

INFO-NEGO #8

April 9, 2020

Where Are We at With Bargaining?

Current Situation

Since March 13, as you know, things have progressed extremely quickly. In only a few days, we went from being in a bargaining situation to experiencing an unprecedented crisis.

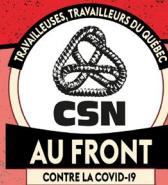
In mid-March, as we were becoming collectively aware of the magnitude of the health crisis and the enormous impact it would have on Quebec, as well as on all public service workers, in particular, health and social services network staff and emergency day care staff, the government told us that it would like to put bargaining aside for three years, by quickly renewing public sector collective agreements by their expiry date, March 31.

For CSN public sector federations, it quickly became clear that immediate measures had to be implemented to ensure that workers could devote all of their energy to responding to the crisis. These measures included a premium for all public service workers called on to contribute to efforts to combat COVID-19 and wage adjustments so that no one would become poorer, as well as the implementation of safe working conditions for all.

It was also clear, however, that the current crisis and the bargaining schedule that the government wished to impose to quickly renew employment contracts did not provide conditions that would allow for holding essential discussions on a

number of issues related to both working conditions and remuneration. In this context, for the CSN, demanding that bargaining be suspended for a period of up to 18 months was the most sensible and responsible way to respond to the government.

M. LEGAULT,
LES ANGES GARDIENS MÉRITENT
PLUS QUE DES MOTS



PRIME SPÉCIALE : ENTRE 3 \$ ET 4 \$/H
POUR TOUT LE PERSONNEL DU SECTEUR
PUBLIC EN LUTTE CONTRE LA COVID-19

With this strong message conveyed by the CSN, both at the bargaining tables and in the media, the government finally had to put aside its desire to resolve everything quickly, i.e. by March 31. By means of a ministerial order, it presented a number of measures to address the crisis, including a special premium that did not meet the needs expressed by the CSN.

We will continue our discussions with the Conseil du trésor on the need to correct several things about the premium for those on the front line and about the importance of not hurriedly negotiating public sector collective agreements on the back of an envelope, so to speak. The current situation must not, in any way, serve to hide the issues taking place in these networks—these issues were very real before the crisis and will be even more so afterwards.

We will keep you informed of all developments. Until then, we invite you to share on social media the various visibility tools prepared by the CSN public sector, which are available on the CSN public sector website. Visuals were created for you to post as a front-line worker or in solidarity with front-line workers. During these difficult times, your contribution, i.e. that of all those working in public services, deserves to be acknowledged more than ever. Feel free to share these tools on social media.



Timeline of Key Events Related to the Central Bargaining Table

- **March 12:** The CSN and the Conseil du trésor held a regular bargaining session, mainly about maintaining premiums and budgets ending on March 30.
- **March 13:** In connection with the COVID-19 crisis that was beginning, the government asked labour organizations to suspend bargaining sessions until April 5 and announced the closure of educational institutions.
- **March 14:** The Quebec government declared, for the first time in its history, a public health emergency.
- **March 15:** The premier met with labour organizations and provided the possibility of renewing collective agreements for the health and social services sector only, for a period of three years. The CSN responded that it did not have the authority, among other things, to discuss such a renewal, and even less so for only one sector.
- **Week of March 16 to 22:** CSN public sector federations and their bargaining committees met multiple times to draft a response to the government. This included various measures to be implemented immediately, which would allow for suspending bargaining for a period of up to 18 months so that combatting COVID-19 could be the sole focus.
- **March 21:** The government reiterated that it wished to put bargaining in its rear-view mirror as quickly as possible. To do so, it told us that it wished to settle all collective agreements in the networks and public service before March 29.
- **March 23:** The CSN submitted its response to the Conseil du trésor, i.e. to suspend bargaining for collective agreements for a period of up to 18 months, as well as the following key measures:
 - Annual wage adjustments of 2.2% on April 1, 2020, and 2.2% on April 1, 2021, for all workers in the public sector; and
 - Maintenance of all premiums and budgets ending March 30.
 - The following emergency measures, related to the crisis, applicable retroactive to the declaration of the public health emergency, were also included:
 - A special premium of \$3/hour for all health and social services staff and for other workers in the public sector called on to contribute their efforts to emergency measures related to COVID-19 and \$4/hour for those providing additional availability;
 - All overtime hours paid at double time; and
 - Solutions to ensure safe workplaces and working conditions, in order to allow public sector workers to get through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Timeline of Key Events Related to the Central Bargaining Table

- **March 23 to 27:** Spokespersons for the CSN public sector had many exchanges with the Conseil du trésor, which allowed for no significant advances, as the government was not able to come full circle on both our response submitted March 23 and its own framework for bargaining.
- **March 26:** The Conseil du trésor submitted a partial offer. It essentially proposed that we accept its initial submission from December 12, 2019, which all labour organizations had deemed unacceptable at the time. It also asked that we accept the status quo when it came to working conditions for the next three years. On April 2, all of the details of its offer were finally provided.
- **March 23 to April 2:** Both at the bargaining tables and in the media, the CSN reiterated its position with regard to the need to fully devote resources to the crisis by implementing emergency measures for public sector workers. The CSN's public sector federations used every possible platform to state a clear message: conducting bargaining for our collective agreements in haste, with no real space to discuss all of the issues taking place in the networks, is unacceptable.
- **March 30:** Following repeated representations on the part of the CSN, the Conseil du trésor informed bargaining spokespersons that the premiums and amounts that were to end that same day would be maintained for a period of six months, other than the annual budgets for the development of professional practice and of professional supervision of newly hired nursing and cardio-respiratory care personnel.
- **The morning of April 2:** The Conseil du trésor provided more details about what it submitted on March 26. It told CSN spokespersons that it intended to propose a premium of 8% for certain types of jobs in some health care units and sectors, and only for the health and social services network. The CSN denounced the insufficient amount of the premium and the fact that the government proposal ignored a large number of COVID-19 front-line workers.
- **The afternoon of April 2:** At a press conference, the Chair of the Conseil du Trésor, Christian Dubé, announced the implementation of two special premiums: a premium for exposure to risk of 8%, limited to certain work locations and health care units and a recognition premium of 4% for other health and social services workers. With regard to bargaining, Mr. Dubé stated for the first time that there was no rush to renew collective agreements.
- **The morning of April 4:** The CSN made representations once again to the Conseil du trésor in order for changes to be made to the special premiums that were announced, in accordance with its demands submitted March 23.
- **The afternoon of April 4:** The announced premiums were confirmed in a ministerial order. While, following CSN representations, the scope of the 8% premium was expanded to include a greater number of workers, the premiums are still insufficient and unfair, as they imply that the lives of all those who put themselves in harm's way on the front line against COVID-19 do not have the same value.
- Additional meetings with the Conseil du trésor will take place in the coming weeks.