

CONFEDERAL LGBT+ COMMITTEE

2020-2023 REPORT



POUVOIR



MAINTENANT



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THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DURING THE LAST TERM OF OFFICE:

DOMINIQUE DUBUC

Syndicat du personnel enseignant
du Cégep de Sherbrooke-CSN and the
Conseil central des syndicats nationaux
de l'Estrie-CSN

MARIE JOSÉE HAMELIN

Syndicat du personnel paratechnique,
des services auxiliaires et de métiers
du CIUSSS MCQ-CSN and the Fédération
de la santé et des services sociaux-CSN

CORINE GAGNON-TREMBLAY

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs
en loisirs de la Ville de Laval-CSN and the
Fédération des employées et employés
des services publics-CSN

ÉRIC KIROUAC

Syndicat des professeur-es du collège
François-Xavier-Garneau-CSN and the
Fédération nationale des enseignantes
et enseignants du Québec-CSN

DOMINIC NORMANDIN

Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs
de la Vallée de la Batiscau-CSN and the
Conseil central du Cœur-du-Québec-CSN

DONALD PICOTTE

Syndicat des travailleuses et des
travailleurs de l'Hôpital Maisonneuve-
Rosemont-Pavillon Judith-Jasmin-CSN
and the Conseil central du Montréal
métropolitain-CSN

À CETTE ÉQUIPE S'AJOUTENT :

MARIE-HÉLÈNE BONIN

Union advisor at the
Research and Status of Women Service

MIREILLE BÉNARD

and later **NANCY POIRIER**

Political advisors to the
CSN's Executive Committee,
also joined the Committee
and **KATIA LELIÈVRE**

CSN Third Vice-President and
political officer responsible for the
Committee and LGBT+ issues

Dominic Normandin
was unfortunately unable
to attend Committee meetings.

**The earliest struggles against
homophobia at the CSN began
more than thirty-five years ago.
Following discussions held on the
sidelines of the 54th Convention,
in 1988, the Confederal Council
created the CSN's first
Gay and Lesbian Committee,
with a broad mandate to propose
“appropriate corrective measures
to the various forms of workplace
discrimination experienced by
lesbian and gay people.”
Only these two groups were
mentioned at the time, whereas
today a much wider sexual
diversity and gender plurality
are known and recognized.**

REPORT

SINCE ITS CREATION, THE COMMITTEE HAS FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- collecting testimonials from our members about conditions in the workplace
- ensuring our activists are visible within the LGBT+ and labour movements
- creating an activist network in all regions of Québec
- preparing demands to improve the current situation

Following its creation, the Committee adopted its first logo to announce its existence: the CSN chains inside a pink triangle. At the time, long before the arrival of the rainbow flag, the pink triangle was the movement's recognized international symbol. During the last mandate, the LGBT+ Committee members adopted a new logo, which is proudly displayed on the Committee's stand today, at the 67th Convention.

In 2021, the CSN's hundredth anniversary, we proudly travelled back in time to retrace the major milestones in the Committee's history.

Shortly after its creation, the Gay and Lesbian Committee set about addressing the conditions faced by lesbian and gay people in the workplace. One of the Committee's first activists, Line Chamberland, then a teacher at Collège Maisonneuve and later at UQAM, conducted several investigations into homophobia in the workplace that informed the Committee's work.

Over the years, the Committee has helped organize various community-initiated events, such as Pride marches and talks. These community connections influenced the thinking of the Committee's members and gave them the courage to lead the fight on the union front.

In the unions, members challenged injustices such as the exclusion of same-sex spouses from insurance and pension plans. It was during bargaining with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in 1993, in the context of coordinated bargaining by all the hotel unions affiliated with the Fédération du commerce (FC-CSN), that the first gains on group insurance were made.

Subsequently, in 1994, Article 17 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was amended to guarantee this right to all gay and lesbian persons. Collective agreements and benefits in the public sector followed suit shortly thereafter, reflecting the legislative changes.

Thus, CSN members have long been, and continue to be, engaged in the fight for anti-discrimination legislation and legal equality.

THE CSN HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN CAMPAIGNS:

- for the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms
- for same-sex civil union and marriage
- on parenting issues and family rights
- for the rights of trans, non-binary, and intersex people

Raising awareness among our members has also been a priority. Many still remember our beautiful "Tricotés serrés" poster.

To reflect the evolution of the movement and the changing issues that confront it, we have changed not only the Committee's logo but also its name: it is now the "LGBT+ Committee."

Our information materials have also had to be updated over the years. For example, the union guide *No More, No Less: Just Like Everyone Else!* has been republished no fewer than five times.

The Committee has organized stands and presentations at almost all meetings of the Central Council and the various Federation bodies. Some central councils and federations have also established their own committees, which carry out their own actions in coordination with the Confederal Committee.

RESULTS OF THE COMMITTEE'S 2021–23 WORK PLAN

Over the past three years, the Committee has continued its work to better support union actions to combat discrimination in the workplace and within the labour movement.

