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The Negotiations Are Not Over Yet!

After several months of discussions and revisions, the “clause-by-clause” negotiation process, which entails coming to an agreement with our employers on how to integrate the different elements of the agreement in principle into the text of our collective agreement, is nearing its conclusion. The writing has gone slowly but without major interruption. Nevertheless, some delays might have been avoided and it is important to acknowledge that there remain several major points to be resolved.

The issue of how to add teaching resources for the 2010-2011 academic year is still not resolved. Last June, in order for each college to know the amount of resources it had to allocate, we agreed to divide the additional 92 FTEs for multiple preparations (HP) in the same way as the federal transfer resources had been distributed in recent years. The text of the agreement clearly shows that, after the first year, these resources must be used in type 1 (*volet 1*) teaching. They must therefore be used to produce overall reductions in the heavy teaching loads that often occur. We know that this is how it is being currently used in many colleges. However, in others, the addition of teaching resources has not taken place and administrations have continued to use them for purposes other than actual classroom teaching, as if no agreement had been signed on this issue. To resolve this issue, our employers have proposed that we simply give up these FTEs!

Another obstacle to overcome also concerns our gains related to reducing

our teaching workloads. In order for changes to the CI formula for supporting student learning (*encadrement*) to gradually add teaching resources, we agreed to refer the technical work to a parity committee, but only after agreeing first that the first adjustment – changing the formula’s PES coefficient from 0.04 to 0.05 for those whose PES is 490 or more – would start next year in 2011-2012. Our employers, however, are arguing that the committee’s mandate is not to change the CI formula, but only to find ways of effectively intervening to improve student support. A better reflection of student support in our workload and a reduction in the maximum number of students that can be assigned to a teacher was however at the heart of our agreement; this must involve changing the CI formula. What’s more, throughout the negotiations, we insisted on changes in this area and our employers representatives never brought up any other method of taking student support into account in our workload.

Remuneration

Advancing more quickly through the first four levels of the salary scales creates a problem in its application that our employers clearly did not foresee. Taking into account the contractual status of cegep teachers, a strict interpretation of the text of the agreement in principle that changes the amount of time in each of these levels would require an increase in pay for everyone who has not yet reached the top of the salary scale. At present, our employers' representatives propose to only give such an increase in salary to those who are currently in the first four levels, not recognizing the inequities that would result for others.

In addition, after repeating to us throughout the negotiations that all salary-related issues must be dealt with at the central bargaining table, the government turned around and agreed to a 2% salary increase for the nurses represented by FIQ at its sectoral table. They have tried to justify this by citing recruitment difficulties and problems in keeping personnel (which we are also experiencing in the cegeps); the granting of this salary premium at the nurses' sectoral table leaves us perplexed! As a result, while our sectoral agreement in principle includes nothing on this topic, we have informed our employers' representatives that it is difficult for us to resolve the two unresolved issues in good faith in view of the confusion that has reigned during the discussions on where and how to address salary-related issues.

During the negotiations, we brought up the issue of levels 18, 19 and 20. This appears more than ever justified as, as a result of the initial findings of the process to maintain pay equity, primary and

secondary teachers will benefit from a salary adjustment of 1.14% at level 17. Applied to our collective agreement, since the first 17 levels of our salary scale are linked to those of the primary and secondary teachers, this measure would result in a much smaller premium being given to teachers with a Masters or doctoral degree, as they would not receive any similar increase at levels 18 to 20. The process of maintaining equity could, as a result, reduce the recognition (already minimal) given to our higher level degrees. The government refuses to discuss this issue with us. Other groups have been able to resolve their salary scale issues at the sectoral table, but our employers' representatives still maintain that they have no mandate on this issue. In addition, our employers refuse to make, at very little cost, the salary scales for the teachers at the *Centre québécois de formation en aéronautique (CQFA)* equivalent to ours.

As a result, even though the writing of the new collective agreement is almost complete, discussions must continue on the very sensitive issues described above. Between now and the FNEEQ Regroupement cégep meeting on February 17-18, the FNEEQ Negotiation and Mobilization Committee will make every effort to complete the writing of the final clauses and to resolve the points in dispute. This meeting will also provide an important opportunity for us to decide if what has already been obtained is acceptable with the agreement in principle or whether we need to start considering actions in order to get there.

