

EN ACTION

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The FIQ and its unions in negotiation mode

Lina Bonamie
President



THE FIQ AND ITS UNIONS IN NEGOTIATION MODE

The President of the FIQ, Lina Bonamie, began her address by reviewing the items on the agenda of the Special Federal Council, noting that some of them dealt with the negotiation of the care professionals' collective agreement.

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"This Federal Council will be the opportunity to assess the last Quebec negotiations with Jean Charest's Liberal government and obtain the first picture of the progress of the local negotiations. Discussions will also be held on the possibility for the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics, of which the FIQ is part, to negotiate four matters in the next negotiations. What are the stakes of such an alliance? What would the impacts be? Is this a promising path for the future? Our discussions will allow us to evaluate its scope. We will also discuss the reform of the process of negotiation and together we will adopt the negotiating structure. As you can see, 2009 will be very busy and energies will be invested in the preparation of the next round of negotiations at the Quebec level, scheduled for 2010."

Ms. Bonamie continued by informing the delegates that they would take a position on the result of the call for tenders concerning the FIQ's group insurance plans. "The proposals received by the two tendering insurers are very interesting and attractive. The members will see a

considerable decrease in the premium rate for next few years." The President then briefly explained that the FIQ opposed the recent influenza vaccination campaign conducted by the ASSTSAS. "I invite you to pay close attention to the presentation on this subject and be vigilant in your institutions."

Finally, an overview of the issues that kept the President busy over the past few weeks was presented to the delegates. We should also mention Ms. Bonamie's meeting with the Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Yves Bolduc, on September 16. "Dr. Bolduc said he is very aware of the condition of the healthcare network. He mentioned that, for him, the solution was at the centre of the action, that human resources were very important in this regard and that he intended to listen to them. Dr. Bolduc said that the government should not be any more open to privatization than it has to date. We will follow this assertion closely."

In conclusion, the President said she was very satisfied with the discussions that took place at this Federal Council.

"I am delighted to observe that the government's attempt to weaken the labour movement has not worked and that, on the contrary, the merger of union accreditations has created a new team that is more combative than ever. This team will be reflected at the December Federal Council, when we will elect the members of the Negotiating Committee and the Information and Support Team."

Finally, this was the last Federal Council for two union reps and Ms. Bonamie noted their retirement after many years of involvement. "I would like to say a special au revoir to Jeannine Mercier of Hôtel-Dieu de Québec and Carole Choquette of Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal and wish them a good retirement!" ■

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Carole Grant, 5th Vice-President and Francine Tisseur, Union Consultant in the Social Security Sector

RESULT OF THE CALL FOR TENDERS

The Federation's last call for tenders dates back to 1998. Last December, the delegates decided that 2008 was an appropriate time to repeat this approach, considering the changes in the contract over the past few years. This is also an opportunity for the FIQ to verify the possibility of obtaining better premium rates and ensuring the insurers' competitiveness in the long term.

The 5th Vice-President and Executive Officer in charge of the Social Security Sector, Carole Grant, and Francine Tisseur, union consultant for this sector, gave the delegates a presentation on the results of the analysis of the tenders. Among five insurance companies invited to tender, based on certain selection criteria, two of them responded to the call for tenders, SSQ Financial Group (SSQ) and Desjardins Financial Security (DFS), the FIQ's current group insurer. The analysis of the tenders focused on three main aspects: compliance of the tenders with the specifications, premium volumes and financial formula.

COMPLIANCE OF THE TENDERS WITH THE SPECIFICATIONS

The delegates were able to observe that the two tendering insurers meet the requirements of the specifications, both in terms of the content of the coverage and the administration of the plans, and that they have the capacity to take charge of a group the size of the FIQ.