This work addressed the four major focus areas in the strategy previously adopted by the Committee: labour education, inclusiveness in our unions, government policy, and raising public awareness.

The achievements of the past three years have built upon and strengthened the work carried out by earlier CSN activists.

FOCUS AREAS

OBJECTIVES

1. Inform the CSN movement about the issues of LGBT+ people and fight homophobia and transphobia

Disseminate information and educational materials to confederal bodies, the federations, central councils, and unions, in line with the principles on diversity adopted at the 66th Convention

Continue cooperation among the LGBT+ committees of the federations and the central councils, in line with the CSN's operational plan

2. Improve support for, participation by, and inclusion of LGBT+ people within our ranks

Build union capacity on sexual and gender diversity, in line with the orientations on psychological health adopted at the 66th Convention

Ensure better representation and consideration of the issues of LGBT+ people in the unions, in line with the principles on diversity

3. Influence government policy on LGBT+ human rights in the workplace and in society

Monitor implementation of the Government Action Plan against Homophobia and Transphobia (2017–2022)

Present the CSN's analysis and positions to the government in public consultations and on other occasions

4. Communicate the CSN's positions and raise public awareness

Develop common positions with other organizations in which the CSN is a member or partner

Contribute to the development of knowledge about the realities faced by LGBT+ people

Participate in efforts to educate new generations

Support the broader LGBT+ movement

LABOUR EDUCATION

Work has continued at the CSN on informing our movement about the issues faced by LGBT+ people and on fighting homophobia and transphobia.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

In 2021, the LGBT+ Committee was pleased to release a new edition of *Labour Pride: What Our Unions Have Done for Us*, a book by Prabha Khosla that traces the role of LGBT+ people in union struggles for their legal rights in Québec and in Canada. The first edition of *Labour Pride* was produced for the Toronto & York Region Labour Council in advance of the 2014 WorldPride Convention. The document is available in French and English.

The new edition of *Labour Pride* responds to a concern expressed by members of the CSN's LGBT+ Committee, particularly Dominique Dubuc and Donald Picotte, who pointed out the lack of information in the first edition about the struggles waged by activists in Québec. The author came to Montréal to conduct in-depth interviews with two former activists, Jean Lortie and Line Chamberland. To complete the picture, we conducted documentary research and searched photographic archives. The book highlights the important role played by the CSN in Québec. A video featuring Committee members Éric Kirouac and Corine Gagnon-Tremblay was also produced to accompany the launch of the book, which coincided with the CSN's centennial celebrations. It is a captivating book and the CSN has already reprinted it several times.

The Committee also continued to distribute the fifth edition of *No More, No Less: Just Like Everyone Else!*, a facilitator's guide to sexual and gender diversity, both in print format and on the Web. The new edition covers new issues and possible union actions.

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, three PowerPoint presentations were prepared for the conventions of the central councils and presented at various meetings:

- **LGBTQI2SNBA+ ... People in the Workplace: Words to Describe Diversity in Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation**
- **Analyzing Collective Agreements with Regard to LGBT+ Issues**
- **Labour Pride: Past and Future Struggles**

During the last three years, Committee members, including Vice-Chair Katia Lelièvre, attended twelve of the thirteen central council conventions and some federation meetings, including CSN–Construction and FEESP–CSN. They made presentations, set up stands, had discussions with hundreds of members across Québec, and took stock of changes among the younger generations in recent years.

COOPERATION BETWEEN LGBT+ COMMITTEES WITHIN THE CSN

Over the past few years, a directory of people responsible for LGBT+ issues at the federations and the central councils has been created and kept up to date. Tools and information have been shared across this network via email and social media. Short videos were also produced and distributed, including one on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of sexual and gender diversity.

The health rules issued during the pandemic made it difficult for the Confederal Committee and the LGBT+ committees within the federations (FSSS–CSN, FNEEQ–CSN, FEESP–CSN) and central councils (CCMM–CSN, CCE–CSN) to carry out joint activities. However, existing relationships were maintained and the CSN was able to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17, 2022, in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region with the announcement of a new LGBT+ Committee at the FEESP–CSN, created on the occasion of its Federal Council meeting.

It is now our practice to mark May 17 by hoisting the rainbow flag in front of the CSN headquarters in Montréal and CSN offices in other regions. Large CSN LGBT+ flags have been created for this purpose. Smaller flags have also been distributed in all regions, to give the CSN visibility at the Pride parades being held in a growing number of regions in Québec.

New collaborations with support networks that were initiated during the previous three-year term continued. A special diversity day was organized for the Syndicat du personnel administratif, technique, de secrétariat et des services de garde en milieu scolaire de la Commission scolaire de Montréal et de la Commission scolaire English Montréal (APPA–CSN) together with members of the LGBT+ Committee and the Intercultural Relations Committee, as well as an adviser from the Research and Status of Women Service. A presentation on diversity, equity, and inclusion was made and workshops were held to offer ideas on effective listening, possible actions, and prevention of harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

Discussions on parental rights with François Enault, CSN's First Vice-President, and the public sector bargaining team continued in connection with the LGBT+ Committee's work on these issues. A national joint committee is working on updating the language of the collective agreements, which is no longer in line with the new legislation.

