

# THE APTS IN NEGOTIATIONS

## ***Intersectorial management proposal filed Quick but disappointing***

On November 30, the government filed its intersectorial proposal for contract talks in the public and parapublic sectors. While the promptness of its filing reflects both sides' desire to rapidly forge ahead, there is a huge gap between this proposal and the union demands filed by the Common Front, to which the APTS belongs.

The government proposal is nowhere near what our members legitimately expect. It provides only a 7% increase over five years to cover all labour costs, including those associated with maintaining pay equity, salary relativity, pensions and other working conditions ensuing from the sectorial demands. This in no way guarantees a pay increase for public-sector employees who clearly need it, as demonstrated earlier this month by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*. The APTS as part of the Common Front is demanding 2% annual pay increases to protect the purchasing power of our members. In addition, it is calling for a catch-up increase of 49 cents an hour, which comes to an average increase of 1.75% a year.

The APTS and each of the Common Front members will study the government's proposal thoroughly. To get the full picture, however, we have to see how management representatives react at all the sectorial tables. This will happen soon, as the legal deadline for filing the sectorial proposals is December 28.

The APTS wants to see these management proposals improved and have the contract talks end with a settlement – not with special legislation, as in 2005. We firmly intend to reach a settlement with the government before March 31, 2010.

## ***Public-sector salaries are lagging behind and the gap is widening, according to the ISQ***

The 2009 Report of the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* (ISQ) paints a dismaying picture of public and parapublic employees' salaries lagging behind those of the private sector. It demonstrates the legitimacy of our salary demands in the current negotiations. The ISQ shows that employees in public health and social services earn 8.7% less than other Québec employees in equivalent jobs. This gap is up from 7.7% last year, and is becoming more marked. If employee benefits are factored in, public-sector employees' salaries lagged 3.7% behind those of Québec employees as a whole in 2009.

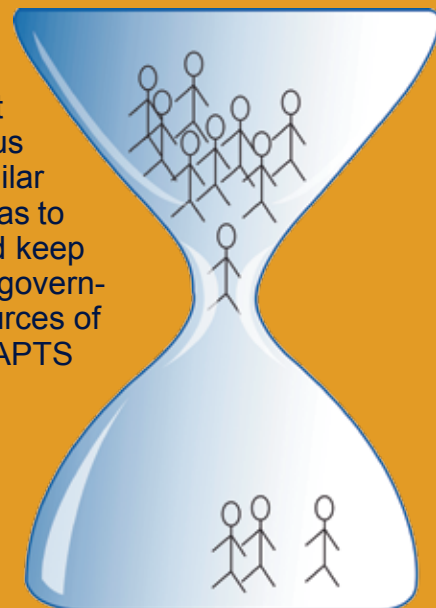
The ISQ study also shows that the salaries set out in the public-sector collective agreements are not competitive. For certain job titles, the salary at the top of the scale in the public sector is lower than the entry-level salary normally paid in other sectors of the economy.

Yet at the same time, labour shortages in the public sector are spreading to almost every job group. The needs are glaring, and available positions are increasingly difficult to fill. To ensure the future of our public services, we have to find ways of attracting new personnel and retaining the more experienced workers - which will largely depend on more competitive salaries.

## Wanting to have their cake and eat it too: private placement agencies and outside sources of labour\* in the health sector

Worn out by the chronic shortage of employees in the sector, our first reaction is to welcome outside professionals who come in and give the existing team a hand. In the short term, these additional resources act as a bandaid. But the marked upsurge in the number of employees from private placement agencies and other outside sources of labour in the sector has many pernicious effects, including that of creating two classes of employees who perform similar duties but with very different conditions. To reverse this situation, the sector has to offer working conditions that are likely to attract and retain the workforce and keep it in the public system. This is a message that we intend to drive home to the government in the current negotiations. The detrimental effects of using outside sources of labour in the sector are summarized below, along with the solutions the APTS intends to propose to rectify them.

The more our sector relies on private placement agencies, the greater the problem of labour shortages in our job titles. In fact, personnel is increasingly exiting the public system to work for placement agencies, and greater numbers of new graduates at the start of their careers are also branching off to the private sector. The same personnel is re-entering the public system through the back door via outsourcing, with much higher salaries, fewer restrictions on schedules and choice of vacation time, and less involvement required in the work teams. This all costs a lot of money, and personnel in the public system is left with the complex cases, thankless schedules and lower remuneration. In 2007-2008, outside sources of labour performed 9,798,037 hours of work in the public system at a cost of \$324,352,226<sup>1</sup>, primarily in Montréal but across the province as well. This reality does not only affect nurses – many of our members are involved as well. In 2007-2008, the number of hours of work performed by outside sources of labour in relation to the total hours worked in the public system (expressed as a percentage) was as follows, by job title: 5.8% for occupational therapists, 4.5% for physiotherapists, 3.7% for audiologists, and 2.6% for psychologists.



\*Translator's note: the term "main-d'œuvre indépendante" covers all outside sources of labour, including self-employed professionals in private practice.

<sup>1</sup> Source: AQESSS

(Association québécoise d'établissements de santé et de services sociaux)

### For public solutions

The APTS is demanding public solutions to the problem of labour shortages. Concretely, to attract and retain employees in the sector, it is imperative to have better working conditions to induce them to pursue their career in the public system. That would be a much more cost-effective investment than using costly outside sources of labour. Union demands for the current negotiations were drawn up with this in mind. They include measures to facilitate work-personal life balance, pay raises, increased inconvenience premiums and greater funds for human resources development.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services and the *Association québécoise des établissements de santé et de services sociaux* (AQESSS) are well aware of this reality. They have indicated their willingness to reduce their reliance on private placement agencies and "Mr. or Ms. Private Professional Inc." The challenge now will be to agree on solutions to set in place.

In broader terms, the delegates at the APTS General Council meeting in November adopted a proposal for the APTS to take all the necessary steps to block the use of outside sources of labour in the public health and social services sector. We will keep you posted of any developments in this process.

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For further information on the current talks, consult the Info-Négo hotline at 450 670-5396 or 1 800 263-4469 and our website at [www.aptsg.com](http://www.aptsg.com).



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