PREMIUM VOLUMES

The premium volumes presented are established for the term of the guarantee of the tendered rates, namely 24 months for the Basic Plans (Drug and Extended Plan III) and Extended Plan I (Dental), and 36 months for Extended Plan II (Life and Long-Term Disability). For Extended Plan II, the insurers accepted to guarantee the premium rates for the third year. On a contract continuity basis, DFS proposes to guarantee the long-term disability rates for the 4th year. These rates would not exceed the 2008 rating. Although the Social Security Sector did not account for this proposal in its analysis, it represents an undeniable advantage.

A comparison for the premium volumes of all plans showed the delegates that the two insurers offer a very low rating for the rate guarantee period. The premium volume is about 7% to 14% lower than the current rating. DFS is the insurer that offers the most advantageous contract for health professionals.

The two insurers submitted interesting proposals concerning the financial formulas. DFS proposes a more interesting formula that favours faster payment of a potential rebate and interest indices that provide a higher annual yield.

SELECTION OF THE INSURER

Considering the results of the analysis of the tenders, the Federal Council delegates opted to continue to have the health professionals insured with Desjardins Financial Security for their group insurance plans. The table presented indicates the rates for the guaranteed contract period with DFS. These rates will come into force effective January 1, 2009.

ADDITION TO EXTENDED PLAN III

Considering the substantial rate reduction from which the members will benefit in the coming years following the results of this call for tenders, the delegates also decided to add the professional services of speech therapists and audiologists to Extended Plan III, effective January 1, 2009. These professionals' fees will be reimbursed 100% with no maximum limit. The rates per 14 days will be \$0.13 for individual or one-parent coverage and \$0.26 for family coverage. ■

TABLE: DESJARDINS FINANCIAL SECURITY - REVISED RATES¹

COVERAGE	CURRENT RATES	RATES ON 01/01/2009	RATES ON 01/01/2010	RATES ON 01/01/2011	
BASIC PLAN					
<i>Drug²</i>					
Individual	\$27.05	\$27.65	\$30.14	The rates of these coverage options will be adjusted according to the conditions of renewal negotiated at that time.	
One-parent	\$34.90	\$35.67	\$38.88		
Family	\$63.58	\$64.98	\$70.83		
<i>Extended Plan III - Basic Health³</i>					
Individual	\$5.55	\$5.03	\$5.03		
One-parent	\$5.55	\$5.03	\$5.03		
Family	\$11.06	\$10.01	\$10.01		
EXTENDED PLAN I					
<i>Dental</i>					
Individual	\$11.25	\$11.27	\$11.72		
One-parent	\$21.37	\$21.41	\$22.27		
Family	\$31.49	\$31.56	\$32.82		
EXTENDED PLAN II⁴					
<i>Basic Life and AD&D⁵</i>	\$0.35	\$0.28	\$0.28	\$0.35	
<i>(rate for \$5,000 of ins.)</i>					
<i>Additional Life and AD&D</i>	\$0.089	\$0.07	\$0.07	\$0.089	
<i>(rate per \$1,000 of ins.)</i>					
<i>Dependent children's life</i>	\$0.08	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.08	
<i>(rate per family)</i>					
<i>Long-term disability</i>	1.188%	0.715%	0.715%	0.863%	
<i>(rate as % of gross salary)</i>					

¹ 14-day rate for the guaranteed contract period excluding the 9% provincial tax.

² Rate including the employer contribution. As at January 1, 2009, this contribution for an employee with a job title for which the maximum salary on December 13, 2005 is equal to or greater than \$40,000/year is \$1.52 for individual coverage and \$3.79 for one-parent or family coverage. For a job title with a maximum lower than \$40,000, this contribution is \$2.67 for individual coverage and \$6.65 for one-parent or family coverage.

³ Includes the addition of coverage for professional services of speech therapists and audiologists.

⁴ DFS guarantees for 2012 that the maximum rates for this plan will not exceed the effective rates for 2008.

⁵ ADD: Accidental death and dismemberment.

FINANCIAL FORMULA

The financial formula is the agreement that specifies what the retention fees will be, how the reserves and the stabilization funds will be constituted, what the credited interest will be on these funds and how the surpluses will be shared, if applicable. The analysis of the financial formula is vitally important, primarily for Extended Plan II, for which the reserves and the stabilization fund involve substantial amounts.

