



John Abbott College Faculty Association

What to Expect for the 2020 Negotiations?

Roy Fu—President

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On several occasions recently, I have been asked by colleagues about the prospects of our next round of Collective Agreement negotiations, in light of the current CAQ provincial government. My response has been that governments do not vary greatly in their approaches to negotiations. In particular, governments, regardless of their partisan stripes, don't usually bend to the force of reason alone at the negotiation table, no matter how reasonable workers' demands are. Such behaviour can be largely explained by the fact that governments have the power of the law behind them, and often public opinion as well.

But all is not lost for workers. While the balance of power is structurally tilted against unions in the bargaining process, unions can, and



JACFA at a Mobilization March, Downtown Montreal, 2015

have at times, shifted the balance through strong mobilization. Strong mobilization can demonstrate syndical resolve in face of governmental intransigence, and can also sway public opinion. Hence, in assessing our negotiation prospects, instead of second-guessing possible government motives and approaches, our energies would be better spent by concentrating our attention on union mobilization.

In view of this analysis, the JACFA Executive has

been active in laying the groundwork for a strong mobilization, as we prepare for the upcoming 12 to 18 months of consultation and negotiations, both locally and at the federation level.

Locally, the first step of our mobilization plan was to maximize participation during the consultations for our demands. The rationale is that greater participation during the consultation stage will result in greater engagement from members, due to a better

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Labour Relations Update

JACFA Suggests Clarification on Grade Review Procedure to College

Roy Fu

Recently the College approached JACFA to seek clarification on the College Final Grade Review Procedure ([found here](#)), in particular, the part pertaining to the appeals process. On the latter, the document states:

“The student has the right to appeal the decision regarding the grade review to the Academic Dean. In such a case the Academic Dean will only review whether the procedure has been followed properly”

There is however, no indication in the procedure on what the Academic Dean should do if they rule in favour of the appeal. JACFA Executive suggested to the College that if the Dean finds that a procedure was violated, s/he should ask that the committee to reconvene and perform the grade review again.

The Collective Agreement itself, in articles 4-1.10 and 8-1.02, refers to the Grade Review Committee but does not provide practical guideline on its functioning.

College Agrees to Limit Number of Postings for Short-Term Leaves

Ethan Mombourquette

Over the past year, several departments have expressed some frustration about the hiring process for short-term, fixed-duration leaves, such as paternity leaves. In some cases, after unsuccessful attempts at finding a suitable candidate, the College sought to reconvene the committee to make successive attempts to hire, even though there were already teachers in place to cover the courses by suppléance, and even though it was likely that by the time any hiring process was finished, the leave would nearly be finished.

The issue was addressed at a meeting of the Labour Relations Committee (CRT) on January 30, where the College agreed that in such cases, if a suitable substitute teacher could not be found after one posting, the College would allow the leave to be covered by suppléance.

JACFA seeks Changes to Student Academic Complaints Procedure

Tanya Rowell-Katzemba

In Fall 2018, the JACFA Executive approached the College administration to voice its concerns about the Student Academic Complaints Procedure. Two particular areas in the current procedure were identified as problematic, and suggestions were made to make the process fairer and more transparent for teachers. The first was the lack of designated time limit in which investigations of student complaints must be completed. JACFA asked the College to include a time limit so that investigations of a complaint may not—in theory, at least—continue in perpetuity. We also asked that the procedure include written notice to the teacher when they are the subject of a complaint, so that the teacher may have some idea of what to expect when they are asked to attend a meeting to discuss the issue with their Dean. The College was receptive to our proposed changes, and we are awaiting a final draft.

The Faculty Lounge: A History

Stephen Bryce– Vice president Internal

Why are faculty so attached to the Faculty Lounge in H-101?

In part because getting one at all was the result of a long struggle, and because the Faculty Association invested in it, both in terms of time and money.

Until 1990, there was no Faculty Lounge at John Abbott. Social events took place in a variety of locations on campus such as Casgrain Student Lounge, the Stewart Hall Board Room (home of “Faculty Fridays” and Thursday “Happy Hours” organized by JACFA and its Social Committee), and the cafeteria. However, none of these locations allowed food to be prepared and served, and social events had to take a back seat to the rooms’ other purposes.

