

Nego Bulletin

Massive Rally wraps up a week of successful JACFA mobilization;

Negotiation on Salary Relativity Stalls

They came and came, wave after wave, bearing their protest banners, noise makers and *casseroles*. They came pushing their strollers, chanting their Anti-Austerity slogans. The crowd was massive, evocative of the Quebec student protests of 2012. An estimated 125,000 people turned out for the Anti-Austerity Protest in Montreal last Saturday.

JACFA contingent at the event was over **30 strong**, with **25 teachers from 15 different departments**, and **8 family and friends**. The rally capped off a week of successful local mobilization where we rolled out green mobilization scarves (the first 50 sold-out), and held a successful Anti-Austerity Cake Rally in the Atrium, giving out over 350 pieces of cake and advice on how the government budget can be balanced without ruthless slashing.

On a different front, the ongoing re-evaluations of our salary scales have stalled with the Treasury Board. They are part of a process that is separate from the current Collective Agreement negotiations because they entail promises made in the last round of negotiations. Born out of the Pay Equity settlement nine years ago, the salary relativity exercise involves the re-evaluation of all public sector jobs vis-a-vis their placement on the government salary classification system. The evaluation is carried out jointly by union representatives and Treasury Board members, based on a series of factors such as the complexity of the work, the workload, and work qualifications. According to FNEEQ calculations using government criteria, we should be higher than our present level.

Last fall, during ongoing talks, the government tried to downgrade our position on the scale from 22 to 21, which would have placed us below primary school teachers. After our successful mobilization, they relented by promising us a minimum level of 22, without precluding the possibility of attaining a higher one.

Now, once again the government is playing games. They have suspended the process because they claim that due to the current Collective Agreement negotiations, they do not have time to do it separately. They want to merge the salary relativity process with those negotiations. FNEEQ, along with other affected unions, has patently refused that route because it would mean taking a step backwards, renegotiating something already agreed upon in principle. FNEEQ's next step will be to take the issue to labour arbitration.

This latest setback demonstrates that getting our current government onside is neither a simple nor straightforward affair. Nonetheless, with the latest rally we have clearly and unequivocally demonstrated our resolve to stand by our demands when they are fair and reasonable. In the words of our CSN comrades, Saturday's rally was a "good start". For JACFA, it laid the groundwork and created the momentum necessary for an upcoming semester of mounting mobilization.