GLOSSARY

- **Stabilization fund:** fund created from the surpluses, which serves to prevent, reduce or absorb a potential deficit. It thus avoids excessive rate fluctuations resulting from poor experience.
- **Retention fees:** clearly defined amounts retained by the insurer for its administration and the risk it assumes.
- **Reserves:** amounts of money accumulated to pay potential benefits.

Special **SISP- NEGOTIATION**



THE IMPORTANCE OF A SISP-N ALLIANCE

On the eve of a new round of Quebec negotiations, the challenges are many for improving the working conditions and salaries of the nursing and cardio-respiratory professionals represented by the FIQ. It's a strong bet that this next round of negotiations will be difficult and that the Quebec government will continue its attacks on the labour movement. The current context, in which the labour movement finds it more and more difficult to effectively oppose the implementation of neoliberal policies, as well as the Decree in lieu of a collective agreement, imposed in 2005, force us to reconsider our methods in order to improve our bargaining power.



Lina Bonamie
President

In the past, the creation of alliances produced results and it is in this spirit that for several months the five member organizations of the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (SISP) started discussions on the possibility of setting up a negotiation table to face, together, the Conseil du trésor on four specific subjects. Following several months of discussions and work, the Federation believes that, in the present context, this chance to create an alliance SISP-Negotiation (SISP-N) is the best alternative to improve its bargaining power and influence when it is time to renew the Quebec collective agreement. The Federation could also share its expertise while benefiting from that of the other member labour organizations of the SISP.

However, for such an alliance to function and represent a credible force in the eyes of the government and its spokesperson, it must receive approval from the greatest number of members

possible. The Federation is asking all 58 000 members that it represents to attend their local general assemblies in order to participate in the discussions and subsequently, take an active part in the decision-making process.

The Federation, like all labour organizations must put a stop to the government's repeated attacks and multitude of antiunion laws. In this context, an alliance with the four other labour member organizations of the SISP is a privileged opportunity for the members. This alliance, the SISP-N, defined by the times and covering four subjects that touch all members, regardless of their job category and the organization to which they belong. So, let's avoid falling into the trap of feeling sorry for ourselves and instead concentrate on our common denominator: the defense and improvement of the working conditions of public sector employees. ■

THE SISP AND ITS HISTORY

In June 2006, the FIQ joined the ranks of the SISP. It deemed it imperative to reinforce its alliances in order to defend public services. The goals of privatization of services and the State's withdrawal from paying for these services did not leave us any choice. The FIQ alone could not lead such a fight. Thus, the three founding labour organizations, the CSQ, the SFPQ and the SPGQ welcomed the FIQ as a member of the SISP. In the summer of 2007, the APTS also joined the SISP. Today, the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics has 300 000 members, of which nearly 250 000 are in the public, parapublic and intrapublic sectors. The first objective of the SISP is still the same, the defense and promotion of the public services offered to the Quebec population and the interests of its members.

Lina Bonamie



Sylvie Savard
4th Vice-President

INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR FIQ NEGOTIATIONS

In order to better understand the structures of a negotiation in a SISP, Sylvie Savard, 4th Vice-President and Executive officer responsible for the Negotiation Sector answers a few questions.

Mrs. Savard, why create an alliance with the SISP to negotiate the following four subjects : salary, parental rights, regional disparities and the retirement plan?

S.S. These four subjects of common interest are of concern to the members of the Federation and have a real impact on their working and living conditions. However, these subjects are part of a general policy of the Conseil du trésor and labour organizations, especially over more recent years, have been unable to move the government from its position. A group of nearly 250 000 public and parapublic sector employees will certainly have a greater impact and greater bargaining power to negotiate with the Conseil du trésor. I feel that joining together will make all the difference.

How does the Federation plan to respect the specific demands of health professionals within a SISP negotiations?

