

MARCH 31, 2015: EXPIRY OF PUBLIC- AND PARAPUBLIC-SECTOR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Exercising the right to strike: at the core of debate

On March 31, about 2,500 people gathered in Québec City to take part in an event entitled *Join us, in action! Common Front Day of Reflection on striking in the public sector*. Workshops, panels and confrontational debates nourished reflection and discussion among participants from the education, health and social services as well as public service networks.

What about a strike mandate?

For the CSQ and its Common Front allies, negotiations have barely begun. However, does that mean it is premature to consider seeking a strike mandate? The eventual use of heavy pressure tactics cannot be discounted, particularly given the contemptuous management proposals – that would undermine working conditions and impoverish public sector workers (75% of whom are women) –, the government's ideological austerity measures, and its budget with catastrophic consequences for public services.

Important consultations to follow

This important gathering launched a comprehensive campaign to consult with members of the Common Front, which includes the CSQ. For this reason, in coming months, you will be invited to express your opinions about negotiations and the strategies to consider that will enable us to secure satisfactory collective agreements. Stay on top of developments and read the Nego 2015 bulletins!

National Assembly surrounded

An impressive human chain, nearly one kilometre in length, encircled the National Assembly at noon on March 31. CSQ members were present to remind the government that as of today, public sector workers are without a contract and that decent working conditions are essential for preserving the quality, accessibility and universality of public services throughout Québec.



At the same time, CSQ members mobilized throughout all of Québec regions to mark the expiry of the collective agreements and to send a clear signal to the government.

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Public sector personnel still angry!

Anger continues to build because of the management proposals riddled with austerity measures presented last December. In addition to impoverishing workers, the government is seeking to claw back the gains won by unions in previous negotiations, undermine the pension plan, curtail job security, and impose greater flexibility and mobility in terms of working conditions as well as extend the power of management.

However, these wage earners are not among society's privileged:

- They have lost 10% of their purchasing power over the last 25 years
- They earn 7.6% less than other Québec workers in comparable jobs (including pension plans and other social benefits)
- They pay 50% of the costs of their pension plan
- 35% of them hold a precarious position with no job security and only 48% hold a regular full-time position.

Such strong mobilization throughout Québec comes as no surprise!

Austerity, an ideological choice

The government has real latitude for investing in the public services. However, although it has a real budget surplus of \$1.6 billion this year, it has decided to make further significant reductions and cuts in the public services to accelerate debt repayment. Yet none

of this restraint is necessary to reach the target in 2026. Worse, it is already referencing tax cuts in 2017, which would deprive it of \$2.5 billion in tax revenue.



If the government were to maintain the current pace of debt repayment and offset the proposed tax changes by reducing tax breaks for the wealthiest and for financial institutions, it would have an additional amount of over \$4 billion that could be reinvested in the public services over the next five years – without compromising a balanced budget or increasing the tax burden for taxpayers.

The stale crumbs that the government is offering reflect the contempt it bears toward its personnel and its intent to undermine their working conditions and ransack the public services for the benefit of the private sector.



DON'T MISS ANY NEWS ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS

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