

Progress with negotiations, but important issues remain

The Common Front's three-day strike and the union counter-offer (see the November 18, 2015 issue of [CSQ Info-nego](#)) have triggered movement at the bargaining tables. However, although on the whole, talks are making progress, some important issues remain to be resolved, in particular, retirement.

In fact, the CSQ and its union partners remain steadfast: the government must abandon its demands to gradually increase retirement age from 60 to 62 years and to raise the actuarial penalty to 7.2% annually. The combined effect of these measures would reduce the pension income of some retired employees by over \$ 10 000 per year, which is completely unacceptable.

As for the sectoral tables, several of the CSQ's federations were asked to take part in a round of intensive bargaining, which suggests that the government has finally given its representatives the leeway they need to engage in real negotiations. The government seems to have heard the signal we sent it last week. The federations have all the mandates they require to sustain this bargaining blitz, and they are prepared to work intensively to secure better working conditions.

Strike on December 9

Given the current state of negotiations, both at the central table and the sectoral tables, the Common Front could call for a province-wide strike on December 9 if the Conseil du trésor does not demonstrate real openness toward achieving a negotiated settlement. Details to follow.

Lanterns to enlighten the employer party

Meeting in the General Negotiations Council, November 25 and 26, CSQ delegates, equipped with lanterns, demonstrated late Wednesday afternoon in front of the offices of the Conseil du trésor. With a nod to Mr. Coiteux's "light-years" remark, they wanted to provide him the enlightenment he needs to conclude public-sector negotiations.



“We believe the stars are aligned for reaching an agreement, despite the Conseil du trésor Chairman's claim last week that we were “light-years away from an agreement,” said Louise Chabot, President of the CSQ. In the same breath, she recalled that the Common Front had taken a significant step in presenting its counter-offer and that special legislation cannot be envisaged.

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“When the Chair of the Conseil du trésor dismisses our offers out of hand like this, it’s not a very clever move, because he is diverting us from our intention to secure a negotiated agreement and that is what he should be trying to do as well. If the government decides to show good faith, we are confident that we can not only improve the working conditions of state employees, but also improve public services for all Québécois,” she added.

Public sector workers Total compensation gap reaches 7.9 %

The total compensation gap (including pension plan and fringe benefits) between public-sector personnel and other Québec wage-earners, is now 7.9%, reveals a new report published by the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ).

Double standard

The ISQ has revealed that government corporation employees, who are not covered by public and para-public negotiations, will receive an average increase in compensation of 3.3% in 2015 and 2.9% in 2016. Furthermore, these increases do not include rises occurring through advancement in salary scales.

Discrimination toward women must stop

Disturbing fact: the ISQ has revealed that close to 63% of jobs in government corporations are held by men, and their total compensation is 24.1% higher than that of the public sector.

For the Common Front, this confirms that the government always has the resources when it’s time to raise salaries in predominantly male sectors, whereas it’s an entirely different story for compensation in the public sector, where 75% of employees are women. Discrimination against women in the public sector must stop.

A fair, reasonable union counter-offer

“The ISQ data confirm that our union counter-offer, which asks for 2.9% in 2015 and similar increases in 2016 and 2017, is justified and realistic. In the context of mass retirement, the total compensation gap jeopardizes our public services. If the Québec government wishes to attract and retain expertise, it has to be able to compare itself to all employers in the labour market,” explained Louise Chabot.

The ISQ reports that the total compensation gap between the Québec public sector and all other public employers (federal, municipal, university and Québec government corporations) is 26.3%.



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