S.S. The FIQ is and will remain the negotiating agent for the members that it represents. The working conditions of the professionals represented by the Federation will continue to be discussed at the sectorial table. For example, statutory holidays, the Committee on care, and premiums will be negotiated automatically by the FIQ. Also, representing almost all the health professionals of Class 1, the Federation will be the most influential and credible organization to back their demands.

Who will decide on the content of the four subjects to be negotiated in the SISP-N?

S.S. The members will be consulted on priorities and on the demands to defend in negotiations regardless of the table at which they will be negotiated. During negotiations, the SISP-N general assembly, composed

of 11 representatives elected by each organization, will make recommendations which will be sent to the bodies of authority of each of the SISP member organizations. For the Federation, the Negotiating Committee, the Executive Committee and the Federal Council will continue to carry out their same roles and responsibilities during the negotiations.

Why do we need to formalize this alliance and sign a protocol?

S.S. To face the government together and negotiate in the name of 250 000 employees, the SISP organizations chose to have a formal agreement. This alliance must be solid and functional. It is for this reason that the members will be consulted. The more this commitment is endorsed by the members of each organization, the more this new force will be credible and influential in the eyes of the spokesperson across the table and the government. ■



SISP NUMBERS

The FIQ: The Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec is composed of 58 000 members in the healthcare sector. The FIQ represents the majority of nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, perfusionists and baby nurses working in the public healthcare network.

The CSQ: The Centrale des syndicats du Québec has 160 000 members of which 100 000 are in the public and parapublic sectors working in the fields of education and health and social services.

The SFPQ: The Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec represents 43 000 members of which 40 000 are part of the Quebec public service.

The APTS: The Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux has 26 000 workers in professional or technical positions in the health and social services public sector.

The SPGQ: The Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec has more than 19 000 members in Quebec public service, civil services, and the education and healthcare network of Quebec.

WHERE DOES THE SISP-NEGOTIATION COME FROM?

In June 2007, the FIQ Federal Council adopted a Protocol of operation for the SISP. This protocol provides for the possibility of developing alliances for negotiations. Confronted with a government that is more and more inflexible and considering the increasing difficulty for unions to defend and improve employees' working conditions, the member organizations started discussions on an eventual alliance for the next round of Quebec negotiations. The creation of such an alliance appears, in the current context, to be the strategy of choice.

THE SISP-NEGOTIATION PROTOCOL

In order to ensure the viability and respect of each organization within the framework of a one-time alliance for the next round of negotiations of the four subjects, it is important and significant to obtain a formal commitment from the SISP member organizations. The following rules should be the basis for a SISP-N temporary alliance for the next round of negotiations.

1. The designation of the SISP to act in the name of the five organizations for the negotiation of the following subjects : salary, parental rights, regional disparities and retirement.

Despite the designation of the SISP to negotiate the four mentioned subjects, the FIQ remains the negotiating agent for the affiliated unions. In this sense, the protocol provides that a spokesperson will act in the name of all the organizations. The FIQ can therefore at any time take over the right to negotiate these four subjects. In addition, the subjects listed in the protocol are the only ones that can be discussed at the intersectorial table as adopted by the June Convention. The subjects in the protocol all have a monetary impact and two of them, salary and retirement, have always been negotiated with the Conseil du trésor. The others were negotiated at the sectorial table but also had to have the approval of the Conseil du trésor. As for the matters specific to health professionals, they will still be discussed at the sectorial tables.

2. The adoption of a common strategic context, plan of action and communication plan.

The strategic context, including the calendar of consultation, the establishment of priorities and the schedule for the negotiation process must be determined by the specific decision-making bodies of the SISP-N. In fact, the decision to join together to negotiate requires adherence to the demands and a common agenda concerning the subjects to be negotiated at the intersectorial table. It is also imperative to have a communication plan and a plan of

action only for the SISP-N to enable the determination of the appropriate actions for the sequence of the discussions at the intersectorial table.