For many years, teachers asked the College to make a lounge for the staff that would be available for both drop-in and organized events. The Faculty Association passed a resolution calling for a lounge to be created on March 15, 1989. The College’s response was that due to space constraints, this was not possible; and in any

case, it would only be interested in a “staff lounge” according to outgoing Director-General Luc Henrico.

Finally, in 1989, Academic Council’s Teaching and Learning Environments Committee, which played a much greater role at that time in mediating the different space needs across the College, was able to find alternate space for the Research and Development office, the Learning Center and “bullpen” offices for new teachers when there was no room in their department. This subsequently made room for a new lounge in H-101. The College accepted the proposal, but balked at the estimated \$20 000 cost of renovating the space with new lighting and a kitchen, saying that they did not have the funds available in that year’s budget. When the other employee associations declined to contribute financially, JACFA agreed with the new Director-General, Gerry Brown, to lend the College \$10 000 until the next year and to pay for the furniture for the new “Faculty Lounge”. In the JACFA General Assembly minutes, Jim Vanstone expressed the hope that this might “signal a new era at



Karen Kaderavek Performing in the Lounge in 2004

the College. Brown really listened!”

The renovations were completed early in the Winter 1990 semester and JACFA’s crack interior design team of Larry Weller and Jim Leeke leapt into action. They consulted with suppliers on fire-resistant upholstery, chairs, love seats and coffee tables to seat 26 people, ordered kitchen appliances, argued with the College over paint colours, decided to add the





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lighting to illuminate the art on the walls, and purchased a sound system for the room. The JACFA General Assembly unanimously voted them a budget of \$25 000 (in addition to the loan) on February 22, 1990.

The lounge opened on Monday, April 9 with free coffee and muffins served all day.

At the beginning, the use of the lounge was an issue to iron out. The College had agreed that the new Faculty Lounge would be administrated by JACFA as long as the space was available to all staff, to which JACFA readily agreed. Events

sponsored by many departments for all were organized: Chemistry organized a lentil soup lunch; Nutrition and Dental had a Halloween gathering with mulled wine and other treats (and, of course, dental floss), and the Business Department organized an annual “big breakfast” that filled the east end of Herzberg with bacon and sausage smoke. Beer and chips in the Lounge were a fixture after JACFA’s evening General Assemblies.

However, some faculty and staff complained about making their way “all the way” to the new lounge only to find it booked for departmental or other events. They called for bookings in the lounge to be restricted to evenings and

weekends. A petition signed by 21 Nursing teachers called for no “restricted” events at lunchtime so that all teachers might eat there. A Lounge Use policy was debated and adopted by the JACFA General Assembly, giving the Executive the authority to restrict the number of weekly bookings to ensure that the drop-in function was preserved.

But, as it was pointed out, if no reservations were to be allowed, JACFA would be prevented from organizing events as well as departments. Eventually, a clear “no meetings” rule was adopted and enforced— the lounge was to be only for social event (nothing with an agenda!).

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JACFA Teams up with Other Unions to Secure Future of Faculty/Staff Lounge

[Tanya Rowell Katzembera and Roy Fu](#)

In the spring of 2017, the College took over the Lounge to use as a temporary space for use by the College Library, during the renovations to the latter’s permanent space. JACFA was promised the return of the space, renovated, once the Library renovations were complete.

In discussions last semester about the future of the Lounge, the College floated the idea of moving the Lounge to SH-104, the location of the boardroom. In response, the JACFA Executive consulted the General Assembly and reached out to the other unions on campus, namely the support staff union (JACASPA) and

the professional union (JACPA).

The three unions subsequently came up with a common position in negotiating with the College. In particular, we asked that the tradition of employee management of the Lounge be maintained, and we said that any new proposed location for the Lounge should not represent a decline from what we have in the current space, which is well-lit, well located social space of a decent size to hold social events.

Very recently, the three unions and the College came to an agreement that the former Lounge space in H-101 will be returned and renovated once the Library renovation is complete. It will be renovated and the College will create an “outdoor classroom”/ patio space adjacent to the Lounge, with access from the Lounge kitchen.

Syndical Tool–Kit: Important Changes are Coming to our Public Sector Pension Plan

Kristina Swiercz— Secretary



For some members, retirement is coming soon, while for others it's a distant dream. Nevertheless, it's important for all members to know that there are changes in our public sector workers pension plan coming in both 2019 and 2020.

