



Report from CEIU Quebec Region National Vice-Presidents (NVP) (March 2024-June 2024)

As your National Vice-Presidents (NVPs), we are working tirelessly in refining our relational, ethical, technical, social, and political skills, to more efficiently and effectively fulfill our duties.

We act as CEIU's spokespersons in the vast and beautiful Quebec region. We are in active communication with our members, union stewards, and union and management leaders.

As part of our responsibilities as CEIU NVPs, we have carried out various activities to promote workers' rights in Quebec and in Canada. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of our actions and achievements over the past period.

Workload Management and Employee Support

The next issue is one that affects us all deeply: workload management.

Although the employer usually claims not to have heard about it, or comments that we bring anecdotes to the table, it has become clear that many of us are facing significant challenges in getting our work done on time, while maintaining the quality that is expected.

In fact, employees in the Quebec region rated their comfort level with quantitative workloads at 14% in EDSC's most recent Wellness' survey.

At the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), members are exhausted and don't feel listened to or taken seriously by management. A committee has been set up to investigate the matter following a survey that was rather alarming. Members are still waiting for healthier working conditions. Their families are affected by their work for the IRB.

Status:

Deadlines and quality: A source of stress and anxiety for many is the difficulty of meeting deadlines without compromising the quality of the work produced. Many of you mentioned shortcomings in training or post-training follow-up. The high turnover of staff in the operational expertise department, resulting in frequent changes of business expert advisors, hampers the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge.

Overtime: It's worrying that some of us feel obliged to work beyond our normal hours, often without compensation, simply to meet targets and for fear of losing our jobs.

Personal impact: The repercussions of overload on our health, self-esteem and ability to balance work and family responsibilities cannot be ignored.

We are fully aware of these issues and are taking concrete steps to remedy them:

Reassessing objectives: We work with management to review work objectives so that they are realistic and achievable.

Recognizing and valuing work: We are committed to ensuring that the extra work done by our members, the employees, is recognized and valued.

Support and resources: A compiled list of support resources available at work or through the union, including mental health and wellbeing services, will be made available to all.

Call to action: Our priority is your health and well-being. We encourage you to openly communicate your concerns and to seek help when you have concerns. Your voice is essential to creating a healthy and supportive work environment.

We can overcome these challenges and build a work culture that values balance and respect for individual needs. We thank you for your continued commitment and resilience in the face of these demanding times.

Strategies currently under consideration:

Dialogue with the employer: We are trying to discuss with the employer to review expectations and work objectives so that they are realistic and fair. For the time being, the answers we get at our level indicate that the control and determination of workloads is more a national matter.

Workload study: We would like an in-depth study to assess workload and identify areas requiring adjustment to be carried out by a competent and objective external firm. We have proposed a team of experts in work organization based on real work. Privacy would be a challenge for implementation.

Member support: We will put in place a plan of available support resources for those affected by work overload, including access to professional counselling and mental health services.

Together, we can create a work environment where the workload is more manageable, and where each member can develop professionally while preserving his or her health and well-being.

Crucial importance of identifying employees by designated workplace

Real and accurate identification of the work site where an employee should go to perform her/his work is a matter of great importance. For more than 2 years, the identification for occupational health and safety (OHS) purposes has been periodically submitted to the Employment and Social Development of Canada (ESDC), Quebec Region. This is done either through the Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) or the Regional Labour Management Consultation Committee (RLMCC). In our dealings with the employer, particularly with ESDC (Quebec Region), this issue has proved to be a significant pressure point.

It has been the case that some members of management have not been fully aware of the importance of the correct identification of workers. However, accurate identification is essential to create clear lists that identify where employees are located and confirm to which site manager the person can report. This is particularly important in the event of health and safety issues. Clarity in this process is not only a matter of compliance, but also a crucial preventive measure to ensure the safety and security of our employees.

In addition, we have found that in many offices there are no health and safety representatives for the employees, who must be selected by the union or local committees. This creates a void in terms of representation and monitoring of OHS standards. This absence is often due to a lack of knowledge of the Canada Labour Code (CLC) and the resulting obligations of employer representatives. It is imperative that this gap be filled by providing adequate training and committing to comply with the Act.

It is also a matter of concern that in some cases the employer has taken it upon itself to appoint employees' health and safety representatives. This practice is in direct contravention of the CLC Part 2. It raises serious questions about respect for established procedures and workers' autonomy in managing their own safety.

We have serious doubts about the ability of the employer to manage hybrid work, including the addition of a 3rd day in the office, in a healthy, fair and equitable way in these circumstances.

We intend to implement the following measures to remedy these problems:

Mandatory training: Recommend urgent and sustained training sessions on CLC Part 2, NJC regulations and directives for all managers, focusing on their OHS responsibilities.

Audit and compliance: Require an audit of current practices and implement an action plan to ensure compliance with the CLC.

Strengthening procedures: Clarify and strengthen procedures for appointing OHS representatives to ensure they comply with legal requirements.

