



LA PASSERELLE NÉGO

ARE WE ON TRACK FOR REAL NEGOTIATION?

We haven't had a Passerelle Nego since April 7! Why the delay? Unfortunately, there has been no progress in discussions over all this time at our sectoral table. The Legault government has been capitalizing on sympathy over the pandemic and using it as leverage to muzzle us and restrict our power to negotiate while promoting its political agenda.

Since December, the Treasury Board has presented the same employer offer three times while providing no response to union proposals. They have even banned representatives from negotiating at our sectoral table (FPPE) for several weeks. Clearly, this inflexibility on behalf of the employer has done nothing to help the bargaining process.

For us, however, there are many reasons to sit down and negotiate: attraction and retention issues, amount of funding available for professional development, payment of the professional order, salaries of ECs, bonuses for psychologists, the addition of new job classes to the classification plan, pay scale integration, guaranteed or improved access to different types of leave and paid days off.

All these topics are currently being ignored by the employer. They want us to withdraw almost all our demands. Which, of course, we refuse to do, especially without compensation.

As you know, we are in a truly exceptional situation at the moment. Given the current global context, we cannot exert our normal means of pressure through collective action.

Unfortunately, we don't have our usual balance of power at the moment and we are without a common front. This creates an environment that favours the government's strategy, including its favourite tactic of "dividing and conquering".

While the government is currently supported by a good segment of the population, everyone wants quality public services. Education, health, and early childhood development all suffered enormously during the period of austerity. In fact, we were getting close to the breaking point. A recent survey revealed that one in three professional staff members were thinking of leaving the education community at the onset of the pandemic.

Putting our heads in the sand or leaving these issues on hold any further will definitely not lead to the employer improving the situation. Normality will return sooner or later...

While the situation is very complex at the moment, rest assured that we will continue our reflections and strategies at the bargaining table based on the decisions made by your elected union representatives and by the federation.

FRANCOPHONE TABLE P1

First Meeting at the Francophone Bargaining Table Since May 1st

While at the bargaining table for the francophone agreement (P1), our employer counterpart agreed to hold a meeting on Tuesday, June 2. This will be the first meeting after a month away from the bargaining table. As a reminder of where we find ourselves, the employer was unable to make headway on the four specific issues of salary, retirement, parental rights, and regional disparities. This meant that sectoral tables, such as ours, did not hold any meetings. As the latest coordinated initiatives of the various sectoral tables have finally shown progress, we are now able to resume talks.

However, this time away from the bargaining table did not mean that the union has taken time off. Within the Conseil fédéral de négociation, we have managed to prioritize the demands we feel are most important and which are most likely to be part of the final agreement. Demands including contributions to a professional

order, an increase in the professional development budget and the recognition of master's and doctoral studies are still at stake, as are several other demands, some of which do not entail a financial investment by the employer such as our demand to add job groups to the classification plan, obtaining a flexible work schedule with telecommuting, and standardizing the number of paid days off. Additionally, there is also still a series of adjustments, which we call "peripheral demands," that are part of the rewording of certain clauses, including special leave in the event of death and maintaining benefits when changing employer.

We have established a meeting schedule for June and the employer has agreed to send us a list of its demands with more details. However, despite the many questions we have put to them, it remains impossible to ascertain their intentions. While it is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has not made our negotiations easy, rest assured that the bargaining committee remains focused on reaching a favourable settlement to improve our working conditions.

ANGLOPHONE TABLE P2

The negotiation team was very happy to return to the negotiation table on June 1st, after an absence of a few weeks. The absence was due to the ongoing *Intersectoral* negotiations between 'la table central' and the public sector employer. The negotiations at this other level concerns the following four items: Salary, retirement, parental rights, and regional disparities. The CSQ General Negotiation Assembly refused the initial government offers which resulted in the temporary halting of negotiations with the employer for all sectoral tables. During this period despite the invitation to negotiate, the employer groups did not respond.

During this pause, the work of the negotiation team continued with ongoing in-depth research and analysis of our demands and meetings with our union representatives at the *Conseil Federal*. *With the help of the Conseil Federal, the team* has been prioritizing the list of sectoral demands. Some of the demands presented to the employer group during our negotiation meetings are augmenting the amounts for the Professional Development budgets, salary enhancement for Masters and Doctorate degrees, and contribution by the employer for professional order fees.

Some other demands from our initial deposit which do not involve large monetary investments include variable work schedule including the option of telework under specific circumstances, and a standardized number of statutory holidays (non -working days with pay), there is also the request to add more employment groups to our Classification Plan. A presentation was made for demands which are classified as *peripheral* and these include maintaining certain benefits when changing employers, and improved definitions specific to special leaves.

Other requests presented to the employer group that pertain to the Anglophone Collective Agreement, P2, have to do with certain aspects of union releases, and the ability to transfer unused sick days into vacation at year end.

A calendar of meetings was established for the month of June averaging two meetings per week. We are hoping that these meetings will result in a satisfactory agreement which will improve our working conditions.

NEWS FROM THE NORTHERN NEGOTIATION TABLES P3 & P4

Negotiations in the North are following the same pattern as those held in the South over the last few weeks. We met with the employer at the Cree table (P3) on May 1, 2020 and at the Kativik table (P4) on April 28, 2020.

During these two meetings we presented and explained some important union demands. Following these two meetings, the employer suspended negotiations pending a return to the central table. While no meetings have taken place at the Cree table since then (P3), two meetings were held at the Kativik table (P4) on May 26 and June 2. Coordinated sectoral negotiations were resumed last week.

At the Kativik meeting on May 26, we tabled a pared-down submission in which nine demands had been withdrawn. The employer told us that this exercise was insufficient and that it was seen as a step backwards from the blitz at the end of March. They are of the opinion that we cannot

sustain bargaining at a steady pace and reach an agreement quickly when there are so many demands remaining. They said they did not know if they had the power to reply to our union demands given the circumstances. At the next meeting, on June 2, the employer finally gave us a reply regarding the union's demands and indicated which ones were received with a certain level of openness. The meeting was constructive, and we had good discussions regarding several union demands. However, we only discussed demands that had no monetary impact.

It is clear that the employer side wants to reach an agreement quickly but, in order to do so, we must discuss and have constructive exchanges. For the moment, we have not quite reached that type of dynamic. We want the negotiations to be resumed at a sustained pace and we have demonstrated our willingness to do so.

