



**Centrale des syndicats  
du Québec**

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## **Press Release**

### **Public Sector Negotiations**

#### **The CSQ announces that it is seeking strike mandates**

Montreal, December 4, 2020. – Following proceedings held on December 2 and 3 last, and in view of the deadlock that has persisted and been criticized in the public sector negotiations over the last few months, the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ) has announced that the members of its *Conseil général des négociations* (CGN) have voted in favour of seeking a strike mandate if the Government's financial framework does not change significantly in the coming weeks.

As it launches a general consultation of its members to obtain strike mandates, the CSQ notes that it has been forced to take this step by the Legault Government's total lack of willingness to submit offers that would significantly improve working conditions in the health, education and higher education sectors. "After several dozen meetings at the negotiating tables, and even though we revised our demands last May to take the health and economic crisis into account, the Government is still refusing to reconsider its own financial framework and make the shift needed to stem the haemorrhage of public sector workers," said CSQ President Sonia Ethier.

If nothing changes at the negotiating tables in the coming weeks, the union, which represents 125,000 employees in the public and parapublic sectors, confirms that its members will be asked to vote on mandates for up to the equivalent of five days of strikes. The results of these consultations will be disclosed at the end of the process, which will take place in the coming weeks.

#### **Things have to change – now!**

CSQ President Sonia Ethier points out that the lack of any significant response from the Treasury Board to the network's many structural problems has added insult to injury in the current negotiations. She is asking for a review of the money set aside for the negotiations in order to address the problems arising from under-investment, labour shortages and job security issues that have caused a veritable crisis in working conditions. "The CSQ's members have had enough of not being taken seriously during negotiations, and are asking for tangible and immediate solutions. Workers in schools, education centres, health institutions and CEGEPs have had to deal with under-

investment for years and now find themselves in a difficult situation. As recently as last week, the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* confirmed that the overall remuneration of Québec's public employees is 9.2% below that of the province's other employees if salaries, pension plans and other fringe benefits such as paid leave, paid vacation time, sick leave and so on are taken into account. As for teachers in elementary and secondary schools, their salaries are the lowest in Canada," said the President.

The CSQ notes that the personnel shortage is felt most in the public networks, and may even compromise services to citizens. "Personnel shortages lead to generalized burnout and overwork among employees. The growing number of absences due to employment injuries and illnesses, and the problem of attracting and keeping staff, have made the current situation untenable. More than ever before, the problems are urgent, structural and need serious solutions. We are facing a veritable crisis in working conditions, and the Government's intransigence is forcing the CSQ's membership to announce that they are seeking another way of unblocking the negotiations. Our message is clear and we will not budge from it: things have to change – now," she said.

### **The ball is in the Government's court**

The CSQ President also reminds the Legault Government of the importance of keeping its promise to make education, health and higher education a priority. Unless the Government's offers are improved significantly, the facts show that the CAQ's promises have simply not been transformed into proposals at the negotiating tables. "By making absolutely no offer that would improve working conditions in any real way, the Government has not only reneged on its promises, but is actively maintaining the extreme precariousness of tens of thousands of jobs held primarily by women. The offers that the employer has persisted in making since April are unacceptable and are tantamount to shovelling the problems into the future. The Treasury Board's closed-off approach since the beginning of the process has forced the CSQ's members to conclude that the negotiations are deadlocked. The ball is now in the Government's court," concluded Ms. Ethier.

### **The CSQ's Profile**

The CSQ represents more than 200,000 members, of whom 125,000 work in the education sector. It has 11 federations composed of approximately 240 affiliated unions, plus the *Association des retraitées et retraités de l'éducation et des autres services publics du Québec* (AREQ-CSQ). The CSQ is also present in the health and social services, early childhood, municipal, leisure, culture, community and communications sectors.

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