Effective July 1, 2019, the first set of changes pertain to the eligibility criteria for an immediate pension without reduction, which means retiring and claiming your pension without penalty. Currently, there are two ways that one can retire without penalty to one's pension benefits:

1. Accumulate 35 eligible years of service, or
2. Reach 60 years of age.

As of July 1, 2019, those who have accumulated 35 eligible years of service will still be able to retire without pension penalty. However, for those who do not have 35 years of service, they will have to wait until the age of 61 before they can retire without penalty. The only exception to the latter rule will be if someone is 60 years old and has accumulat-

ed 30 or more eligible years of service. (It is important to note that "eligible years of service" does not necessarily mean 35 years of full-time service. If someone works even one day in a calendar year, they accumulate one eligible year of service for the purpose of pension calculations. In other words, a member may have 35 years of service of eligibility but has not actually worked 35 years full time.)

The second major change

- As of July 1, 2019 those who do not have 35 years of service will have to wait until the age of 61 before they can retire without penalty.

- As of July 1, 2020 the new penalty rate will be 0.5% per month, up to 6% per year.

coming to our pension rules will take effect on July 1, 2020; it involves an increase to the pension penalty for those who retire without meeting the above criteria. The new penalty rate will be 0.5% per month, up to 6% per year. Currently it is

0.33% per month, up to 4% per year. This means that a retiree's pension will be permanently reduced by the said percentages for each month/year they fall short of the minimum age or years of eligible service.

Finally, all information requests and documentation related to pensions will no longer bear the names *Commission administrative des régimes de retraite et d'assurances* (CARRA), *Régime de retraite des employés du gouvernement et des organismes publics* (RREGOP), or *Régime de rentes du Québec* (RRQ). Instead, all such communication will be under *Retraite Québec*, the new name of the agency handling our pensions.

Retirement planning can be overwhelming and seem complicated but there are two members of JACFA who are skilled in helping you through the process. Alexander Panassenko and myself both have unique tools and training regarding our pension plan and can be reached at jacfa@johnabbott.qc.ca for an appointment.



Syndical Tool–Kit:

JACFA to Produce Guide for Hiring Committees

Ethan Mombourquette– Director

The Faculty Collective Agreement defines the composition and mandate of the hiring committee in article 4-4.00. This article has been instrumental in allowing teachers to select their own colleagues, and to build departments with consistent standards and values over time. But the article has limits. In particular, it is silent on the actual procedures that the committee should follow in making a selection.

Over the past few years, the College has been taking a more prescriptive role in the hiring process than it has done historically. As a result, the JACFA Executive has encountered an upsurge in questions from our members about the role of the hiring committee and the hiring process in general. Some of

the common questions we have received include:

- What are the committee's responsibilities with respect to the confidentiality of the candidates' information?
- Who is responsible for calling candidates and setting interview times?
- What happens if one of the members of the committee is in a conflict of interest?
- What do the faculty members of the committee do if they disagree with the administrator members?
- What happens if no candidate is recommended by the hiring committee?

and many, many more.

In an attempt to address some of these common questions and concerns, The JACFA Executive will be producing a guide for hiring committees in the coming months.

Leading up to its production, we wanted to reach out to our members and ask: **are there any questions that have arisen in your experience on a hiring committee that you think should be addressed in this guide?** If so, please send your questions to: jacfa@johnabbott.qc.ca.

The current goal is to have the guide produced in time for Fall 2019.

Stay tuned!

Attention: Ontario Residents

Did you know that it's possible to have your payroll deductions lowered to reflect the lower income tax rates you pay as an Ontario resident? This way you won't have to wait until tax time to receive these benefits. For more information on the procedure to reduce your deductions, contact the JACFA Executive at: jacfa@johnabbott.qc.ca

What to Expect for the 2020 Negotiations

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understanding and ownership of the process; this would subsequently translate into greater resolve in defending our demands through action, should it become necessary. Our plan included bringing the consultation to departmental meetings, activating the Mobilization Committee, surveying our members online, and encouraging departments and groups to bring forth motions at the General Assembly. The fruits of our efforts subsequently became apparent at the General Assembly on March 25 where we had a strong turnout and 4 motions were adopted, all of which originated from our members.

