

Over many meetings...

Since January, the Negotiation and Mobilization Committee has redoubled its efforts to reach an agreement by March 31. Despite the climate of respect between the two negotiating parties, signs of openness on our main priorities remain nonexistent: no new resources have been proposed for teaching (volet 1); no discussions on our salary scales (the issue has been referred to the central table); and, finally, nothing has been proposed to improve job security! We describe these initial exchanges as the start of a slow negotiation limited so far to peripheral subjects, the « operationalization » of our employers' demands, our insistence on the need to address our workload demands, and the first signs of possible openness on some issues from our employers.

A Slow Negotiation

Focussed on Peripheral Issues

The four meetings that took place in January gave us the opportunity to explain some of our more peripheral demands, including those on *medical arbitration, the possibility of partial medical leave, delaying vacation and a progressive return to work after a medical leave, increased access for nonpermanent teachers to certain leaves, how to calculate professional experience, conditions for gradual retirement, introducing a general offer of services, the contractual link and hiring requirements*. Beyond asking questions of clarification, the *Comité patronal de négociation des collègues* (CPNC) did not respond formally to our demands until the beginning of February. Instead, they tried to introduce their own main priorities (hiring, probation, evaluation and accountability) without ever specifying exactly how they wanted to change them in our collective agreement. We invited their spokespersons to « operationalize » their demands, which had been presented simply as « issues », and also to let us know the degree to which they are open to negotiating our peripheral demands.

On February 1, following our repeated requests, the CPNC defined their demands in concrete terms. Here are the salient facts.

Workload

First of all, our employers want the collective agreement to better reflect our workload as described in the teaching profession report. For them, this means adding new required tasks to volet 1: the development of departmental course guidelines, participation in various kinds of meetings, professional assistance, student success, etc. They believe we must be made accountable for all of these activities and that they require an evaluation mechanism to ensure that they are being accomplished.

In addition, our counterparts want to clarify the role of department coordinators so that they are « real links » (*véritables traits d'union*) between teachers and academic administrators, in particular with regard to respecting institutional policies and regulations. As the CPNC believes this will require special skills,

while coordinators may continue to be elected by departmental assemblies, these « nominations » will have to be confirmed by the Academic Dean in order to satisfy the requirement for « accountability ». Note also that the only example the CPNC could give us as a possible change in work organization to generate savings was to reorganizing coordinators by sector in order to reduce them in number.

Our employers also propose to modify the functions of program committee coordinators; they want them to have to present a work plan and an annual report to the Academic Council, once again to ensure accountability.

With regards to the issues of programs with low enrolments, students with special needs and Continuing Education, the CPNC simply stated that these are, for them, priority issues. If there is to be an addition of resources for these purposes, they will have to come from savings generated by reorganizing our work or redirecting some « additional resources » (such as column D or federal transfers).

Continuing Education

According to our counterparts, it's not unthinkable that FTEs might be added in order to create full-time loads in Continuing Education or to convert such resources into funds to pay those who participate in consultative meetings. At this point, the CPNC introduced the concept of «key teachers» (profs pivot) who would be pedagogically responsible for a project. It goes without saying that for our employers, since Continuing Education's raison d'être is to meet current training needs (e.g. AEC programs with limited life spans), such resources cannot permanently be assigned to any particular program. In addition, as some training is extremely targeted, the CPNC wants administrators to be able to bypass hiring priorities in order to hire a teacher who is very well connected with the labour market. They also want to make the rules related to double employment more flexible, in order to allow teachers from regular day-division teaching who have specialized skills in a particular area to also give courses in Continuing Education.

Job Security

Finally, we obtained more details on the probationary period for new teachers. Contrary to what was written in our employers' demands, teachers would have a hiring priority from the start. However, in order to keep it, they would have to pass at least two evaluations over a period of up to three years, during which the withdrawal of hiring priority would not be eligible for a grievance. The College could indicate their expectations to these teachers and completely break the employment link after just one evaluation if it was particularly poor. However, once the probationary period is completed, the College would not be able to remove a teacher's hiring priority.

Our Insistence on More Teaching Resources

On February 3, we explained our workload demands again by putting them in the context of the multiple reasons why workloads have increased over the years and by defining how this has changed the working conditions of teachers. The brilliant presentation

of our spokesperson seemed to catch our employers' representatives, who asked for a long unscheduled break. On its return, the CPNC fell back on the government's official line and invited us to accomplish «organizational savings». They noted that for any new resources to be added will be «extremely rare».

On February 17, in order to show how important it is that teaching resources be added for the entire cégep system, we invited the Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de cégep (FEC-CSQ) to join us for the first hour of the meeting at our negotiating table. With one voice, the two union federations reaffirmed that no agreement can be reached without a significant addition of teaching resources in volet 1. We also explained the basis of our proposals to change the formula for financing teaching resources for the colleges and the parameters of the individual workload (CI) formula.

The First Signs of Openness

The negotiation meetings held in the month of February were mainly focussed on our peripheral demands and on both sides' demands for clarifications to certain areas in the collective agreement. The employers' representatives went over section 7 of our demands and indicated which ones they were open to discuss further.

Therefore, exploratory negotiations are possible on the following subjects:

- that medical leaves not be sufficient grounds for refusing to offer a teaching load;
- that the College must accept the decision of the arbitrator following medical arbitration;
- that professional experience greater than 10 years be fully recognized;
- that Terrebonne be removed from the list of teaching units in article 8-5.04;
- that the report on the use of teaching resources by discipline be presented in the same format as the statement on the use of teaching personnel;
- that the substitution of workloads between regular teaching and Continuing Education be permitted for part-time teachers as well;
- a solution to the problem of how to calculate seniority;
- a change to how to calculate experience;
- a clarification of a contractual link;
- a right to withdraw for teachers without job security;
- a clarification to state that teaching allocation for multidisciplinary courses creates posts;
- a clarification of the rules related to gradual retirement.