



Salary, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities

The APTS-FIQ Alliance demands



After filing the FIQ demands on working conditions on June 1st, the APTS-FIQ Alliance presented its counter-proposal on intersectoral matters to the employer party on June 5th. The APTS-FIQ Alliance is presenting the salary, retirement, parental rights and regional disparities demands.

Unlike the government offer that made no effort to meet the legitimate demands of the 131,000 employees in the health and social services network, the alliance's demands demonstrate a real willingness to negotiate while taking into account the specific situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that impacts Québec's economic situation.

The employer party now has the counter-proposals on both the sectoral and intersectoral matters. It's time to negotiate.

Salaries

The government is offering a 5% increase over three years, with a lump sum of \$1,000 for employees at the top of the scale and another \$600 for all employees, prorated to hours worked.

The APTS-FIQ Alliance is demanding a salary increase of 12.4% over 3 years that includes a 7.4% salary catch-up for its members. This increase is intended to:

- ▶ Protect the members' purchasing power by linking it with inflation. A clause on maintaining purchasing power will also be added, so that the salary increase follows inflation if it is higher than what was foreseen in the initial demand;
- ▶ Catch up on the historic gaps in the compensation of employees in the health and social services network compared to the other sectors of activities in Québec (private sector, municipal administration, public enterprises, universities and federal administration), other public enterprises (Hydro-Québec, SAQ, Loto-Québec) or even other Canadian provinces.

This salary increase comes close to the government offer, because it includes the lump sums of \$1,000 and \$600 proposed by the employer party in the salary scales, but has the advantage of:

- ▶ Creating a compound effect and keeping the salary increase every year;
- ▶ Increasing the amount eligible for the contribution to the Government and Public Employees Retirement Plan (RREGOP).

The salary increase demand (inflation and catch-up) is as follows:

Year 1: 5.75% including the \$1,000 lump sum

Year 2: 3.15%

Year 3: 3.50%, including the \$600 lump sum

Total: 12.4% over 3 years

More than 85% of the APTS-FIQ Alliance members are women. The helping relationship and delivering care and services is considered natural for women and systematically devalued by the government. For years, the Alliance members' pay has lagged behind compared to other job titles, both in the public network and for all workers in Québec. It is time to recognize the economic value of their work. Women also endure the worst of austerity, while men benefit more from major investments in construction or infrastructures, for example. Moreover, that is what is happening with the plan to jump-start the Québec economy after the COVID-19 crisis with Bill 61. However, it is mostly women who are on the front lines in the battle against the disease and who suffer the biggest drawbacks.

Despite the difficult economic context, it is crucial for the APTS-FIQ Alliance to obtain a salary catch-up for its members. The Alliance agrees that the full catch-up could be over several collective agreements considering the serious consequences from the COVID-19 crisis on the Québec economy. During a crisis, it is even more important to protect government employees' salaries with a clause to maintain purchasing power.

Retirement plan

The government is proposing setting up an inter-union joint committee to address the issues affecting the pension plan over the months and years after the collective agreement goes into effect, therefore postponing making a decision.

The APTS-FIQ Alliance is demanding the negotiation of two demands related to the pension plan directly at the bargaining table:

- ▶ Set the actuarial reduction for early retirement at 5% a year of early retirement as of July 1, 2020 and not 6% as stipulated, to reflect the real cost of an early retirement;
- ▶ Do not force employees who participate in the gradual retirement program to retire at the end of the agreement and they can maintain their regular work as it was prior to the beginning of the gradual retirement program.

Parental rights

The government is proposing to set up an inter-union joint committee to address the issues affecting parental rights in the months and years after the collective agreement goes into effect, therefore postponing making a decision.

The APTS-FIQ Alliance is demanding the negotiation of these demands directly at the bargaining table to correct the injustices:

- ▶ Increase the days off for pregnancy follow-up appointments from 4 days to 8 days;
- ▶ Allow an employee who takes a maternity leave and parental leave to postpone her vacation to a time of her choosing;
- ▶ Allow maternity leaves (when a child is born), paternity and adoption leaves to be split or postponed with relation to other leaves taken.
- ▶ Compensate a pregnant or breast-feeding employee, who is on protective reassignment, in the same manner as an employee with an employment injury, based on the principle of equity.

The Alliance agrees to discuss certain measures proposed by the employer party at the bargaining table:

- ▶ Eliminate the administrative delay to take advantage of the adoption leave in the mixed bank;
- ▶ Adjust the calculation formula for the maternity leave allowance;
- ▶ Set the deadline for notice of departure on maternity leave at three weeks (instead of the current two-week notice).

The Alliance agrees to discuss the reference period for part-time employees' benefits in an inter-round committee.

Regional disparities

The employer party wants to maintain the status quo for regional disparities, and therefore, not address this issue at the bargaining table.

This position makes no sense to the APTS-FIQ Alliance because there are serious staff attraction and retention problems in remote regions. By refusing to address these issues, the government is letting down Quebecers and members of the First Nations who live far from major centres. However, they are entitled to the same services as others.

The Alliance is demanding a response on the proposals filed last October from the employer party who has been systematically avoiding the issue for several months. These proposals are designed to:

- ▶ Expand the scope of the retention premium;
- ▶ Add localities in certain sectors requiring a remote premium;
- ▶ Expand access to trips out;
- ▶ Require the employer to mitigate the tax losses linked to benefits.

The demand to implement the preventive measures in occupational health and safety for remote regions was filed at the sectoral table that deals with the working conditions for FIQ members.

Together, the APTS and FIQ represent 131,000 workers in the health and social services network, more than 85% of whom are women.