At the federation level, JACFA representatives have been actively pushing for the establishment of more democratic processes and struc-

tures during the negotiations. The latter is a perennial challenge because of the various alliances that our federation forms, both at the central and sectoral tables (see p.8 for details). An important facet of the challenge involves the establishment of an effective and democratic decisional process at the central table, to ensure that key decisions, such as prolongation of strikes or acceptance of agreement in principle, reflect the will of the rank-and-file members. Difficulties arise in this regard in part due to the nature and size of our alliances at the central table, where our union federation, FNEEQ, is negotiating alongside multiple federations from different employment sectors both within the CSN (consisting of 150 000 workers), and within the broader Common Front alliance (involving 500 000 workers) where each federation and alliance has its own

decisional structure. Another reason for this challenge is the top-down bureaucratic decision-making culture that has existed at CSN, something that the CSN leadership have vowed to change this time around.

Of course, there is a slight chance that this government will respond to reason at the negotiation table, and we will not have to resort to a push-back. After all, as we have learned from our local labour relations experience, negotiations always turn out better for everyone, when both parties come to the table in good faith, willing to listen, respond to concerns of other side, reason, and compromise. We hope the government will take this tact in the upcoming round of negotiations. In case they don't, we will, in the least, be prepared.

The Faculty Lounge: A History

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The walls of Faculty Lounge were frequently used to display the art of faculty, staff and local community artists. Sometimes the art was controversial. One time, a Mathematics teacher complained to the JACFA Executive that he had repeatedly found some of his

paintings in the Lounge turned around to face the wall. JACFA sponsored vernissages two or more times each semester. Live music was also featured. The Lounge was always packed when "Music and Smoked Meat" evenings were held, whether for the Celtic rock of Kirk MacGeachy (Geology) and his band Orealis or the

cello of Karen Kaderavek (H/P/R).

At the College's 40th anniversary "Welcome Back Breakfast", Gerry Brown singled out the establishment of the Faculty Lounge as one of his major achievements as DG. This applies to the Faculty Association as well.



External Updates

FNEEQ Seek Alliances at Central and Sectoral Tables in Negotiations

Roy Fu

Much as in previous rounds, in this upcoming round of negotiations our union federation, FNEEQ, is seeking alliances with other union federations at both the central negotiation table and the sectoral one. At the central table, where salaries, pensions and parental rights are addressed, FNEEQ will be negotiating with other CSN public-sector unions, namely, the *Fédération de la santé et de la services sociaux* (FSSS), the *Fédération des professionnelles* (FP), and the *Fédération des employés et employées de service publique* (FEESP). The CSN federations are also currently pursuing a broader “Common Front” alli-

ance with other union centrals, such as the *Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec* (FTQ). This alliance would be similar to the one that was formed during the 2015 negotiations, which assembled more than 500 000 public sector workers. Locally, a Common Front alliance would facilitate greater collaboration in mobilization, as both John Abbott support staff and professional unions are part of non CSN-affiliated unions.

At the sectoral level, where working conditions specific to CEGEP teachers are negotiated, FNEEQ is seeking to enter into

a formal alliance with FEC-CSQ, the other CEGEP teacher federation. In the past, the kinds of collaboration between the two federations have varied from formal alliances, where the two federations form a joint negotiation committee, to less formal arrangements, where the two federations negotiate separately but establish collaboration protocols. The latest update on this front is that, in spite of a successful formal alliance in 2015, the two federations have run into some difficulties in talks. Points of contention include the choice of a common spokesperson, and a protocol related to union raiding.

FNEEQ Takes Strong Position in Defense of Minority Rights, Against False Religious Neutrality Debate around Bill 21

Roy Fu

At a special Federal Council meeting in February, FNEEQ adopted a motion that opposed any prohibition of reli-

gious symbols worn by public employees, without exceptions. This position was taken in anticipation of the CAQ government’s legislation on the so-called “religious neutrality” debate, which was tabled on March 28, 2019.

The CSN took a similar position in December 2018; only its position slightly differed from FNEEQ’s, leaving some

room for exemptions and interpretation. In particular, CSN opposes the prohibition of religious symbols by public employees, except for purposes of



Protesters in Downtown Montreal March Against Bill 21, April 7, 2019



Protesters in Downtown Montreal March Against Bill 21, April 7, 2019

identification, security, and communication.

FNEEQ's current position is an important departure from the one it took during the Parti Québécois government's Charter of Values debate in 2013.

