

## A disappointing and disturbing filing by the employer

On December 17, 2009, the *Comité patronal de négociation des collèges* (CPNC) submitted its negotiating positions in written form. This document is presented as a series of issues, each preceded by a preamble describing the context in which talks are taking place. For example, it touches on the new realities described in the report of the joint committee on the teaching profession, college governance, the expected decrease in the student population, difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, and the economic crisis. Reading it left us disappointed and very worried. A meeting held five days later, during which the CPNC responded to questions about its positions, failed to reassure us.

Although the employer reiterated its intention to achieve an early settlement, potential problems must be highlighted. These concerns include the collective organization of work, accounting for our

activities, and the working conditions of non-permanent teachers. Even worse, the CPNC filing has nothing to say about our main demands regarding the workload, salaries and job security.

Finally, with regard to the need for additional resources to resolve the most important problems in the college system, even though our counterparts do not exclude the addition of new FTEs (full time equivalents), they consider that the only possible way to achieve this is to find ways to save money through a reorganization of our work.

### *College departmental management called into question?*

In the section dealing with its first issue, «Following up on the report on the teaching profession», the employer touches on the complexity of our work and the increased importance of the collective dimension of learning activities (skills-based approach, program-based approach, establishment of various institutional policies, etc.). Because of this, however, «The role of coordinators (departmental and program) must be reviewed to ensure that each teacher participates in the achievement of institutional obligations».

What do they mean by that? Do they want coordinators to become the *boss* rather than a “peer among peers”? It’s a question to consider seeing that, when we asked the CPNC on December 22 where they thought savings could be made to work organization, they specifically mentioned coordination!



### **Greater accountability**

In the same section, the employer says it wants to clarify «the obligation of teacher accountability», and this, again, so that the agreement will «better reflect the reality described in the report on the teaching profession.» This does not bode well. Even as we call for measures to reduce our workload, they want to us to be filling out more reports! It is rather shocking to think that the document we received fails to offer much in response to our demands either on this issue or the



issue of resources, as we shall see later. Nevertheless, we will continue to point out that the report on the teaching profession also found a significant increase in work specifically related to teaching itself.

### **Risk of increased insecurity**

Our sectoral demands include better working conditions for non-permanent teachers both in the regular sector and in continuing education. Among other things, we are calling for faster access to permanent status; better recourse

against the withdrawal of hiring priority; and remuneration to hourly paid teachers for supervising student work.

On the other hand, the CPNC appears to want to make non-permanent teachers' jobs even more precarious than they are now! They propose to «revise certain rules on granting tenure» in order to ensure, among other things, «that the specific conditions outlined by the college when a teacher is hired, or during her or his employment, are fulfilled.» What's more,

they want to establish a process in which hiring priority would only be awarded following a period of probation and a positive evaluation. In other words, new teachers would have no hiring priority until they had shown that they can be «counted on for years to come», to quote one employer representative. Questioned on the subject, the CPNC answered that it wanted to end the «automatism» and no longer be «held captive to the fact that as soon as someone teaches one course we are forever stuck with that person.»

Likewise, hourly paid teachers in continuing education have no cause to rejoice over the employer's objectives. Citing the fact that colleges are «called upon, often in a very short timeframe, to develop programs and training activities to meet specific and individual needs», our partners intend to modify the system of hiring priority «in order to give the position to the person who is most competent to teach the subject» and to «revise provisions relating to double employment». When we questioned them about this, they clarified that they

did not wish to reconsider the whole issue of hiring priorities. Oh joy!

### **No mention of important demands**

As was previously stated, the document presented to us makes no mention of our principal demands, which can be grouped under the themes of a reasonable workload, more job security and a fair wage. Firstly, our counterparts sent everything pay-related – including our demands regarding the family-work balance – to the central negotiating table. Moreover, when you look at their positions discussed in the previous section, the CPNC clearly does not appear to have much sympathy for the idea of improving access to permanent status. Finally, although the employer «aims to provide support to teachers faced with such situations as programs with small enrolment, development of continuing education and adapting educational services to an increasingly diverse student population», no details were provided about the nature or level of this support. We might add that at no point in the employer's document are issues raised of the possibility of modifying the CI parameters to account for multiple preparations or the large number of students needing supervision.

### **Mobilization is more necessary than ever**

This overview of the negotiating priorities set by the Comité patronal de négociation des collèges is not an exhaustive list of its «offers.» For example, the employer also made demands related to the allocation of fixed resources between colleges (Annex I-2), allocation of leaves, temporary program approvals and MEDs.

However, despite the CPNC's failure to explain its demands we can observe that, given the distance between our respective bargaining positions, we will not make significant gains without an all-out mobilization. In every cégep, teachers must show their administrations that they support the negotiating committee, by participating in great numbers in the various activities that will soon be organized and by widespread use of our visibility tools (the scarf, the electronic signature and so on). Solidarity is more essential than ever to attain our objective: a satisfactory and signed agreement before March 31, 2010.