

EXCERPTS FROM THE AUTUMN 2016



LE MAGAZINE DE L'ASSOCIATION DES RETRAITÉES ET RETRAITÉS DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DES AUTRES SERVICES PUBLICS DU QUÉBEC

QUOI de *neuf*

DOSSIER

LA MUSIQUE N'A PAS D'ÂGE



CONGRÈS

Le 46^e Congrès de l'AREQ arrive à grands pas!



VERT DEMAIN

Le Forum social mondial 2016



ACTION SOCIOPOLITIQUE

Le temps arrangera-t-il les choses?



ASSURANCES

Les nouveaux tarifs de la RAMQ

AUTOMNE 2016

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Pierre-Paul Côté

President

A FULL FALL AGENDA

When you read this article, the Executive Council will have already traveled many kilometres and met hundreds of members in preparation for the June 2017 Congress. This pre-congress tour by the Executive Council seeks to determine whether the orientations approved at the last Congress were still pertinent or whether they required modification.

Based on the results of the Working Group on Congress Content's work and supported by the Board of Directors, the members of the Executive Council are using their abilities to provide those present with a rich and interesting experience. It is important to note that the professional support from the AREQ resources team and its mobilization around this project are reassuring to all elected officials.

Finding the proper balance

We face the common challenge of finding the proper balance between our personal desires and our collective needs, all the while considering that the realization of these objectives will be the responsibility of elected officials and volunteers at the sectoral, regional, and national levels.

Financial security and all matters related to health and social services have been and will continue to be on our Association's radar.

As well, we notice that, in the wake of our stands on issues and the dissemination of numerous news releases, we are now invited to participate in various press conferences along with other players from civil society. Moreover, interviews in the press and on air have allowed AREQ to become better known as an association for the defence of the rights of retirees and seniors.

The continuation of our mandates

The concentration of our efforts and energies in the preparation of the triennial congress that will bring together over 600 members in no way means that we will neglect our other mandates. Indeed, meetings of various national committees and regional representatives are also scheduled in this third year of our triennial. Under the guidance of members of the Executive Council and an AREQ councillor, the action plans drawn up at the start of the triennial will be completed in the imparted time.

Our participation in various CSQ bodies as well as our meetings with other associations of retirees and seniors will exhaust the time granted us, as far as we can tell.

Keeping an eye on current events

Considering that current affairs often present us with unexpected surprises, we will keep a sharp eye on developments related to the AREQ mission. This mission consists in the promotion and defence of the interests and the cultural, social, and economic rights of our members and seniors, and to contribute to the creation of an egalitarian, democratic, unified, and pacifist society.

I wish you all a beautiful autumn full of amazing colours and a joy of living equal to your expectations.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

Dominic Provost

Communications Advisor

YOUR ASSOCIATION TAKES ACTION, SPEAKS ITS MIND AND MAKES DEMANDS.

Here is a summary of AREQ's main public initiatives since the last issue of *Quoi de neuf*.

July 3, 2016

AREQ recognizes World Plastic Bag Free Day

AREQ took advantage of World Plastic Bag Free Day, July 3, to reiterate its position and announce the actions taken to reduce the use of plastic bags.

Remember that, in April, AREQ officially declared itself in favour of the abolition of single-use plastic bags distributed in businesses throughout the province. In addition, AREQ members are invited to organize a « without my plastic bag » action in November as a personal gesture, but also to send a message to our deciders.

“Every year, Quebec consumes over a billion single-use plastic bags. This is enormous. We must take concrete action to eliminate their use. This is the reason we advocate for a reduction at source,” added the 2nd vice president and political official for the environment and sustainable development at AREQ, Ms. Claire Bélanger.

June 23, 2016

Ageism during the census

AREQ has denounced what appears to be ageism within the framework of the federal government census toward people in residential facilities.

Indeed, AREQ has learned that seniors living in private residential facilities did not receive census forms. The documents were instead sent to residence administrators, many of whom simply filled out the forms using the information available in residents' file even though they, the residents, were quite lucid and perfectly able to fulfil their duties.

“Many seniors were surprised and angry about not having received the form. They consider important performing their civic duty and completing the form. It is a duty, but also a right to do so ourselves. Some people may require assistance to do so, but it most certainly isn't the case for most residents of care facilities. Also, there is no justification for completing the form and not advising the resident. As far as we are concerned, it is a lack of respect and a demonstration of ageism,” declared AREQ President, Pierre-Paul Côté.

