



The CSN Goes Before the Courts to Have Bill 43 Invalidated

Our hearings before the Superior Court to have Bill 43 — the bill that allowed the government to unilaterally rule on our working conditions during the 2004–2005 round of bargaining — declared unconstitutional are finally underway and going well. Conseil du trésor representatives have presented their case, and now it is up to the labour unions, including the CSN, to present theirs. All of our arguments will be presented to Judge Claudine Roy, who is presiding over the proceedings, by the end of March at the latest. We remind you that the objective of this legal recourse is to have Bill 43 invalidated, as it was adopted in violation of charter provisions guaranteeing freedom of association.

On January 30, a ruling by the Commission des relations du travail (CRT) vindicated us. Its decision attests to the fact that the government and the then president of the Conseil du trésor, Monique Jérôme-Forget, acted in bad faith during the 2004–2005 round of bargaining related to the renewal of our collective agreements. In March 2007, the International Labour Office had also condemned the government decree, saying that it violates international labour conventions. We are not, however, participating in the recourse presented to the CRT because, although this body may be able to pass judgment on an employer’s ability to bargain in good faith, it has no power to invalidate the law that the government used to impose working conditions on us.

Wages to Increase on April 1, 2012

On April 1, workers in the public sector will see their wage and salary scales increased by 1.0%. (For CEGEP teachers, though, the increase will only take place on June 1.) That percentage may be increased based on economic growth indicators; in fact, during the last negotiations, it was agreed that a maximum additional increase of 0.5% would be applied if Quebec’s nominal gross domestic product (GDP) for 2010 and 2011 was higher than the expected growth rate of 3.8% and 4.5%, respectively. We know that the GDP for 2010 was higher than 3.8%, but official information on the 2011 GDP will only be released in the coming months. This is why we made sure our collective agreements stipulated that the adjustment was to be retroactive to April 1, 2012. What’s more, nothing is preventing the government from acting now to include the adjustment in the planned wage increases.

Quebec’s **nominal gross domestic product** is an economic growth indicator that is used to measure everything produced in Quebec by residents and non-residents. The term “nominal” is used because the indicator is calculated according to prices that are in effect during the reference period. Real GDP, on the other hand, refers to that which is produced by an economy and is evaluated without taking price increases into consideration

The RREGOP

With everything that’s being said about retirement plans lately, we thought it would be appropriate to shed some light on the Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan (RREGOP). First, it should be noted that the risks are already shared by the employing government and its salaried workers directly from their respective funds..

Moreover, workers have absorbed significant increases to their retirement plan contributions. At the start of the 2000s, the contribution rate was set at 5.35% of the portion of salary exceeding 35% of the maximum pensionable earnings (MPE), while today it is set at 8.94% of the portion that exceeds 33% of the MPE. This represents a total increase of over 70%. That’s what we call doing your part! Especially

knowing that the employing government does not put all of its contributions into a fund, as it should.

Also keep in mind that the RREGOP is not as generous a retirement plan as people would like to believe. According to the last actuarial evaluation, the average pension of a RREGOP retiree is \$21,847 per year before the age of 65 and \$8,979 after 65. From then on, the RREGOP pension is coordinated, i.e., reduced to take into account the public Québec Pension Plan (QPP). During the last negotiations, we did what was necessary to improve long-term funding for our pension plan. People must be reminded of this so we can put an end to the attack on our working conditions.



Recognizing Specialized Workers

A Willingness to Agree to Joint Recommendations

January 19 marked the fifth meeting of the joint working group, composed of the Conseil du trésor and the Intersyndicale — the FSSS-CSN, FEESP-CSN, FTQ and SISP (CSQ, SFPQ). The meeting revealed a certain willingness on the part of the Conseil du trésor to agree to joint recommendations. The working group indicated that there was room for continued talks based on what had been accomplished to date. It was therefore agreed that three other meetings would take place before April and that talks would continue into June in the prospect of work proceeding quickly.

Also during the meeting, at the request of several union representatives, the Conseil du trésor made it clear that it would supply, to the extent possible, more details about its methodology. This would make it feasible to quantitatively analyze how the public and parapublic sectors attract and retain specialized workers. Within the framework of continued analysis and discussion, such information will allow for more effective deliberation and leave us better equipped to make decisions regarding the employment groups that fall under the all-party agreement.

Message to Employers

In addition, to increase employers' awareness of the challenges involving the attracting and retaining of specialized workers, the Intersyndicale agreed that all unions have a duty to send an unequivocal message to management. This message must clearly state that specialized workers want to be recognized across all sectors. The goal is to increase the awareness among public and parapublic employers of the difficulties that this group of workers has faced for several years now. Such solidarity between institutions is essential to the progress of the talks with the Conseil du trésor.

We remind you that the work carried out by the Intersyndicale and Conseil du trésor stems from the agreement between the Common Front and the government. The objective of this agreement is to find solutions to the unique problems encountered by specialized workers.