



FNEEQ Counter-Offer to the CPNC: Have Your Say!

LOAD AND RESOURCES

FNEEQ COUNTER-OFFER TO THE CPNC : HAVE YOUR SAY!

On April 26, after 26 meetings at the table and three weeks of radio silence following a period of “blitz” in name only, the Management Negotiating Committee for the Colleges (*Comité patronal de négociation des collèges, CPNC*) presented us with a comprehensive offer of settlement.

An analysis of the content of this document permits only one conclusion : although the current offer is clearly not as shocking as the employer’s filing of last December 17th, it remains, nevertheless, quite insufficient. This is particularly so regarding the injection of resources intended to lighten our workloads and create posts leading to tenure. It is hard to believe, in light of a mountain of evidence presented to the CPNC numerous times, that their offer could be so far removed from the real needs identified by both sides in the study *Teaching at the College Level... Profile of the Profession*.

Of course, they had announced ahead of time that resources would be sparse; but still, it is profoundly unacceptable that a gulf this wide should sit between the offer and the genuine needs. When we think about the principal mission of the college system, and the present difficulties with retaining professors or attracting new ones, this is unacceptable in and of itself. But it is even more so, if we consider that with a minimum of political will, the government could solve the workload problems in the cégeps. For example, we could supply the system with desperately-needed oxygen by increasing the proportion of federal transfers reserved for teaching activities and by reinvesting the sums that will become available due to apprehended drops in enrolment. In the end, our message to our employers should be that we do not need these resources in five years. We need them now!

Furthermore, the CPNC offer utterly fails to reply to other important demands, such as improving our salary scale, protecting union representation, and forming the committee on the mode of resource allocation, which was formally promised by the Minister. It also still contains irritants, including numerous additions to departmental functions, to the roles of program committees, and to the jobs of their respective coordinators. It also includes setbacks to the status of professors on availability. Nevertheless, we should also point out that the employer has agreed to revise the way seniority and experience are calculated, and to form a parity committee to study the working conditions in Continuing Education. All of these are worthwhile advances for non-permanent professors.

That said, apart from these few points of convergence, the overall CPNC offer fails to meet our main demands, grouped under the themes “a reasonable workload”, “a decent salary” and “more job security”. We must consequently now change our angle of attack to pursue the negotiations. This is why the FNEEQ negotiation and mobilization committee has prepared a counter-offer, on which you are being invited to give your opinion before May 14, which is the day for reporting back.

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Even though the text of the counter offer was adopted at the *Regroupement Cégep*, it goes without saying that the unions being consulted can propose amendments to it. The *Regroupement* will then evaluate whether to retain each proposed amendment. **However, it is important to remember the idea behind the exercise.** We are well past the stage of developing a new book of demands. Parts of the document you are receiving are the result of the discussion so far. No one should expect, at this stage, to find the full initial list of demands reproduced here – no more than the employers can expect their entire initial list of demands to still be on the table. Each side has withdrawn some of its demands; we cannot pretend these exchanges have not happened. Thus, in order to persuade the CPNC to drop the idea of imposing a period of probation and administrative evaluation on professors starting out in the profession, we have had to resolve to let go of certain demands on behalf of non-permanent professors, including the demand to grant tenure after six years of seniority or five consecutive years of full-time work. However, the counter-offer retains demands indirectly affecting non-permanent teachers, for example by freeing up teaching resources through a higher allocation to department coordination, by eliminating double charging, and by amending the date of reporting enrolment figures. It would also open posts in relation to courses in the 360 discipline and apply resources from professors on gradual retirement to the creation of posts. All this represents a better chance of obtaining tenure for non-permanent professors.

Obtaining what we demand clearly requires a level of mobilization equal to the stakes. The current negotiation is crucial for the future of the college system, and its outcome will affect this system for a long time. In this context, there can be no question of surrender.

The counter-offer will will submit to the CPNC after this period of consultation will constitute a last effort to confirm whether the government has the political will to recognize the problem of working conditions in the institutions of higher learning known as cégeps. The manner of our counterparts' reply – and their degree of openness – will lead either to pursue the negotiations or to envisage the use of stronger pressure tactics.

In any event, it will turn out to be of critical importance to implement the FNEEQ Action and Information Plan that was recently presented or will be presented in the coming days.

Have a good discussion!

The FNEEQ negotiation and mobilization committee.