At that time, the federation took a position that supported the prohibition of religious signs for certain categories of employees, including police officers, judges, and public prosecutors. On the question of denial of services for those

with face coverings for religious reasons, in 2013, FNEEQ supported it. In its current position it stipulate that any regulation must be based on the evaluation of real obstacles to the provision of services.

Over the past two years or so, since the adoption of the previous Liberal government's Law 62, JACFA representatives have played an active role in steering the debate at FNEEQ away from one about "religious neutrality" and

"secularism" and toward one about defending equal rights for all.



Protesters in Downtown Montreal March Against Bill 21, April 7, 2019

Mobilization Update

2019 Edition of JACFA Mobilization Committee Launched

Tanya Rowell-Katzemba, JACFA executive responsible for mobilization

As the preparations for Collective Agreement negotiations get under way, The JACFA Mobilization Committee has once again been convened, with a mandate to assist the JACFA executive in cultivating our colleagues' engagement with the negotiations. At its first meeting, the committee hit the ground running; its first project was to mobilize as many members as possible to attend the March 25th General Assembly, where the main item was to make recommendations that will help shape FNEEQ– CSN demands for our next Collective Agreement.

Throughout the course of negotiations, the Mobilization Committee will meet to plan and exe-

cute mobilization events and strategies. If you are interested in joining this committee, there are spaces open. Please contact JACFA.



Mobilization Committee Members (from left): Julien Morency-Laflamme, Jean-Marc Beausoleil, Roy Fu, Tanya Rowell-Katzemba, Roxane Millette, Charbel Nassif



Opinion:

We Need Equal Pay for Equal Work in Continuing Education

Nicole de Hoop & Stephanie Myers– English and Continuing Education Department

As Non-Permanent Continuing Education instructors, we would like to advocate for a renegotiation of the two-tiered payment method between Continuing Education and Day Division in 2020 FNEEQ Collective Agreement. The current two-tiered system of hourly pay versus CI creates divisiveness within departments and colleges, as well as devaluing both the Continuing Education staff and the students.

As a Continuing Education instructor being paid an hourly wage, one is not compensated for the copious work completed outside of classroom, including planning and marking. Marking final exams, a requirement in our department, requires 10 hours for each class of students at minimum, and often more. Alongside these duties that are required, one is also not compensated for regular department and all-school faculty activities. Department meetings and other important events become a difficult question of unpaid labour for precarious workers. Either these events are attended during

one's own free time, outside of teaching hours and between marking and planning, or they are foregone altogether. While Continuing Education instructors are making this difficult choice, decisions are being made at these meetings that are shaping one's classes, schedules, and one's own department's future. Continuing Education staff that are already separated by schedules and pay opportunities are also further separated from the majority of the department through absence at these crucial junctures.

This separation of Continuing Education from the rest of the faculty contributes to the devaluing of the work done by Continuing Education instructors. By the creation and maintenance of this salary gap, instructors are encouraged to view Continuing Education as inherently lesser than Day division, something to be resented and cast off at the first available opportunity. For DEC program courses, almost all Continuing Education courses are identical to Day Division, as they are interchangeable regarding course codes and curricula; yet they are devalued in

the eyes of the province, the schools, and the faculty by the practice of unequal pay for equal work.

“Continuing Education students often need more support and one-on-one office hours to improve, and yet instructors are not provided any in contracts”

The unequal treatment of Continuing Education and Day Division does not end with faculty. As instructors who are qualified to teach during the day are encouraged to cast off Continuing Education for Day work, students are left behind. Continuing Education students often need more support and one-on-one office hours to improve, and yet instructors are not provided any in contracts. These are the college's most vulnerable students, and their instructors are not paid for any

additional support time that these students require. Instructors provide these supports because they are professionals that value their work, and the students that they work with, but this work is not being recognized by the College. Continuing Education instructors eventually feel compelled to seek more valued work out of financial necessity.

We are both experienced educators, with years of experi-

ence managing classrooms, teaching at risk youth, and adapting for ESL and other classroom needs. Students like those in Continuing Education are the students that we love to teach, and would gladly choose above all others.

However the existing two-tier system not only devalues our work in the eyes of our colleagues and our employer, it makes it impossible for us to provide for these students while adequately providing for

ourselves.

