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Bargaining 2020 - Submission of CSN Demands

Demands to Improve the Quality of Life of all Quebecers

On October 30, with a creative demonstration in Québec, we marked the submission of our demands for the 2020 round of bargaining. For this occasion, the activists in attendance were invited to make their own signs with messages to either the Legault government or to Quebecers. Drawings of all kinds and hundreds of catchy slogans punctuated the demonstration on the streets of Old Québec under the both intrigued and interested gaze of residents and tourists. Our first mobilization and visibility action was a success.

Accompanied by over 600 activists, our common demands—those of the 150,000 workers in the CSN public sector—were submitted to the Conseil du trésor. After a year of consultation and debates about solutions to propose to the government to improve public services, we are bringing to the bargaining table a strong draft agreement from all of the unions in the four federations (FEESP, FNEEQ, FP, and FSSS), which are all part of the Comité de coordination des secteurs public et parapublic (CCSPP).

The conditions in which we find ourselves while entering into this round of bargaining are unique: an unprecedented crisis in the networks after years of massive budget cuts and a significant labour shortage in all sectors across Quebec. With historic budget surpluses, the current government has more than enough funds to change the situation. Massive investments are needed to improve our working and practice conditions and to increase our wages, in order to reassert the value of our jobs and allow for staff attraction and retention in our networks. This is the key message being conveyed by our demands.

Urgent need for action

Nothing is working in our public services. We know this better than anyone because we are experiencing the crisis on a daily basis in our workplaces. The years of austerity have hurt us a great deal. With workloads that have become unbearable and insufficient wages, we are no longer attracting new workers, and we are struggling to retain existing staff. Drastic measures are urgently needed!

Wages

To meet the needs of the workers in the networks, we are demanding an increase of \$3/hour for all staff for the first year of the collective agreement. This fixed amount represents a significant increase for all, while having a larger impact on those who earn the least, either because the pay for their jobs is less or because they are at the start of their careers and, thus, at the bottom of their pay scales. For the second and third year of the collective agreement, we are demanding an increase of \$1/hour or 3%, based on whichever is most beneficial for each worker. Our wage demands also include a clause for protection against inflation so that no one will ever again become poorer while working for Quebecers.

**You are a public sector worker and a member of the CSN?
Create an account on AGIR, the CSN public sector web app.**

<https://app.secteurpublic.quebec>

Working and practice conditions

Our bargaining proposals also clearly reflect that staff attraction and retention in the public networks require improved working and practice conditions. Work overload is now the norm in our workplaces, which makes the situation unsustainable in all sectors. This can be seen, in particular, in the skyrocketing costs of disability insurance. To remedy this crisis situation, we have decided to include a demand related to working conditions in our list of central table demands, even though these issues are generally negotiated at sectoral tables. We are demanding that significant financial margins be provided to improve working and practice conditions, specifically to allow for job creation.

Demands with a social focus

In our list of demands, we also included demands about other matters that are negotiated with the Conseil du trésor. Some of these demands extend beyond the public sector. For example, among our demands related to the pension plan (RREGOP), we are demanding that the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), which manages RREGOP funds, quickly proceed with fossil fuel divestment.

Another example of a demand with a social focus is that related to whistle-blowers: we are demanding that a clause be included that would ensure that public sector workers would be free to denounce problematic situations that occur in our workplaces and that are detrimental to the well-being of the public.

See all of the demands submitted to the Conseil du trésor:
www.secteurpublic.quebec/demandes

In action

The demonstration that took place when we submitted our demands concluded a two-day gathering during which over 600 activists from unions in the four CSN public-sector federations came together to reflect on and discuss methods of reaching our bargaining objectives. Discussions with stakeholders whose struggles bore fruit, in both the union and community contexts, fuelled debates and provided new perspectives with regard to mobilization. Coming out of this reflection exercise, one thing is clear: we cannot be on autopilot—we need to do things differently, think outside of the box, and regain confidence in our capabilities.

It is now up to us all to present our demands. We have a strong draft agreement that meets the needs of public service workers. It is with the combined strength of 150,000 CSN public sector members that we are beginning this round of bargaining—together, we will succeed!