AREQ also wondered why only short census forms were sent to residential facilities. The long (detailed) form contains many questions that could be of interest to seniors.

Therefore, the Association asked Statistics Canada to revise its practices and directives by sending all communications directly to the residents of private care facilities for seniors.

June 15, 2016

Improvements to public pension plans

A few days ahead of the meeting of federal and provincial finance ministers regarding the improvement of public pension plans, the *Observatoire de la retraite* and its partners have called on the Government to opt for a formula that would substantially improve the financial coverage of retirees. “The Canadian Finance Minister, the Honourable Bill Morneau, as well as all the provinces recognize the need for improving the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan if we want to avoid impoverishing future cohorts of retirees,” declared Mr. François L’Italien, *Observatoire de la retraite* co-ordinator.

As for the AREQ president, he stated “seniors are hit directly by fees increases of all kinds. If we wish to see them contribute to society, we must shelter them from poverty. Improving public pension plans would be an obvious solution.”

June 3, 2016

Protecting the rights of senior tenants

Four of the major associations of seniors and retirees, including AREQ, joined together to praise the work begun in 2015 by the MNA for Gouin, Ms. Françoise David, and the collaboration of the Quebec Government regarding the rights of senior tenants. The adoption of Bill 492, titled *An Act to amend the Civil Code to protect seniors’ rights as lessees*, represents a considerable advancement for low-income seniors. This bill modifies the conditions for the repossession of an apartment and eviction outlined in the Civil Code to better protect the rights of seniors.

May 24, 2016

CROP POLL: Trivialisation of the circumstances of seniors

In a memorandum tabled before the Government in the wake of the action plan on abuse 2017-2022, AREQ presented worrisome figures on ageism and abuse. Indeed, according to a CROP poll conducted in March 2016 on behalf of AREQ, 82% of the Association’s members claim to sometimes be or often be victims of ageism. Moreover, three quarters of those asked believe that we are now witnessing a trivialization of the lot reserved for seniors in our society. They further believe the government should prioritize the launch of a new awareness-raising campaign against ageism and the recognition of the contribution of seniors in society.

It should also be noted that the memorandum tabled by AREQ before the Government contained 12 recommendations to better fight abuse in all aspects of life, either at home or in institutions.

May 3, 2016

Ancillary costs: support for a class action suit

AREQ formally supported the legal action launched by the FADOQ network in federal court to see the *Canada Health Act* applied and to put an end to ancillary costs in Quebec.

This undertaking is part of continuing actions taken by various groups, since August 2014, to stop medical clinics from over-invoicing. AREQ has denounced this practice many times along with doctors, health workers’ associations, seniors’ associations, as well as patients’ and citizens’ defence groups.

“For almost two years now, we have repeatedly called on Minister Barrette to ban over-billing by doctors in medical clinics. He has not only ignored our calls, but gone on to adopt a law legalizing these ancillary fees claiming that people are ready to accept them, which is totally

false. The federal minister too has been slow to react. The battle now moves to the courts,” states Pierre-Paul Côté.

April 26, 2016

Coalition for the maintenance of the health and welfare commissioner

AREQ has joined the *Coalition pour le maintien du Commissaire à la santé et au bien-être* (Coalition for the maintenance of the health and welfare commissioner). The members of this commission, which sees itself as non-partisan and comprising people from all walks of life, believe that abolishing this position would represent a great step backwards as regards our public services and have joined together to denounce the move.

Thus, AREQ noted that, over the past 10 years, the commissioner published numerous independent reports, most notably regarding the quality of seniors’ residences and home care. “Investments in home care, for example, are the subject of fine speeches, but it is difficult to see if the funds promised are in fact delivered and to have a clear picture of the situation. We therefore need the neutral and independent perspective of the commissioner, and it is difficult to see how the minister of health could make an objective evaluation and critique of its own work,” stated Ms. Ginette Plamondon, AREQ adviser for socio-political action and women’s affairs.

CONGRESS

Lise Legault

General director

AREQ 46th CONGRESS IS FAST APPROACHING

It is under the theme *Conviction Commitment Cohesion* that some 630 delegates will gather in Lévis from May 29 to June 1, 2017. Because the mission of AREQ primarily consists in defending the rights of seniors, members involved at all levels of the Association are necessarily people convinced, committed and coherent in their actions.