Hybrid working: Key issues concerning the addition of a day at the office in September

As we approach the reinstatement to the office scheduled for September, several major issues have been identified that require our collective attention and immediate action. It is essential that we address these issues proactively to ensure a smooth and equitable transition for all our members.

Office organization: Current office organization remains uncertain, and the workforce census exercise has not yet been completed. This situation creates uncertainty about the layout of workspaces and the distribution of resources, which can affect the productivity and well-being of our members.

Integrating new employees: We are aware that some of our new employees have never had the opportunity to physically work in the

office. This raises concerns about their integration into existing teams and their ability to adapt to the organizational culture.

Lack of clarity on integration and accommodation: There is also a lack of clarity regarding information on integration and accommodation rights. This gap can lead to difficulties for members who require specific adjustments to carry out their work under optimum conditions.

Necessary actions: To meet these challenges, we need to take the following actions:

Finalize the workforce census: We urge the employer to complete the census quickly, to clarify office organization.

Integration program: Set up a robust integration program for new employees, including training sessions and team-building activities.

Transparent communication: Ensure clear and transparent communication on integration procedures and available accommodation measures.

[CEIU-Quebec commitments](#) to remedy this situation: We are committed to working tirelessly to defend your interests and to collaborate with the employer to resolve these problems. We will remain vigilant and active to ensure that your rights are respected and that your return to the office is under the best possible conditions.

We invite you to share your concerns and suggestions to enrich our collective approach. Your voice is essential in shaping an inclusive work environment that respects everyone's needs.

Raising awareness and clarifying the Duty to Take Accommodate (DTA)

We have identified an essential need to clarify and educate our members on the duty to accommodate. It is crucial that each member is fully aware

of his or her rights and of the resources available to ensure an equitable work environment adapted to his or her needs.

Lack of understanding of rights: It became apparent that many members are not sufficiently aware of their rights to accommodation. The resources provided, often in the form of hyperlinks via the intranet, are not always consulted or understood in their entirety. Most of the time, this happens when there is a failure to set aside the time needed to become fully informed.

Lack of coaching: We found that coaching by management is not systematically offered, leaving members without the necessary tools to navigate their respective situations. In addition, there is a tendency to hastily note in the file that "the employee has been met and has not requested accommodation", without considering the member's real understanding of his or her rights. We also note a certain resistance on the part of some members of management to members being accompanied by the union in discussions and the search for viable accommodation measures. However, it is clearly established that an employee can be accompanied throughout the process. We recommend that you always be accompanied by a union representative for any question relating to an OPMA.

Vulnerability and isolation: The most vulnerable members, often isolated, do not contact the union until it is too late for effective intervention. This situation is unacceptable and requires immediate action to ensure that all members can benefit from the required assistance in a timely manner.

Requests to the employer: We have formally requested that the employer provides reasonable time for members to read and understand the information regarding accommodation measures. It is essential that the employer commits to better informing members and providing the necessary accompaniment.

CEIU-Quebec commitments to remedy the situation:

Develop easily accessible resources: We will create or distribute simplified guides and summaries of accommodation rights.

Organize awareness-raising workshops: Sessions will be organized to help you understand and exercise your rights.

Ongoing support: A support system will be set up to answer your questions and assist you with accommodation measures.

We encourage you to take an active part in these initiatives. Do not hesitate to ask for help when you need it. Together we can ensure that every member is informed, supported and prepared to be successful in their work environment.

Letter of agreement on telework

The telecommuting agreement in our collective agreement stipulates that any employee may request to work from home. The employer must use her/his discretion wisely and assess each situation on a case-by-case basis.

We invite any employee wishing to work from home to make a formal request in writing, mentioning the agreement.

If the issue has not been assessed on a case-by-case basis and is refused simply by citing the Treasury Board Secretariat TBS directive, recourse is available. Contact your local representative or section to find out more.

Importance of full access to the statistical data needed for union-management collaboration

We would like to inform you of a situation that concerns us all. It requires our collective attention. It concerns access to vital statistical data and information. Some of this information has been withheld or incompletely provided by our employer, despite our repeated requests. This information is crucial for the successful cooperation between the union and the management and for the effective defense of our rights and interests.

Background and issues:

Unfulfilled requests: Our legitimate requests for accurate and complete data have been met with refusals or partial responses, hindering our ability to analyze and act in an informed manner. In this context, it is not possible to have in-depth discussions on issues or situations affecting you.

Impact on cooperation: This lack of transparency undermines the necessary trust and co-operation between the union and management and limits our potential to improve working conditions.

Consequences for members:

Affected decision-making: Without reliable or complete data, or the absence of information, our ability to make informed decisions and advocate for positive change is compromised.

Delayed union action: Lack of complete information can delay our initiatives and weaken our negotiating positions.

Action needed: We must act decisively to ensure that our demands are met.

Constructive dialogue: We will pursue our discussions with management about the importance of this data, and demand a clear protocol for its sharing until information sharing is mutually satisfactory.

Raising awareness and training: We will organize training sessions to raise members' awareness of the importance of this data and its use effectively.

