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COMMON FRONT ON STRIKE DECEMBER 9

Yesterday, the Common Front announced that a one-day national strike would be taking place next December 9. After walking off the job on three different days, after tabling a principled counter-proposal to the Government and after announcing the postponement of certain days for strikes to be held, the tone certainly did change at our different bargaining tables. However, significant obstacles still remain, both at the sector-based tables and at the central bargaining table, notably with regard to issues involving working conditions, salaries and the pension plan.

Some of the management bargaining committees have gone so far as to evoke, at some of the sector-based tables, the desire to reach an agreement between now and Sunday. Is this a sincere undertaking, or a new “game of smoke and mirrors”? This is what we’ll see over the next few hours. If the Government isn’t serious, if the obstacles aren’t removed quickly, there will be a national strike of the 400,000 members of the Common Front next December 9, and there are moreover mandates for two more strike days that still remain. All the strike notices will be sent out between now and the end of the day Friday.

Denis Lessard, a journalist at La Presse, wrote this morning that “everything is in place for the conclusion of a collective agreement, next week, between the Government of Quebec and the labour federations.” Really?

But for this to happen, negotiators will have to have the mandates to enable them to respond to the demands that we have formulated, both at the central bargaining table and the sector-based tables, and the demands for rollbacks made by the management will have to be withdrawn. While the blitz was being announced yester-

day at certain sector-based tables, the initial feedback seemed to indicate that management’s pruning exercise still remains insufficient.

At the central bargaining table, despite the intensification of discussions since the tabling of the Common Front’s counter-proposal, Treasury Board representatives have still not responded to the three principles that we have been advocating all along: stop the impoverishment of public sector workers, put an end to their salary disparity and allow them to benefit from the collective enrichment of Quebec society.

The CSN and Common Front bargaining teams remain available at all times to do the work necessary to reach an agreement that is satisfactory to all public sector employees. It’s now up to the Government to send the necessary mandates to its negotiators!