A CROP survey conducted from February 15 to March 2, 2016, with a thousand of our members validated our orientations established in June 2014. People who will make up the delegations were elected at sectorial general assemblies (SGA) in spring 2016. The SGA of spring 2017 will confirm these delegations according to the number of members at December 31, 2016, [art. 4.01a), Statutes and Bylaws]. Between now and the Congress, they will participate in various meetings, exchanges, and discussions. They will have the opportunity to give their views on the orientations established by the Association at the Congress. Some have already done so.

The Executive Council tour of the regions will end on November 17. This tour hopes to listen to delegates and exchange with them so the orientations will reflect the expectations of the majority of members. In December, the Board of Directors will propose a draft of orientations to be reviewed by delegates. Two review periods are scheduled so that AREQ will arrive at the

Congress with a proposal of orientations that will allow it to pursue its mission with confidence, commitment, and cohesion. Subsequently, an action plan for the triennium 2017-2020 will be drafted by the Board and adopted at the National Council of autumn 2017.

CHANGES TO STATUTES AND BYLAWS

A revision of certain articles of the statutes and bylaws is absolutely necessary. The Congress is the body that adopts the statutes and bylaws and modifies them when needed [art. 4.02, paragraph d) of the Statutes and Bylaws]. The National Council, the Board of Directors, the Regional Council and the Sector Council can propose amendments to the statutes and bylaws, at the latest on December 31, 2016, (art. 27.01). Members who would like to suggest a change to the statutes and bylaws must address their suggestion to one of these bodies. The Sector Council is the recommended body to pass along a proposal.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE CONGRESS

The working group on the content of the congress and the Congress Organizing Committee are hard at work planning a rich and interesting content, and refining the logistical details of the event.

In the spring, the National Council will elect a national election committee on the recommendation of the Board of Directors. It will also recommend to Congress the proposed amendments of the statutes and bylaws it deems promising.

While preparing the Congress, supreme authority of our Association, elected officers and staff will continue to implement the action plan for the third year of the 2014-2017 triennial.

For more about the actions taken in 2015-2016, I invite you to read our next issue.

Looking forward to it!

RETIREMENT

Johanne Freire

Social Security Advisor

ON THE WAY TO AN IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC PENSION PLANS

June 20, 2016, federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, and his provincial counterparts met to address the issue of financial security in retirement. After this single meeting, nine out of ten provinces approved of the federal government's proposal and agreed to implement an improvement program to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) in 2019. Quebec did not sign the agreement. This reform of the Canadian pension system is what Mr. Morneau said he wanted when he submitted his first budget last March, and is in line with the election promises made by the Liberal government.

PRESENT SITUATION IN CANADA AND IN QUEBEC (BEFORE THE REFORM)

State-provided retirement income sources at 65	
Old Age Security (OAS)	\$ 6,848.64 max.
Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)	\$ 9,283.20 max.
Canada Pension Plan (CPP) or Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) benefits	\$ 13,110.00 max.

By adding the income from public pension plans to which Canadians are entitled, namely CPP/QPP, OAS, and GIS, the replacement income at 65 reaches a maximum of 40%.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Quebec Pension Plan (QPP)
Contributions: CPP 9.9% QPP 10.65%
50% employer 50% employee (100% self-employed)
Income earned on which contribution is mandatory: between \$3,500 and \$54,900*
Replacement rate of income at retirement: 25%

* There is no contribution on amounts under \$3,500 or over \$54,900

In Quebec:

- Six persons out of ten do not have an employer-sponsored pension plan.
- Only 35% of employer-sponsored pension plans are “defined benefit” pension plans.

REFORM OF THE CANADA PENSION PLAN (CPP)

The reform will be implemented in provinces that signed the agreement, that is to say, all those participating in the CPP, and the implementation of changes will be phased in from January 1, 2019. Here are the major changes to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP):

- The universal increase of replacement rate of income, from 25% to 33%, once retired. This increase will be funded by a gradual increase in contributions, paid equally by the employee and the employer.
- The Increase of the maximum amount of income on which to contribute, from \$54,900 to about \$82,700 in 2025 (14%).

Measures have been devised to avoid a too great economic impact on businesses and contributors:

- the gradual implementation of changes over a period of seven years from January 1, 2019 until fully in force in 2025
- the increase of federal tax benefits on earned income to offset the impact of higher contributions on low-income workers
- a tax deduction for contributions (employee) related to the enhanced portion of the CPP

Quebec chose not to join the agreement on June 20, preferring to continue to act alone with its plan (QPP). Provincial Finance Minister, Mr. Carlos Leitao, whose proposal was rejected by the federal government and by Ontario, favors an improved QPP, but in a different way.