Legal action: If necessary, we will consider taking legal action to ensure that the employer meets the obligations to cooperate and be transparent. This includes using Access to Information and Privacy requests available to Canadian citizens regarding public institutions. **Unfortunately, the cost of these requests will be subsidized by your union dues. \$5 per request. However, it will be a way for us to have access to the necessary information that has not been available in the meantime through union-management co-operation. The invocation of good faith in relation to the use of these means or methods has been seen as a threat rather than as a step towards a solution.

CEIU-Quebec commitment: We are committed to vigorously defending your right to information and to working tirelessly to establish a transparent and collaborative working relationship with our employer.

Issues relating to the refusal of requests for union leave

We would like to draw your attention to a matter of concern that affects the effectiveness of our union representation. It concerns the recurring difficulties that our union representatives face in obtaining permission to leave their desks to attend important meetings with management, to accompany members, to deal with grievances or to attend bilateral meetings.

This situation is even more frustrating given the existing protocol of engagement, which clearly defines the terms and conditions of union meetings in the Quebec region. Despite this, our representatives have been repeatedly denied access, which not only hampers their ability to defend the rights of our members, but also to engage in constructive dialogue with management.

Impact on union representation: The refusal of union leave requests has a direct impact on the quality of the representation we can offer our members. Without the active presence of our representatives during important discussions, employees' interests and concerns may not be fully considered.

Violation of the commitment protocol: Non-compliance with the established engagement protocol is a major source of concern. This protocol was designed, among other things, to ensure that union representatives could carry out their duties effectively and without hindrance, and to lay the foundations for healthy, respectful and effective collaboration. The current obstacles therefore pose a significant challenge to the exercise of our legitimate union activities.

To remedy this situation, we strongly recommend the following actions:

Procedure Review: An immediate review of union release application procedures to identify and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

Protocol compliance: Strict application of the commitment protocol, with corrective action taken in cases of non-compliance.

Dialogue with management: The organization of dedicated meetings with management to discuss these issues and find mutually beneficial solutions.

We are convinced that these measures will help strengthen our collaboration with management and ensure that our members' rights are respected and vigorously defended.

Advanced training program for union representatives

We have received numerous requests expressing the need for advanced training for our union representatives, particularly in the crucial area of grievance representation. We understand the importance of this request and are fully committed to providing our representatives with the tools and skills they need to effectively defend our members' rights.

Importance of advanced training: Representation, including grievances, member accompaniment, DTAs, racism and oppression, is a fundamental part of our union work. It requires a thorough understanding of labour laws, collective agreements, the CLC, the Human Rights Act and bargaining procedures. Advanced training in this area will enable our representatives to better navigate the dispute resolution process and ensure fair and competent representation.

In response to this request, CEIU-Quebec undertakes to:

Developing a training program: We will ensure that a comprehensive training program covering all aspects of union representation, including the latest practices and case law, is developed by CEIU. We are committed to finding a quality one if the development interval is not optimal.

Collaboration with experts: We don't hesitate to call on our CEIU national union representatives NUR or other labor law experts from the PSAC to provide specialized, up-to-date training sessions.

Access to learning resources: Learning resources will be made available online for ongoing, autonomous learning. They will be accessible by local sections through the tools at their disposal.

Practical sessions: Practical workshops will be organized to enable representatives to apply the knowledge acquired in real-life scenarios.

We are convinced that these advanced training courses will strengthen our union and improve the quality of our representation. We encourage you to support this initiative and actively participate in the training opportunities that will be offered.

Significant advances in communication with IRCC

We are delighted to share with you some encouraging news about our ongoing efforts to improve communication and collaboration with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). This represents an important step forward in our commitment to defend the interests of our members and strengthen our dialogue with the employer.

Establishing contacts with IRCC: Contacts have been established with IRCC to organize bilateral meetings, specifically at the level of employees in the Customer Support Operations division. These bilateral meetings are essential to discuss our members' concerns, expectations and proposals for improving working conditions.

Preparing a list of IRCC members: A list of IRCC members by designated location is currently being prepared. This initiative is crucial to ensure that each member is properly identified and represented. The employer has recognized the importance of this initiative and is keeping us informed of developments.

The contacts that have been established with the IRCC are promising for future relations and show a great deal of openness on their part. We are optimistic about the possibility of building a solid partnership that will benefit all members involved.

We are committed to continuing these efforts and will keep you informed of our progress. Your active participation and feedback are essential to the success of these initiatives.

We would like to thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to the positive impact that these developments will have on our work together.

As you can see, we don't have time to be bored. Fortunately, we can count on the members of our regional executive, on our active and committed

local executives among our 30 local sections, and on the support and advice of our regional union office staff. Our mission is simple: to do everything in our power to help you grow and develop in a pleasant, healthy and safe workplace.

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We invite you to continue to share your experiences and suggestions. If you haven't already, please start. The On Jase/Let's Talk evenings were rich in information. To understand the scale of the challenges you face and to develop effective solutions, your participation is essential.

Next report: October 2024

Your NVPs, Annik Beamish and Judith Côté, wish you a warm and happy summer.

In solidarity!