These students deserve better. They deserve devoted and enthusiastic instructors, which can only happen when these instructors are available, valued, and fairly compensated, and that are recognized for their equal education, equal experience, and equal work.

Welcome! Thank you!

The JACFA Executive would like to welcome all of our new colleagues who joined the faculty recently, and to thank retirees for many years of their services.

Newly hired:

- Kaysie Ching Chong, Nursing
- Damian Clarke, Biology
- Maryse Dagenais, Biology
- Tania Di Tota, Nursing
- Manuela Girotti, Mathematics
- Matthew Hachey, Chemistry
- Christopher Hughes, Biology
- Leonardo Juverdianu, Bio-Pharma
- Robert Miller, Dental Hygiene
- Rossio Motta-Ochoa, H/P/R
- Rajwinder Padda, Nursing
- Alexandre Pharand, Police Technology
- Ebbiny Price, Dental Hygiene
- Mathieu Provencher, Economics
- Hicham Tiflati, H/P/R

- Evelyne Trudel, Nursing
- Jobie Weetaluktuk, Native Languages
- Sarah Worndle, Geology

Retiring at the end of Winter 2019:

- Saba Ahmad, Mathematics
- Nancy Carosiello, Mathematics
- Susan Gillis, English
- Mike Homsy, Physical Education
- Gary Mc Hugh, Paramedic Care
- Karl Raudsepp, Theatre & Music



From Right to Left: New(er) Teachers Shanna Kousaie and Rahul Ranjan at a JACFA Orientation session with members of Executive



Opinion:

Physical Education Teachers Need a Fairer Way of Calculating their Workload

Joel Fitleberg and Karen Oljemark -Physical Education

In anticipation for the next round of Collective Agreement negotiations, there is a province-wide effort amongst Physical Education teachers to redress the inequities in the current calculation formula for their discipline.

One of the biggest issues faced by CEGEP students and teachers alike is time: time to learn, time to teach, time to get all those assignments done, and time to get all those competencies evaluated. Depending on their discipline, a typical CEGEP teacher is responsible for teaching between 120 and 160 students, with 12 to 16 classroom hours per week each semester. As many of us experience, these conditions often make it challenging for teachers to properly monitor, assess, provide feedback, and even get to know each student in our classrooms.

The teaching workload pressure are ever more acute for Physical Education (PE) teachers in the CEGEP network. It might come as a surprise to some that, on average, a PE teacher is responsible for teaching not 160, but more than 200 students per semester under similar conditions as their colleagues in other disciplines. These include delivering similar classroom hours (7 to 8 sections of 2-hour classes per week) with up to 3 preparations, as well as administrating and evaluating about 8 to 10 written assessment items per student per course.

This situation dates back to the CEGEP reform of the early 1990s, when the impact of the CEGEP system's move to competency-based teaching and learning was never adequately factored into this discipline's workload formula.

Prior to the reforms, the main focus of PE classes was to keep students moving, and teach some basic nutrition concepts. Students were evaluated mainly on participation, and were tested on their knowledge of activity, such as the rules and basic techniques of the given activity. Since the reforms, the curriculum and corresponding evaluations have significantly shifted to more health and wellness concepts, such as principles of training, stress management, time management, importance of sleep, managing risky behaviours, etc. Each of these latter concepts and /or competencies are usually evaluated in separate assignments. This change significantly increased the amount of correcting time for PE teachers, but was never acknowledged in the CI calculation.

In anticipation of the next

round of Collective Agreement negotiations, there is a province-wide effort amongst PE teachers to redress the inequities in the current calculation formula for their discipline. One of the solutions being proposed is to revise the CI formula so that it also takes into consideration the NES (total number of students taught per week) for teachers who deliver courses with an in-class ponderation of less than 3 hours (weekly class contact time). Currently, NES is only calculated for those with 3 hours or greater. As most Physical Education courses have an in-class ponderation of 2 hours, such a change would bring our workload more in line with that of our colleagues in other disciplines.

We do far more written evaluation work than we are given credit for, and we simply would like this to be reflected more accurately and fairly in how our workload is calculated.

Thank you for listening, and we hope that we can count on your support as we move forward with this issue so we can do a better job for our students.

Opinion:

It's About Investing in Our Values and the Values of Our Investments!

