



The government's response to our demands

Far from bridging the gap

The government presented us with its proposals on Monday, November 30. Here is an overview of how the Treasury Board's proposals fall short of meeting employees' needs.

We are asking for 11.25% raises over three years, including a catch-up increase. The government is offering us an increase in "labour costs" that is limited to 7% over five years. That's a sizeable difference.

Salaries are only one component of labour costs. The Treasury Board's proposal would include the costs of maintaining pay equity, salary relativity, pensions and "any adjustment measures introduced, where applicable, to rectify sectorial problems". The rest would go to salary increases for a five-year contract. At present, we have no idea of what these potential raises might look like, or whether they will be granted at all.

The meeting on November 30 was very brief, as planned. The union negotiators did not have an opportunity to clarify the remaining gray areas related to the government objective. This is why we are using the conditional tense here, as we are presenting our union interpretations that are based on the proposals filed, which will have to be verified. Other bargaining sessions between now and the end of 2009 will give us a clearer idea.

Organization of work

The government also introduced the question of organization of work in its response. At a press conference, the government spokespersons explained that potential savings resulting from a reorganization of the work could be used in finding solutions to sectorial problems. Here, too, a number of aspects have to be clarified.

As for family-work balance, the government is not at all open to a framework law. It argues that it already passed various pieces of legislation on the heels of its policy on the family.

In terms of parental rights, the government agrees to work with us to bring our collective agreements in line with the various laws, but it seems to be excluding the *Charter of human rights and freedoms* from this exercise.

As far as skilled workers are concerned, the government will inform us of its position later on.

There's no question about it - we're not giving in!

We've gotten steadily worse off over the years, and we've had enough! Our demands are legitimate and realistic. For the future of public services, a change of direction is necessary.

Our Common Front has already borne fruit, nonetheless. In contrast to the intransigent attitude of the government in 2003-2005, the latter now seems to be open to genuine collective bargaining. The government also responded to our demands barely a month after we filed them, just as we asked it to do. This leads us to believe that the government is willing to arrive at a negotiated settlement before March 31, in keeping with the strategic framework we adopted.

It's up to us to demonstrate our unwavering determination in the next few months.