FUTURE PROPOSAL FOR THE QUEBEC PENSION PLAN (QPP)

You may recall that the QPP was created in 1966 after Quebec decided to leave the CPP to create its own pension plan. The fact remains that both plans have always been more or less harmonized. But that could change as Quebec said no to the reform of Minister Morneau. Among the reasons mentioned, there is the financial burden that would increase the contributions of low-income persons and employers. The provincial government will soon present a proposal to improve the QPP, which will likely be similar to the rejected one filed by Minister Leitao during the meeting of June 20, that is to say, a more modest increase. It would also be targeted and gradual. This was suggested by Mr. Leitão in a statement after the meeting of ministers.

By focusing on a targeted rather than universal increase, Quebec says it wants to protect the purchasing power of the poor (incomes of less than \$ 27,000), and "help increase pension income of workers who face insufficient savings while promoting voluntary savings, especially with the implementation of voluntary retirement savings plans". Quebec would have wanted to see the federal government increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for low-income earners.

By the end of 2016, the provincial government will submit its detailed QPP improvement proposal. As provided in the QPP Act, every six years, public consultations must be held during which interested citizens and organizations have the opportunity to exchange and express their views on the proposed guidelines.

INSURANCE

Johanne Freire

Social Security Advisor

UPDATED RAMQ RATES

IN FORCE SINCE JULY 1, 2016

Persons covered by the public prescription drug insurance plan of the *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec* (RAMQ) saw an increase in rates for the 2016-2017 year. These amendments were implemented on July 1, 2016, for a 12-month period ending on June 30, 2017.

The public drug insurance plan was created in 1997 following the adoption of the *Prescription Drug Insurance Act*. This plan must cover people aged 65 and over and those who are not eligible for a private drug plan, such as members of AREQ not covered by the private plan of their spouse or any other private plan.

NEW RATES FOR 2016-2017

Nearly 3.5 million Quebecers are affected by this rate increase: those between 18 and 64 registered in the public prescription drug insurance plan, those of 65 or over who are not receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), and those 65 or over receiving a GIS at the rate of 1 to 93%.

The maximum annual premium undergoes an increase of 3.1%, from \$640 to \$660. The amount of the premium varies (between \$0 and \$660) depending on net family income. This premium is paid yearly upon filing the income tax return. The premium payment is mandatory, whether you require prescription drugs or not.

When purchasing drugs at a pharmacy, the insured must bear some of the costs. It is known as the contribution of the insured and comes in two forms: the monthly deductible and the co-insurance.

The monthly deductible amounts this year to \$18.85, up 4.7% from last year, while co-insurance, which is the percentage of the drug cost that must be borne by the insured once the deductible is removed, increased to 34.5% from 34%.

The maximum contribution is the maximum amount payable monthly by the insured person to buy drugs. It moved this year to \$87.16 from \$85.75 for those aged 18 to 64 and those 65 or over not receiving GIS. This represents an increase of 1.6%. Regarding those aged 65 or over receiving a GIS at the rate of 1-93%, the maximum monthly contribution is lower: \$52.16.

**ADULTS 18 TO 64 NOT ELIGIBLE FOR A PRIVATE PLAN
PEOPLE 65 AND OVER WITHOUT GIS**

Rates before and after July 1, 2016

AT THE PHARMACY						UPON FILING THE ANNUAL INCOME TAX RETURN	
MONTHLY DEDUCTIBLE		CO-INSURANCE		MONTHLY MAXIMUM CONTRIBUTION		ANNUAL PREMIUM	
BEFORE	NEW RATE	BEFORE	NEW RATE	BEFORE	NEW RATE	BEFORE	NEW RATE
\$18	\$18.85	34%	34.5%	\$85.75	\$87.16	DE \$0 À \$640	DE \$0 À \$660

“FREE OF CHARGE” INSURED UNDER THE PUBLIC PLAN

About a quarter of those registered to the public plan receive free medication. These are people aged 65 or over receiving a GIS at the rate of 94 to 100%, dependent children of persons insured in the public plan, as well as claim-slip holders for benefits from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity.

For more information about the RAMQ prescription drug insurance plan, go to www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca.

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