pattern if we decide to remain in FAC?

As hard-working as they are, the two FAC labour relations experts have a lot to cover. For example, as well as covering all labour relations disputes for all FAC colleges, these two individuals must work on the dossiers regarding recognition of years of schooling for new teachers, and, now, negotiations for the new contract. Add to this the fact that one of these two labour relations specialists will, by FAC rules and philosophy of "teachers for teachers", have to return to teaching after 4 years in office, leaving his role to a neophyte. In my time as member of the executive, I have seen recognition of years of schooling for a Ph.D. from a recognized university in Western Europe take 18 months. We have appeals by teachers who graduated from universities in the ex-Soviet Union that have been waiting for years, with no resolution yet. At FNEEQ, there is a teacher who has release time to focus specifically on this question. When Lionel-Groulx left FAC to join FNEEQ, outstanding cases were resolved as soon as he took up the dossiers.

There are differences in the contracts, differences that I see as advantageous to teachers. The FNEEQ contract includes recognition of additional schooling twice a year for all teachers, permanent and non-permanent; provisional programs must become permanent programs with the beginning of the 4th cohort of students; it takes 450 hours (instead of 525) for Cont. Ed. teachers to gain day priority, etc.

A history of making the wrong decision

Finally, FAC has a recent history of making the wrong decision in the name of principle, and having to catch up later on. This was the case with the extension of the previous contract, on the question of the 173 hours, and the rejection of the last contract, which resulted in having the decree imposed on us. As we know, these decisions cost us a lot of money, and the decree had clauses, many now changed in the recent ad hoc agreement, which were inferior to those in the FNEEQ contract. I see no indication that this trend will change.

I have met with teachers from FNEEQ over the years, at meetings of Cegep history teachers and at the annual Anglo Cegep union meetings. Like many of you, I have friends in FNEEQ unions. They are satisfied with FNEEQ's services, don't feel lost inside a big union, don't feel stifled by the FNEEQ (or CSN) bureaucracy, and don't understand a desire to remain isolated in FAC.

Unity is essential. Ben Franklin said some time ago (and I paraphrase his words), if we don't hang together, we will hang separately. We are facing huge challenges now and in the future with the global economic downturn. This will have an impact on our current negotiations and beyond. It really is time that Dawson teachers joined their colleagues in the heart of the Cegep union movement.

*Newer teachers have asked that the acronyms used be explained:

FAC, La Fédération autonome du collégial, is our current federation. It has 15 member unions with about 3,500 members and is separate from any other union organization.

FNEEQ, La Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec, is affiliated with the CSN, has 37 unions and 14,000 members in the Cegep group.

FEC, La Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep, affiliated with the CSQ, a primary and secondary school teachers' federation, has 7 unions and approximately 1000 members

Please note that all the ADR reports are available on-line on the DTU site, www.dtu.qc.ca

More Than You Want to Know on Insurance Advantages for Retirees with FNEEQ

By: David Olesik, (Economics/geography)

MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR RETIREES OVER 65

FNEEQ has a better and cheaper collectively negotiated medical insurance policy for all retired teachers over 65. After 65, for the cost of \$27 per month for an individual or \$53 per month for a family, a retired teacher with FNEEQ can add to RAMQ supplementary drug insurance plus access to professional services, virtually all the protection held by a working teacher. This includes access to the same drugs and professionals as a regular teacher. However drugs are reimbursed at a rate of 75% until \$2400 then are 100% reimbursed. The details of coverage and the rates are available in English on the FNEEQ website.

FAC does not have a collectively negotiated medical plan after retirement. Desjardins does offer an individual plan to FAC members as a supplement to RAMQ. However this is significantly more expensive than the plan of FAC. For an individual it costs \$39 for those 65-70, \$51 from 70-75 and \$58 over 75. It is hard to compare the benefits in the two plans, as there is significantly less detail in the brochure about the FAC plan. Nor do we have any detail about rates for couples or families. FAC's insurance company refuses to send any printed material describing rates. Nor do they have any information online detailing the conditions of the plan or the cost. They are, however, willing to describe the rates orally on the phone to any FAC member who is considering retirement. However, they appear only to provide the rates which apply to a particular member. We got the information by phone.

TRAVEL INSURANCE FOR RETIREES

FNEEQ provides travel and medical insurance outside of Canada for 182 days per year. FAC provides similar insurance for 90 days per year. How much would the extra 90 days cost for FAC's retirees? Hard to say as insurance companies do not usually quote supplementary insurance. However here is an estimate. If FAC retirees aged 65-70 wanted to buy 90 days of medical insurance from the Capital it would cost \$628. This is, however, not supplementary insurance which would certainly be more expensive.

LIFE INSURANCE

If Dawson changed to FNEEQ current DTU retirees could transfer their current life insurance to la Capital and profit from its lower rates without the need of proof of insurability. This is what happened at Valleyfield and Lionel-Groulx.

Future retirees after a change to FNEEQ would have access to life insurance up to \$55,000 through la Capital as long as they wished. The cost varies with age. However the same insurance coverage exists beyond 80 years of age. You can check the details and cost in English on the FNEEQ website. There is no information on rates or the FAC plan on the FAC website.

MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR RETIREES UNDER 65

FNEEQ has a better collectively negotiated medical insurance plan for retirees under 65. However it is slightly more expensive than the use of RAMQ described below. For \$1286.52 per year FNEEQ provide insurance to an individual for drugs, professional services and travel. The maximum which a retiree could pay for drugs under the FNEEQ plan is \$600 per year.

FAC does not offer a collectively negotiated drug plan for its retirees under 65. Instead FAC suggests that its former members enroll in the provincial drug plan, RAMQ, intended for those who do not have access to collective plans. The RAMQ solution is slightly cheaper than the FNEEQ collective plan but it is less secure. RAMQ would cost most teacher retirees \$570 plus co-insurance on drug costs. To this must be added the cost of Desjardins individual plan for professional services and travel which would be \$29 per month for those between 60 and 65 or a total of \$348 per year. To this must be added the cost of co-insurance which runs to a maximum of \$927 per year. If no drugs are purchased, RAMQ plus professional services and travel insurance will cost FAC retirees \$918 or \$368.52 per year less than FNEEQ retirees ($\$348 + \$570 - \$1286.52$). If the maximum monthly contribution of \$77.21 is made to RAMQ for drugs purchased FAC retirees pay \$41.52 per year less than FNEEQ retirees ($\$348 + \$570 + \$927 - \$1286.52 - \$600$). However the use of RAMQ by FAC and Desjardins appears to be skirting the Quebec law about medical insurance. By law as FAC through Desjardins provides group life insurance it must also provide drug insurance and cannot legally suggest that retirees younger than 65 take RAMQ. The threat that FAC will be required to provide drug insurance retroactively and collect the difference from its retirees hangs over this plan. We suspect this is the reason for the lack of written information about the FAC plan. Further, as FNEEQ's insurance for those 65 and over is not only better but also cheaper the difference lost by those under 65 will be recovered by the gains after 65. Plus there is no gambling with the possibility of retroactive payments. However, FAC has used RAMQ for retirees under 65 for a considerable time. Therefore, perhaps we have exaggerated the threat.

Make sure that you attend the DTU sessions on Insurance in 5B.13 the Boardroom:

Monday March 30, 2009 :

14h00-15h00 FNEEQ-La Capital &

15h00-16h00. FAC – Desjardins

Tuesday March 31,2009 :

13h00-14h00 FAC-Desjardins

14h00-15h00 FNEEQ - La Capital