Each organization should designate a person responsible for communications and another for action - mobilization. These two teams will be responsible to ensure that communications and the plan of action be directed towards their respective organizations. While taking into account the global strategic context, each organization will however have the chance to develop an action-mobilization plan as well as a supplemental information plan in line with their sectorial demands.

3. Implementation of specific decision-making bodies

Each organization will be represented on the SISP-N decision-making bodies. Other than the Negotiating Committee, the structure will contain an executive committee as well as a general assembly. The Executive Committee consisting of five people (the presidents of each organization), will have, among others, the mandate to prepare recommendations for the SISP general assembly. As for the General Assembly, made up of a maximum of 11 elected representatives per organization, it will have the mandate to develop recommendations for the appropriate decision-making bodies of each organization. The recommendations made by the SISP General Assembly will be adopted by the decision-making structure of each organization. It could also happen that, occasionally, the SISP General Assembly will convene a meeting of the negotiation decision-making bodies of each organization for information, mobilization or the implementation of a decision of the General Assembly. However, this

meeting will not have any decision-making powers.

4. A method to take decisions by its decision-making bodies focused first and foremost on consensus and endowed with a voting formula to settle deadlocks, if need be.

At present the proposed protocol provides that to be adopted, a motion must receive the approval of each of the representatives of the organizations. If it is impossible to arrive at a consensus two others formulas are provided; the first provides for the agreement of four organizations and if agreement is still not possible, the second formula provides that a motion that receives the approval of three organizations that represent a majority of members is adopted according to certain rules in the protocol.

On the other hand, at the June convention, the FIQ delegates rejected any decision-making method other than consensus. In addition, at the Special Federal Council of October the delegates' decision was of the same nature as that taken at the Convention. So, for the Federal Council and Convention delegates, only the rule of consensus can be applied to the decision process at the SISP decision-making bodies. The FIQ informed its SISP partners of the mandate received from the Federal Council and is waiting on the position of the other organizations on this condition. However, the SISP member organizations believe in this alliance and none want to put its existence at risk. →

(cont'd from page 3)

5. Implementation of a SISP-N team (negotiation, action-mobilization, communication, legal).

Each organization will delegate a person for the negotiating team in order to lead the negotiations at the intersectorial table. In addition, the SISP Executive Committee will be responsible for naming a person to act as the spokesperson at this same table. This person will act exclusively for the SISP-N and will be paid by the five member organizations. Mobilization and communication teams will also be set up. To support the negotiation structure, each organization will designate an employee for the legal and retirement aspects. The designation of people from each labour organization to make up these different teams to support the negotiations allows all the expertise to be gathered for the good of the common interest. It is understood that this structure will operate in a parallel manner to that of the FIQ while maintaining close ties between the intersectorial and sectorial tables.

6. A non-raiding protocol.

It goes without saying that with the goal of encouraging solidarity between the organizations, in a period as important as that of negotiations, the protocol provides that they give up raiding each other during the next round of negotiations. This protocol also provides a method to settle disputes in the case where a SISP member organization does not respect the conditions in the protocol. ■

CONSULTATION OF FIQ MEMBERS

During the Special Federal Council of October the delegates were able once again, to discuss the possibility of joining the SISP-N. Sylvie Savard, 4th Vice-President and responsible for the negotiations, Gino Pouliot, Coordinator for the negotiations presented the SISP-N protocol. Brigitte Fauteux, 3rd Vice-President and Executive officer responsible for the Union Organization Service as well as Pierre Desnoyers, Union Consultant in this service, presented the non-raiding protocol. The exchanges that followed produced answers to the various concerns and questions raised by the delegates.

