

STAND **with us**

to increase our clout and leverage



BARGAINING UPDATE No. 7 • CENTRAL BARGAINING TABLE • NOVEMBER 18, 2015

COMMON FRONT TABLES A COUNTER-PROPOSAL

Last November 6, 11 months after tabling its first offers at the central bargaining table, the Treasury Board has finally made a move. Its new offers clearly represent insufficient progress, but it is a move in the right direction all the same. Regardless of the statements made by the President of the Treasury Board, Martin Coiteux, this movement at the bargaining table is a direct result of our historic mobilization and the strike movement initiated by the Common Front.

The Common Front isn't waiting 11 months to take the bull by the horns. It is important for us to take advantage of the situation, which is favourable to making progress in our negotiations, and that was generated by our determination and our mobilization. That is why, we are tabling a Union counter-proposal today. Here are the highlights of the foregoing:

SALARY DEMANDS:

The Common Front is maintaining the three principles that have guided our negotiations since the very beginning, in accordance with the bargaining mandates that were given to the Common Front:

- Stop the impoverishment of public sector workers;
- Put an end to their salary disparity and maintain parity with other Quebec workers;
- Improve their living conditions by enabling them to benefit from the collective enrichment of Quebec society.

Accordingly, the following amended salary demands were tabled with the Treasury Board:

- **Cost of living protection:** in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), with a minimum of 1%;
- **Catch-up pay:** 1% per year until the total compensation disparity as noted by the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) disappears;
- **Collective enrichment:** 0.5% if the growth of the GDP is greater than 1%.

A salary demand of 2.5% per year, with an adjustment, if inflation exceeds 1%. At the present time, based upon data validated by Statistics Canada – an inflation rate of 1.4% and a GDP growth rate equal to 1.5% – we can affirm that for 2015, the salary increase would amount to 2.9%.

The Common Front representatives at the bargaining table have made the demonstration to the Government that it has sufficiently wide budget leeway to respond to this demand and to reverse the cutbacks that were announced for our public services.





PENSION PLAN

As a precautionary measure, we are continuing with the technical work concerning the sustainability of the RREGOP. The Treasury Board negotiators have never ever demonstrated to us that our pension plan, capitalized at 98.4%, was in jeopardy.

The Common Front still rejects the notion of raising the age of retirement without penalty from 60 years old to 62 years old, as well as the increase in the actuarial penalties to 7.2%. Over the next few days, we will be putting forward a certain number of advantageous measures and incentives, to enable people who would want to work longer to do so. We believe, from the perspective of retaining expertise within our public systems, that this approach is far more worthwhile, for everyone concerned, than the punitive and coercive measures, being advocated by the Government

In 2010, the Common Front negotiated an article that enabled employees who wished to work a 36th, a 37th, and indeed a 38th year, to thereby have their pension benefits increase up to a maximum of 76% of the salary earned during their best five years. This measure has borne fruit. The Common Front is thus proposing to the Government to remove the ceiling on this article and raise it to 40 years worked. The employee who so wishes could thus work longer and thereby have their pension benefit increase to 80% of the salary earned during their best five years.

SALARY RELATIVITY AND SALARY STRUCTURES

When Martin Coiteux presented his new offers, he presented his salary-restructuring plan as if it

was the result of joint work carried out with the Common Front. Nothing is further from the truth. We accepted to undertake work on salary structures, but we had laid down very clear conditions:

- The exercise could only be done on a zero cost basis;
- Nobody could come out a loser at the end of the operation. Accordingly, an increase in the salary of one job classification could not be done at the expense of another one;
- The work on salary relativity cannot dispose of our demands to increase the salary parameters;
- For the exercise to be a success, the Government must put aside the idea of a wage freeze.

One can't help but observe that what the Treasury Board tabled last November 6, did not respect a single one of these conditions. In spite of everything, we will continue to work on the salary structure with the Government, and we will remind them of the parameters that we have been putting forward right from the very beginning.

WHAT'S THE STATE OF OUR MOBILIZATION

The Common Front will be announcing today that it is postponing the three days of a national strike scheduled for December 1, 2 and 3, and this, in order to leave all the room possible for negotiations to move forward.

We received a very convincing mandate for six days of strikes. Three of them have already been put into action, with the consequences that we all know: forcing the Treasury Board to review its positions after 11 months of deadlock.

The Common Front is not contemplating repudiating these strike days, nor suspending the movement. By signifying to the Government that we are prepared to go out on strike on certain days later than initially planned, we are sending them a clear message: if no significant progress is observed at the bargaining tables over the next few hours, the strike movement could resume as of next week.

It is because we are strong, united and determined that we are in a position to make this gesture. It is because we have been successful in rallying the population behind our demands – the car horn festival all across the Province of Quebec is a perfect example – that we're in a position to defer our strike days, to table a counter-proposal to the Government and to leave all the room possible for negotiations to pick up speed, over the next few hours. It is simply thanks to the extraordinary mobilization of the 400,000 members of the Common Front that the balance of power is seriously tipping towards our side.

Martin Coiteux must grasp our message: the members of the Common Front are determined to improve their working conditions and the population's access to our public services. And the postponement of our strike days could end up being quite short, if no significant movement is observed at the bargaining tables.