



ECONOMIC SITUATION: QUÉBEC AVOIDED THE WORST

Gathered recently in a general negotiation council (CGN), the delegates were provided with the most recent data on the state of the public finances and the most up-to-date financial indicators.

This overview suggests that, even though the financial situation of Québec isn't what it was before the health crisis, it remains true that we avoided until now the worst scenarios put forward by some forecasters. Despite a return in a deficit situation, Québec's relative good position certainly allows the government to meet our demands and improve the working conditions of public networks employees.

In that context, we believe that the tight financial framework that the government offers for the current negotiation rests on a political choice and not on the public finances capacity to sustain public services that are more necessary than ever. Consequently, visibility actions will be organized to denounce this choice, remind the government that we won't bear the cost of unjustified cutbacks again and reiterate the importance to invest in public services.

Central table negotiations

Since our last publication, the intersectoral table met eight times. After repeatedly asking the employer to react to all our demands, it was ultimately on Friday, October 2, five months after we submitted our global counter-offer to the Treasury Board (TB) representatives, that we finally obtained the last answers. Let's not forget that it was on May 6, 2020, that the CSQ filed a new proposition in reaction to the global "tentative agreement" proposal that the government had filed on April 27.

The employer's reactions to our proposals are easy to summarize: all our demands are denied. The TB is fixated on its own proposal. The employer has no interest in the implementation of a job evaluation committee. It prefers to keep full responsibility for maintaining pay equity and the entirety of its managerial rights as to the creation or modification of positions. Also, there is no willingness to conduct work to compare the treatment of Québec's public sector's personnel to that of other public administrations' personnel, namely that of other provinces.

As for our salary demand filed on May 6, it's only on October 2 that we learned that the government maintained its April 27 position. As for our demand to invest more in the working conditions and conditions of practice, the TB deems it inadmissible on the grounds that it doesn't respect its financial framework and that, regardless of the needs of the health and education institutions, which are more and more urgent. This demand consists in a budget equivalent to 3% of the total payroll for each federation, for the sectoral tables negotiations.



A government stuck in its initial position

Another important demand is the one aiming to renew the bonuses related to some key positions of the public sector, like specialized workers, psychologists and some job categories of personnel working in CHSLDs or with disruptive behaviour disorder (DBD) clients. This demand is still on the table, but the employer requires that in exchange for the bonus extensions, we give up any demand regarding their improvement.

In short, the employer's message to the central and sectoral negotiation tables has been the same until now: the only possible outcome must respect the negotiation framework it has defined. The government said it wants to resolve the negotiation quickly, but this will have to be done on its own terms. As for the glaring problems in the working environments, like overload, burnout, lacking work organization and staff shortage, there is no way it will be discussed before the collective agreements are renewed.

Sectoral tables negotiations

You will thus learn without surprise that the sectoral tables negotiations are also moving at a slow pace. The mere fact of having to agree on a meeting calendar requires many days of reflection from the employer.

On the union side, our spokespersons have almost finished presenting our demands. It would now be time for the employer to make its positions known, but it shows

little eagerness to do so. It pretends not to have a mandate, refuses to comment on our main demands and multiplies tricks to try and gain time from lack of willingness to negotiate.

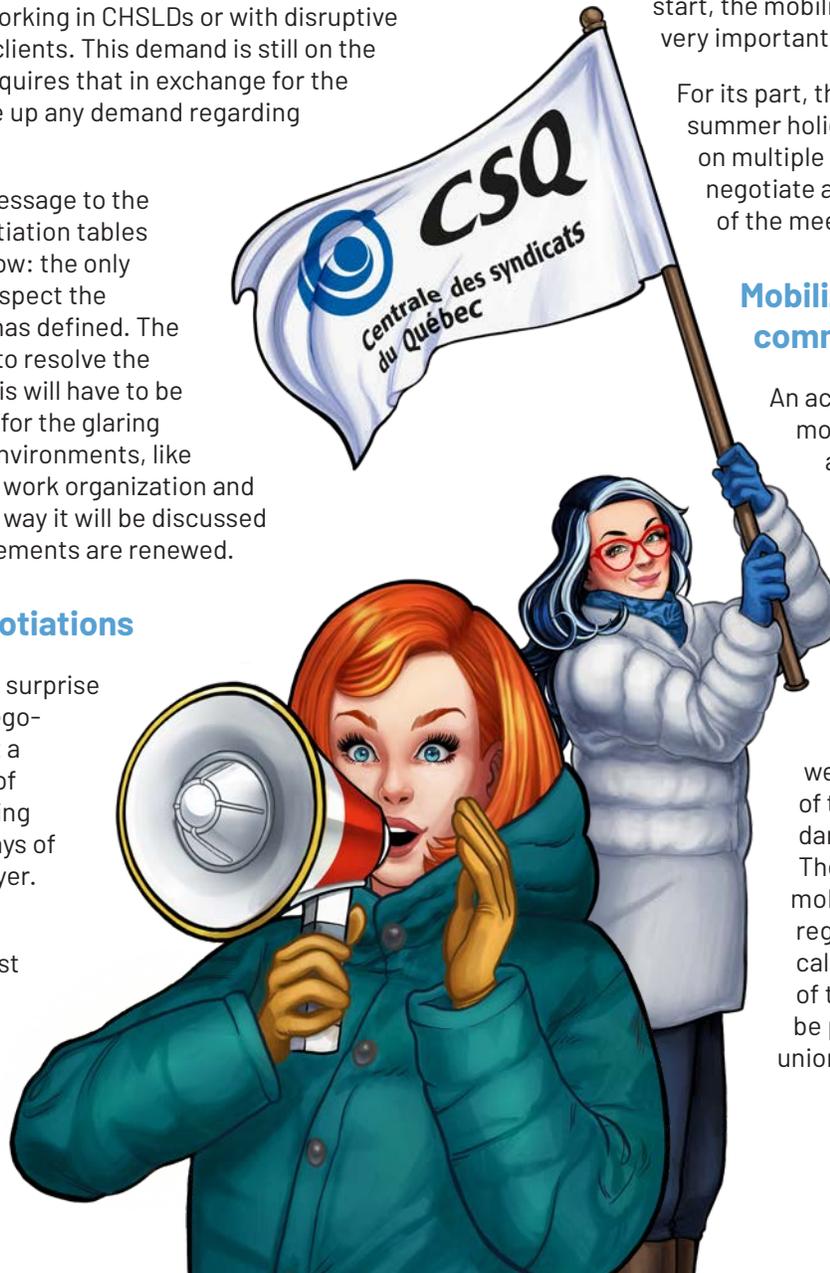
Clearly, if we want the true negotiations to start, the mobilization actions will take on a very important role in the next weeks.

For its part, the union, since the end of the summer holidays in mid-August, expressed on multiple occasions its willingness to negotiate and even to increase the pace of the meetings.

Mobilization and communication actions

An actualized version of the mobilization and communication action plan was suggested at the CGN, taking into account the current health context. The delegation adopted the plan after having specified the communication lines.

Essentially, actions will be carried out in the coming weeks according to the evolution of the negotiations and in accordance to public health guidance. The strategic group, the action-mobilization officials and the regional coordinations will be called upon for the execution of this plan, which should soon be presented to you by your union representatives.



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