The FIQ members must now be consulted on the rules in the protocol which would shape a SISP-N alliance. The final decision will be taken by the delegates at the December Federal Council as previously determined. The following six rules of functioning in the SISP-N protocol, as modified and adopted by the FIQ, are those on which the local general assemblies must decide:

- the designation of the SISP to act in the name of the five organizations to negotiate the following subjects : salary, parental rights, regional disparities and retirement;
- the adoption of a common strategic context, plan of action and communication plan;
- the setting up of specific decision-making bodies;
- only the rule of consensus is applicable in the decision-making process;
- the setting up a SISP-Negotiation team (negotiation, action-mobilization, communication, legal);
- a non-raiding protocol. ■

Find out the date of your local general assembly from your local union team. It will be your chance to give your opinion on this possible alliance in the SISP-N and the Federation wants to know your opinion.



Réjean Parent, President of the CSQ,
Lucie Martineau, President of the SFPQ,
Dominique Verreault, President of the APTS,
Lina Bonamie, President of the FIQ and
Gilles Dussault, President of the SPGQ



ASSESSMENT OF THE QUEBEC NEGOTIATIONS

Sylvie Savard, 4th Vice-President and Executive Officer in charge of the Negotiation Sector, accompanied by Richard Beaulé and Linda Perron, presented an assessment to the delegates on the last Quebec negotiations of the FIQ collective agreement. Ms. Savard explained why this assessment, on an exceptional basis, was coming nearly three years after the imposition of the Decree. "The context of the past few years meant that the organization's priority has been the negotiation of the 155 local collective agreements."

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE LOCAL NEGOTIATIONS?

For the first time, the FIQ has negotiated nearly 155 local collective agreements that include the 26 matters provided in Appendix A1 of Bill 30. In fact, the FIQ was in the forefront of more than a hundred negotiations within a very short time frame. An operation of this scale required input from several people and had an impact on the other Federation files and everyday labour relations. Because the negotiations are still not completed, the executive officers responsible for this file, Sylvie Savard and Daniel Gilbert, presented a partial assessment, that is an assessment of the phase of negotiations.

This first analysis allowed the delegates to return to the internal and external context that prevailed during the local negotiations and to look again at all the steps of the process, from the preparatory phase to the conclusion of a collective agreement by direct negotiation between the parties. Madam Savard specified that it is an assessment done with a federal perspective and asked each union, if they so wished, to add to it with their own local or regional analysis.

Lastly, even though it is a partial assessment, the employers have already confirmed that the negotiations with the FIQ have been difficult. The Federation wanted to lead and distance itself from other labour organizations. The assessment of the process where a third party intervention was required will be given at a future Federal Council.

The negotiations ran from autumn 2002 to the abrupt termination of discussions in December 2005. Throughout this period, the political and union environment was being transformed constantly. A retrospective of the events allowed the delegates to remember the many steps and take a critical look at them. The adoption of the six negotiating priorities - arrangement of work time, stabilization of positions, maintenance and development of competencies, prevention of violence, accelerated dispute resolution and access to childcare in the work environment - was the starting point of the process for renewal of the collective agreement. However, this occurred within a context in which the issues were influenced by a right-wing current seeking to impose privatization, deregulation and disengagement of the State. Indeed, the application of Bills 25 and 30, the many contestations, the internal reorganization, the change of union allegiance campaign and voting waves to be prepared were all events that created pitfalls for the negotiating process.

The distressing outcome is well known: the coming into effect of the Decree in lieu of a collective agreement on May 14, 2006. Ms. Savard reminded the delegates that, because of the way these negotiations were concluded, neither the President of the Federation nor the Executive Officers in charge of the Quebec negotiations signed the texts, to the great dissatisfaction of the employer representatives. "The renewal process was difficult and frustrating in many regards. However, the Federation was very vigilant and the gains obtained, the scope of its actions and the positive spinoffs from its struggles are evidence of its capacity to defend the interests of health professionals," the Vice-President pointed out.

AN ACTION PLAN HALF FULFILLED

The action plan adopted by the Federal Council in October 2005 had the purpose of supporting the negotiating team with concrete actions. Two types of operations were proposed. First were visibility actions, sending the message that the negotiations had begun and that mobilization was being prepared: Operation Essential Services, Operation Halloween, Operation Public and Political Pressure. Next came mobilization actions aimed at publicizing the problems experienced by the members and the importance of solving them.

