



EXCEPTIONAL CRISIS, EXCEPTIONAL RESPONSE

Today, the General Negotiation Council (CGN) delegation gave the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) negotiation team the mandate to make a counter-offer in response to the negotiating framework the government wants to impose regarding the collective agreements renewal in the public sector.

At the CSQ, democracy is essential and, in that, consultation constitutes a central element of the negotiation process. Democracy takes time and energy, and it takes on its full meaning today in this time of exceptional crisis which is hitting Québec and the whole world.

"CSQ members are on the front lines of the management of this crisis. From early childhood educational services personnel, to school support staff and healthcare personnel working in health and social services centres, workers of all sectors are doing their part so that Québec can face this crisis with calm and the least inconveniences, and they have their hands full!" states CSQ president, Sonia Ethier.

A crisis with unpredictable impacts

As soon as it became obvious that the coronavirus crisis would hit Québec in full force, the CSQ answered the Québec prime minister's call and agreed to collaborate in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

In these times of crisis, the situation evolves at record speed. Since March 15, 2020, the Québec government has insisted to engage in an expedited negotiation with the public sector trade unions, with the objective to quickly enter an agreement. The reason given by the government is the need to concentrate its efforts in the coronavirus fight.



CSQ president Sonia Ethier adds: "The situation has quickly changed. Because of the pandemic, the negotiation context of three weeks ago no longer exists. The emergency measures quickly intruded on our members' working conditions. On March 23, François Legault's government decided that settling all collective agreements before March 29 is absolutely necessary. With confinement conditions making it far from ideal to react in the face of adversity, we see an obligation of solidarity to secure the interests of our thousands of members while maintaining quality public services."

Exceptional measures, exceptional means

As noted above, the government wants to establish a quick negotiation framework to ensure "industrial peace" for a three-year period. In response to this appeal by the government, considering the current crisis and uncertainty context, and to ensure the defence of workers, the CGN delegates refused to embark in an accelerated negotiation and intend to suggest a whole other negotiation framework to the government.

That counter-offer is the result of a consultation of the CSQ affiliate trade unions gathered in the CGN. Following the meeting, the mandate given to the negotiation committee includes two main objectives:

- ✓ Extend the current collective agreements to pick up the negotiation after the crisis
- ✓ Establish guarantees to financially protect our members

The mandate incidentally gives the CSQ the responsibility to challenge the government so the current crisis does not jeopardize the possibility of sectoral agreements to meet urgent needs on the field. The Centrale thus suggests postponing the sectoral agreements negotiations to a more favourable time while providing for arrangements for the adoption of short-term solutions for members.

The CSQ negotiation teams are currently meeting with the government representatives to present the details of our counter-offer. To respect the negotiation process, a communication with details of the CSQ counter-offer will be sent shortly.



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