LABOUR INCLUSION

The Committee has undertaken new initiatives to improve support for, participation by, and inclusion of LGBT+ people among our ranks.

UNION CAPACITY BUILDING

The activities mentioned above, together with a training session on sexual and gender diversity created specifically for the CSN Legal Department, have helped to improve knowledge and understanding within the CSN.

However, the pandemic led to the postponement of an event on occupational health and safety, and the role of unions in dealing with discrimination and harassment affecting LGBT+ people in the workplace.

For their part, the Committee's members attended information and training sessions, including conferences and talks organized by the SAVIE-LGBT project and the Table des réseaux de l'éducation (see below), to keep their knowledge up to date and be able to answer questions from union members at union activities.

REPRESENTATION OF LGBT+ PEOPLE AND ISSUES

The election in 2021 of our current Third Vice-President, Katia Lelièvre, is one example of effective representation of LGBT+ people and attention to their concerns within the CSN's unions and organizations (including support networks). So was the election of General Secretary Jean Lortie, a few years ago.

The Committee has continued its support for partnership research on the inclusion and exclusion of LGBT+ people (the SAVIE project) led by UQAM's research chair in sexual diversity and gender plurality. The CSN's participation has made a significant contribution to mobilizing members, raising awareness, and documenting workplace conditions.

The Committee attended almost all of the central council conventions in order to make itself known, raise interest in union action among LGBT+ community members, and answer questions about how unions can better represent and stand up for LGBT+ people.

Distribution of the book *Labour Pride*, a must-read for anyone interested in Québec's social and labour history or in current issues of equality and equity in workplaces and unions, has also helped raise awareness within the labour movement regarding the struggles of LGBT+ workers.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Committee aims to continue influencing government policy on the rights of LGBT+ people in the workplace and in society.

GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN

Throughout this mandate, it has been much easier for the Committee to follow government actions closely, partly because LGBT+ issues have been the subject of debate and extensive media coverage. This was the case, for instance, with the adoption of laws in Québec and Canada prohibiting sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy, which the CSN welcomed in a press release.

In recent months, the Committee has been invited to participate in a consultation on the third Government Action Plan against Homophobia and Transphobia (2023–28). Katia Lelièvre, Third Vice-President, presented a set of priorities that the CSN would like to see adopted by the government, particularly in regard to the workplace, and stressed that tools and programs should no longer be aimed solely at employers but also at unions. A brief was produced and submitted to the government on this subject.

CSN POSITIONS

The CSN also presented its analyses and positions at the public consultations on Québec's Bill 2, intended to reform family law with respect to parentage and to amend the Civil Code's provisions on personality rights and civil status. The bill was subsequently split into two and a section dealing with surrogacy was postponed for further study. The CSN produced a brief on the impact of the retained part of the bill on trans, non-binary, and intersex people. The law that was passed in June 2022 is a significant step forward in the history of LGBT+ struggles. However, parental rights in the case of surrogacy remain to be defined. All of the CSN's briefs can be found on its website.

THE CSN AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Aiming at creating a social impact beyond the union, the Committee also publicizes the CSN's actions and positions, and contributes to public education in cooperation with other organizations in which the CSN is a member or partner, such as the Conseil québécois LGBT, Fondation Émergence, Fierté Montréal, RÉZO, ILGA, and others.

THE SCHOOLS

The Committee participates in educating of the next generation, as an active member of the Table nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie des réseaux de l'éducation (National Table against Homophobia and Transphobia in Educational Networks), which promotes cooperation among stakeholders in Québec's education system, including union, employer, student, and government organizations. The Table approached a software development company that produces an interface used by many educational institutions and asked them to update their data collection terminology and strengthen the protection of trans and non-binary people's personal information. Representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Office for the Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia share information at the Table regarding the government's work on various matters such as ending the incorporation of gender data into students' permanent codes. The CSN's representative at the Table actively participated in drafting a brief presenting the Table's recommendations on the Government Action Plan to Combat Homophobia and Transphobia (2023–28) and attended, together with another Committee member, the S'engager pour les diversités (Commitment to Diversity) symposium organized by the Table in November 2022.

CONCLUSION

Members of the LGBT+ Committee believe that unions have an essential role to play in defending the rights of all workers, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. The labour movement is uniquely placed to fight discrimination in the workplace. It has been demonstrated that union action can contribute significantly to making progress toward a free, inclusive, and prejudice-free society with true social equality for all.

Over the next three years, the Committee plans to continue its fight for legal equality as well as for true equality, both in the workplace and within the labour movement, and to address the four focus areas identified in this report.

The LGBT+ Committee aims to serve as an instrument to give voice to all people of sexual and gender diversity within the CSN, raising awareness and mobilizing the union's various components, making our union organizations truly inclusive, influencing government policies in favour of equality rights, and passing the torch to new generations who will take up these vital struggles, both today and in the future, for:

- the rights of trans, non-binary, and intersex people
- lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who still face prejudice and discrimination



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