Most of these actions were a clear success. They sensitized public opinion to the health professionals' demands. Some actions even contributed to the development of a new cohesion and a new solidarity among the different health professionals in the Federation's ranks. However, certain denunciations contained in the action plan could not be made because the government's adoption of the Decree put an end to the mobilization operations.

AN INEFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF NEGOTIATION

It is clear that the government's imposition of a Decree represents a failure of the system of negotiation for all union

organizations and a negation of the right to negotiate. The FIQ believes, more than ever, that the system of negotiation itself should be the focus of in-depth discussions and a major reform. The current legal context seems favourable because the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a decision in which the freedom to negotiate henceforth is better protected. Moreover, a Superior Court judgment concluded that Bill 30 violated freedom of association and therefore the right to negotiation. The recent recommendations of the International Labour Office (ILO) on this subject also turned out to be very relevant.

CHANGES TO THE NEGOTIATING STRUCTURE

After studying the evaluation of the negotiating structure, the delegates adopted recommendations for this structure to favour informed decision-making during future negotiations. Thus, the composition of the Negotiating Committee will be reviewed to account for the new reality of the network and the organization. Moreover, the involvement of this committee's members will begin sooner, during the drafting of the priorities. Finally, the two union reps of the FIQ Information and Support Committee will participate in preparing the action plan. ■

MAIN GAINS OBTAINED BY THE FIQ IN THE LAST NEGOTIATIONS

- Awarding of permanent positions to all employees.
- Establishment of pilot projects on the arrangement of work time.
- Payment at time-and-a-half for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.
- Additional days off for employees eligible for retirement.
- An increase in the budgets allocated to human resources development.
- Changes favouring accelerated dispute resolution.
- Maintenance of salary insurance benefits during a dispute.
- New provisions to counter violence at work.



THE NEGOTIATION STRUCTURE

With the adoption of the structure for negotiations, the delegates have taken the first decision which will lead them towards the renewal of the next collective agreement. As stated by the Executive Officer in charge of negotiations, Sylvie Savard, and the Union Consultant for the Negotiation Sector, Francine Roberge, the negotiation structure is not an end in itself, but rather a means that the organization gives itself in order to succeed in negotiations.

THE REFORM OF THE SYSTEM OF NEGOTIATIONS

Demanded for a long time by labour organizations, the Conseil du trésor has finally decided to undertake discussions on the eventual reform of the Quebec system of negotiations. Labour organizations, including the FIQ, have been invited by the Conseil to participate in the development of this reform. The time available to try and negotiate this reform in depth is very short and makes the union's expectations modest, in the least.

The Executive Officer in charge of negotiations, Sylvie Savard, accompanied by Robert Seers and Gino Pouliot, Union Consultants, on the legal team and the Negotiation Sector respectively, informed the delegation of the objectives that the Federation is pursuing within this reform. The FIQ demands a system of negotiations that is independent and exempt from interventions by the State Legislator as well as a better balance of bargaining power between the parties by being equipped with, for example, the real right to strike as well as an efficient method of resolving conflicts in the case of deadlocks. The FIQ also demands that the matters to be negotiated at the Quebec and local level be redefined in order to bring these negotiations closer to the realities of the workplaces.

The work on the reform continues in interunion meetings with the CSN, FTQ and SISF. It is the FIQ and the CSQ who represent the SISF five member organizations. At the present time the labour organizations are developing common positions. To be continued.

Remember that the decision-making structure of the negotiations is there to give us the capacity to function and to take decisions while respecting democracy. So, the adopted structure is more or less the same as the one used in the last negotiations. It contains both a decision-making structure and an information and support structure.

Even though no decision has been made concerning implementation of a negotiation table with the member partners of the Secrétariat intersyndical des services publics (SISP) on the four subjects of common interest, the adopted structure allows the Federation to keep the upper hand on the whole negotiation process and ensure that decisions taken by the FIQ decision-making bodies are respected.

DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

The delegates decided that the Federal Council is the largest decision-making body during the period of negotiations. The Federal Council is composed of the members of the Executive Committee, delegates from all the institutions represented by the Federation as well as the elected members of the Negotiating Committee. The delegates are called upon to decide on the priorities, on the draft collective agreement, the means of action and on the recommendation on the agreement in principle.

The Executive Committee is responsible for the overall progress of the negotiations. It is them who make, among others, the recommendations to the Federal Council on the plans of action, pressure tactics and the acceptance of the agreement in principle.

The negotiating committee is the key body in the negotiation structure. The first responsibility of this committee is to support the members' demands. It must also advance the propositions and counter-propositions made at the sectorial negotiation table, guided by

the priorities that have been decided by the members. This committee must make timely choices to optimize the bargaining power of the Federation in order to obtain improvements in living and working conditions.

To better represent the concerns of health professionals and adapt to the new realities in the workplace, the delegates decided that the Negotiating Committee will now consist of ten health professionals elected from among the delegation (1 of whom comes from the nurse category, 1 from the nursing assistant category and 1 from the respiratory therapists category), one member of the Executive Committee and three union consultants (without the right to vote).

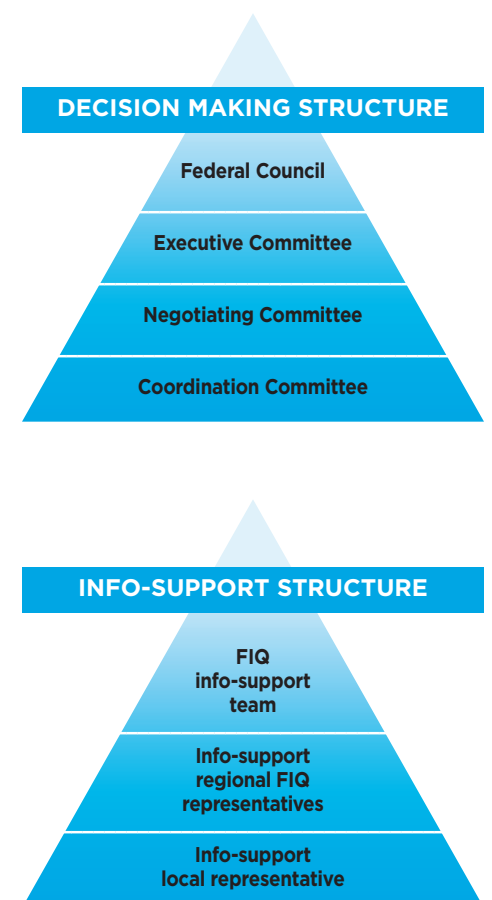
The Coordination Committee will now be composed of one member of the Executive Committee and three union consultants from the Negotiation Sector. It is linked with all the other levels in the negotiation structure and is the body that coordinates all the activities of the negotiations. Throughout the negotiations, it makes recommendations to the negotiating Committee as much on the strategy as on the more technical questions of collective agreement wording.

THE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT STRUCTURE

Considering the comments made during the 2002-2006 assessment of the negotiations which indicated, among others, the effectiveness of the information and support structure in place, the delegates decided to renew it. This information and support structure is a pyramid of three levels : federal, regional and local.

As in the past, each accreditation must designate its local representative for information and support. All of these local representatives will receive and transmit information to a regional FIQ representative for information

and support. These 18 regional FIQ representatives will be chosen on a regional basis by and among the union representatives of that region and will be in contact with the union representatives on the FIQ information and support team. The two union representatives on the information and support team, elected from among the delegation, will then be responsible for communicating with the regional FIQ representative. Lastly, an information and support union consultant will work in close collaboration with the union representatives on the FIQ information and support team. The roles and functions of all the union representatives in the information and support structure are surrounded by the implementation of the decisions taken by the Federal Council and the Negotiating Committee. ■



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