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The Salary Issue

In each round of negotiations, the salary issue is particularly sensitive. Government workers legitimately want to maintain their purchasing power and to participate in their society's enrichment; the population at large does not want to see its tax load increase, while at the same time demanding quality services. The media is dominated by a few editorialists, economists and politicians who repeat the refrain that "Quebec is in the red" or "public finances are in danger".

According to Jean Trudelle, FNEEQ president, similar repeated arguments try to make us gradually accept the privatization of public services, which enriches a few while reducing the working conditions of workers and also reduce the access of the poor to services. This we know from the experience of numerous countries which have opened the door to the private sector in health care as well as in education. Such initiatives tend to trap individuals inside more and more hermetically sealed social classes.

Our salary demands are more than just legitimate: public sector workers have been considerably impoverished in recent decades, without even taking into account that teachers must make do with salaries that are clearly lower than elsewhere in Canada.

We must not accept as truth the mantras constantly repeated by right-wing economists. Fair salaries in the public sector are not a budgetary impossibility; it's a question of political will, pure and simple.

**Table Showing the Gap in Salary at the Lowest Salary Levels
In Relation to the Inflation Rate Since 1983**

	1983	2002	2010
Annual salary with 17 years of schooling	\$22 403	\$33 034	\$39 179
1983 salary adjusted for inflation (difference per year)	Same	\$38 700 -\$5 666 -14.7%	\$45 639 -\$6 460 -14.2%
Annual salary with 18 years of schooling	\$24 077	\$38 119	\$42 500
1983 salary adjusted for inflation (difference per year)	Same	\$41 591 -3 472 -8.3%	\$49 049 -\$6 549 -13.4%
Annual salary with 19 years of schooling	\$25 908	\$41 001	\$46 227
1983 salary adjusted for inflation (difference per year)	Same	\$44 755 -3 754 -8.4%	\$52 779 -\$6 552 -12.4%
Annual salary with 19 years of schooling and PhD	\$28 830	\$45 598	\$50 276
1983 salary adjusted for inflation (difference per year)	Same	\$49 802 -\$4 204 -8.4%	\$58 732 -\$8 456 -14.4%

Government Revenues

Declining government revenues are often presented as being as inevitable as death. We are led to believe that sources of revenue cannot be increased; therefore cuts in social services budgets are the only possible solution. However, many voices have been raised to contradict this message that has been so uncritically replayed in the media. Therefore, researchers from the Institut de recherche en économie contemporaine (IRÉC) as well as the *Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques* (IRIS), at the request of the CSN and the *Coalition contre la hausse des tarifs*, have regularly intervened in the public debate on the economy and public finances to suggest a variety of ways that would allow Québec to develop in other ways: a more progressive tax structure, a stronger effort against tax evasion and loopholes, surtaxes on the profits of large corporations, to name just a few.

No Real Increase

This media discourse also creates some confusion about the real meaning of salary increases. However, for us, for far too long, it means nothing of the sort! In a system where the value of money fluctuates over time, it is absolutely essential to take inflation into account when

measuring changes in purchasing power. Since 1983, a basket of goods and services that cost \$100 has increased to \$204, an increase of 103 %¹. During the same period, when taking this inflation into account, public sector employees' purchasing power has truly decreased.

In addition, for cegep teachers, there are particular problems with their salary scale. Belonging to higher education, cegeps must naturally recognize the value of the schooling of their teachers. At the top of the scale, the separation between echelons has been significantly reduced, and along with it most of the advantage for teachers in possessing a Master's degree or a Ph.D. As for newcomers to the profession, their salaries have fallen so far behind that students newly graduating from certain technical programs are being offered better salaries than their professors, who hold university degrees!

This is why FNEEQ targeted salary adjustments as a high priority in its negotiation demands. We want to both increase salaries at the start of teaching careers of the scale and also to increase the salary paid to those with masters and doctoral degrees by applying the same 4.29% increase to the three highest levels that applies for all of the other levels.

Salaries of High School and College Teachers Across Canada								
	Québec Montreal		Ontario Toronto		Alberta Edmonton		British Columbia Vancouver	
	High School	College	High School	College	High School	College	High School	College
Lowest salary (Bachelors)	\$36 472	\$36 472	\$43 085	\$55 683 (2008) \$56 797*	\$48 789 (2007) \$50 760	\$51 644	\$42 932	\$51 797
Gap with Québec			+ 18.1%	+ 55.7%	+ 39.2%	+ 41.6%	+ 17.7%	+ 42%
Highest salary (Any diploma)	\$73 839	\$73 839	\$89 271	\$96 529	\$83 151	\$90 561	\$79 891	\$83 231
Gap with Québec			+ 20.9	+ 33.3	+ 17.2	+ 22.6	+ 8.2	+ 12.7
CPI Index**	95	95	107	107	101	101	101	101
Lowest Québec weighted salary	\$36 472	\$36 472	\$38 253	\$49 438 \$50 427*	\$45 891 \$47 745*	\$48 576	\$40 381	\$48 712
Gap with Québec			+ 4.9%	+ 38.2%	+ 30.9%	+ 33.2%	+ 10.7%	+ 33.6%
Highest Québec weighted salary	\$73 839	\$73 839	\$79 259	\$85 703 87 417*	\$78 211 81 371*	\$85 181	\$75 145	\$78 287
Gap with Québec			+ 7.3%	+ 18.4%	+ 10.2%	+ 15.4%	+ 1.8%	+ 6%

* Salary estimated for 2009-2010 with a 2% annual increase.

** The indexes comparing prices of goods between cities are published regularly by Statistics Canada and allow the comparison of cost differences between major Canadian cities. They take into account the price of food, housing, electricity, transport, leisure, etc. The comparative indexes used are taken from the Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index for January 2010 no. 62-001-X.

¹ Statistics Canada Consumer Price, Canada Bank: http://www.bankofcanada.ca/fr/taux/inflation_calc-f.html.

Community colleges are the educational institutions most closely comparable to the cegeps, especially for technical programs and continuing education. Most cegeps are also members of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, which includes 175 institutions from across Canada.