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## A Negotiation Blitz...

... at a Snail's Pace!

From April 2 to 26, there were no meetings at the bargaining table for the FNEEQ Negotiation and Mobilization Committee. While there were many issues remaining to discuss, it was clear that without a response from our employers to our demand for an addition of teaching resources in the cegep system, negotiations could not move forward.

The *Comité patronal de négociation des collègues* (CPNC) finally deposited its offer on April 26. Unfortunately, the injection of resources is far from meeting the real needs of college teaching. These needs were clearly identified in the work carried out by the parity committee describing our work in the *Teaching at the College Level... Portrait of the Profession* report from March 2008. Two hundred and seventy-five (275) FTEs added gradually over a five year period, very few in the first years; this does not respond to the **urgent** needs of cegep teachers!

In addition, our employers' global offer was disappointing in terms of what it did not include. No adjustment to the salary structure to improve wages at the bottom end of the scale or to recognize the value of masters and doctoral degrees, no mention of a committee to reconnect the financing formula to the parameters of the workload formula (CI), despite the formal commitment of the Minister of Education and the recognition of this commitment at the negotiation table, nothing on recognizing union rights, etc.

At last Thursday's meeting of the FNEEQ *Regroupement Cégep*, delegates began by rejecting this offer as the basis of a settlement. They subsequently gave a mandate to their representatives to present a counter-offer to our employers. In the coming days, local unions will be consulted on this counter-offer. It reaffirms the need for a significant addition of resources dedicated to teaching.

**Enough is enough.** For ten years we have demonstrated how cegep teacher workloads have increased through all of the proper channels.



Demonstration on 29 April, in front of Michelle Courchesne's Montreal office. Photo : Michel Giroux

The extent of this increase is such that it is now impossible to fulfill it properly without seriously cutting corners in the quality of one's life, or even health. Our working conditions do not correspond with those that we have a right to expect in higher education.

The situation is made all the more indecent when you add to this the fact that the Ministry agreed that of the significant sums received in increased federal transfer payments, almost none may go to teaching. The Minister of Education wants to amend the Cegep Act to add that teaching constitutes its principal mission. And yet, just 10 percent of these federal transfer funds may be dedicated to teachers, and none for actual teaching activities. These activities, which are supposed to be the "principal mission", account for 70 percent of the total budget of the cegep system. There is an **unacceptable gap here!** Teachers, experts in their disciplines, must be found at the heart of educational success, but our administrations still don't realize this!

Our employers' offer makes it clear that our urgent message has not yet been heard. In the coming weeks, FNEEQ will try to remedy this situation by making this point politically, but its members' frustration and anger cannot be contained for much longer.