

# Labour relations

with Dr Mélanie Dufour-Poirier

## Talking points

### Knowledge

1. What is a trade union?
2. What is a social delegate?

### Comprehension

3. Why are mental health issues in the workplace increasing?
4. What challenges do social delegates in the Quebec Federation of Labor (FTQ) face when providing mental health support to colleagues?

### Application

5. If you were a labour relations researcher, what questions would you ask trade union representatives to understand why FTQ's social delegates often do not receive recognition for their work? Remember what Mélanie said about the importance of building and maintaining good relationships.

### Analysis

6. How and why do you think the COVID-19 pandemic affected workplace mental health?
7. Based on the article and your own thoughts, how do you think FTQ's social delegates and other trade union representatives could be better supported to help them maintain good mental health among their colleagues?

### Evaluation

8. Why do you think Mélanie is adamant that only a system of primary prevention that includes all stakeholders will be able to reduce workplace mental health injuries?
9. Under the capitalist economic model, companies survive by making a profit – in other words, the economic gain from the employees' work is greater than what the company pays out in employees' salaries. This profit is then used to grow the company or to reward shareholders. Do you think full social justice for all workers is possible under this system? Why, or why not?

## Activities

### Improving mental health at work

Imagine you have been put in charge of helping a company whose employees are suffering from mental distress due to poor working conditions, unrealistic working demands, poor work-life balance and loss of meaningful working communities.

Based on the outcomes of Mélanie's research and your own ideas, design an action plan to turn this company into one in which the mental health of workers is supported and cared for. Your action plan should have at least five evidence-based key actions that the company can take.

Remember to consider the following:

- The importance of work design for mental health
- The importance of an inclusive approach that involves workers, employers and union representatives
- The importance of primary prevention
- The role of FTQ's social delegates and how this role can be supported
- The need for the business to maintain profits and stay economically competitive
- The need to stay within legal and regulatory boundaries
- The importance of defending workplace mental health as a fundamental right and a key aspect of social justice and industrial democracy.

Share your key actions with a classmate and listen to their action plan. Was their approach different to yours? How could you combine your two approaches to improve the mental health of workers in the company?

### Improving mental health at school

Create a mental health action plan to improve mental health and well-being among your classmates. This could include raising awareness of mental health issues faced by teenagers, addressing the taboos surrounding talking about mental health, or strategies to help your classmates improve their mental health.

## More resources

- Visit Mélanie's faculty page to find more resources about her work: [www.eri.umontreal.ca/repertoire-departement/professeurs/professeur/in/in18998/sg/MelanieDufour-Poirier](http://www.eri.umontreal.ca/repertoire-departement/professeurs/professeur/in/in18998/sg/MelanieDufour-Poirier)
- This article discusses Mélanie's longitudinal research into the role of the FTQ's social delegates: Case History of the FTQ's Social Stewards Network: A Unique Experiment in Union Peer Support for Mental Health in Workplaces in Quebec, Canada ([journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0160449X231163533](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0160449X231163533))

These articles introduce Mélanie's ©Trans-faire tool:

- ©Trans-faire: A Mechanism for Taking Collective Control of Mental Health Interventions in the Workplace ([www.academia.edu/81033854](http://www.academia.edu/81033854))
- Covid-19: Mobile d'autoformations et d'expérimentation du ©Trans-faire par le Réseau des délégués sociaux de la FTQ ([www.lcs-tcs.com/current.html](http://www.lcs-tcs.com/current.html))
- Visit Mélanie's Futurum webpage to read the article and activity sheet in French: [www.futurumcareers.com/how-can-trade-unions-prevent-mental-health-issues-at-work](http://www.futurumcareers.com/how-can-trade-unions-prevent-mental-health-issues-at-work)