Kelly McKinney -Humanities/Philosophy/Religion and Roxane Millette -Biology

It is hard to believe that negotiations for another collective agreement are right around the corner. One central issue during this period is the management of our pension fund currently done by *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec* (CDPQ), a state-run investor responsible for several public pension funds and insurance programs in the province. While the debate usually revolves around benefits, we would like to focus our comments on how our pension fund is invested.

At the March 25 JACFA General Assembly, representatives of John Abbott's Imagine Change's Political Working Group proposed a motion that asks the Caisse to completely divest from the fossil fuel economy within three years. Here, we would like to explain the reasons why.

As many of you know, according to the alarming October 2018 [report](#) issued by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), if we maintain our current CO₂ economy and fossil fuel (gas, oil, and coal) extraction levels, we will soon exceed the 1.5°C global warming threshold limit. Exceeding 1.5°C will result in irreversible, catastrophic losses and devastat-

tating disruptions to all life on our planet. These include:

- More intense heatwaves, droughts, floods, storms, and wildfires
- Altered infectious disease patterns— for example, increased water borne illnesses because of rising sea levels and flooding, and diseases spread by expanding populations of mosquitos and ticks
- Collapse of global agriculture and food systems and other supportive ecosystems (including massive extinctions)
- Population displacement— massive migrations
- Increased armed conflicts and violence over depleted resources, such as water, fertile land and fisheries
- World economic instability and volatile markets

Given the state of emergency, we must reduce CO₂ emissions by 45% in the next ten years. However, the most dramatic changes must occur in the next few years. This requires radical systemic transformation of the current system away from fossil fuel extraction and other modes of CO₂ consumption. According to the Columbia University Earth Institute [Center on Sustainable Investments](#), to meet CO₂ targets we must

keep at least 80% of current fuel reserves in the ground. One way to encourage this shift is to divest our pension investments away from the fossil fuel economy.

In the past, ecological arguments for fossil fuel divestment were stronger than financial ones. However, that is no longer the case. Last Friday, the group *Sortons la Caisse du Carbone*, with the support of David Suzuki Foundation and Greenpeace, published a [report](#) based on their analysis of the CDPQ's hydrocarbon investments from 2011 to 2018. *Sortons la Caisse du Carbone* found that the CDPQ's investments in major oil and gas companies have lost 4.3%, or \$3 billion in value during that time period. If those funds had been invested in other sectors with comparable indices, CDPQ could have enjoyed returns of \$7.8 billion to \$10.8 billion. *Sortons la Caisse du Carbone* is calling for immediate and total fossil fuel divestment to prevent greater losses to our savings.

As alternative energy sources are becoming cheaper, more profitable, and the demand for them and related service and products have been growing, continued financial investment



in fossil fuels becomes more risky. These trends may account for the losses in value of CDPQ fossil fuel investments identified by *Sortons la Caisse du Carbone*. Moreover, in a worst financial-case scenario, the fossil related stocks and bonds in our pension funds could become what are called stranded assets, becoming worthless when the carbon bubble bursts.

Although the CDPQ has launched a climate change investment [strategy](#) and plan, the total value of its investments in fossil fuels has increased from \$12.4 billion to \$18.5 billion since the 2015 Paris Accord. Currently, 6.2% or \$18.5 billion of CDPQ investments are financing the construction of pipelines and the expansion of tar sands.

The demand to divest in three years is not unreasonable, given that several other major pension funds already have or are in the process of divesting. [New York City](#), which has nearly \$5 billion USD in securities from 190 fossil fuel companies across five different pension funds, plans to completely divest by 2023. Further, according to a 2018 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) article, “The latest figures released by nongovernmental organization DivestInvest suggest that, so far, over 780 organizations and nearly 60 000 individuals have made [commitments worth \\$6 trillion](#) USD to divest from fossil fuels and invest in climate solutions such as renewable energy.” Even the World Bank will halt investing in gas and oil exploration after this year.

Our savings (remember, this is our money, not the government’s) must support the transition towards renewable energy and the green economy.

For more information on CDPQ investment plan, see <http://sortonslacaisseducarbon.org>

For more information on Imagine Change’s growing movement at JAC, contact Kelly McKinney or Christian Levesque, Imagine Change’s Winter 2019 Coordinator.

Happy Spring From Sucrerie De La Montagne!



More than 170 people, teachers and their family members, joined JACFA’s Sugaring Off in March.

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