



We've filed for mediation!

The union organizations in the public and parapublic sectors joined together in a Common Front to win back their right to free collective bargaining. For these negotiations, the Common Front also decided to take a different approach. The goal was and still is to reach a negotiated agreement as soon as possible, without a labour dispute. We therefore adopted a very tight timeframe aimed at reaching an agreement by March 31, 2010 at the latest – the date the decrees expired. The Common Front made every effort to achieve this goal, but the lack of openness and willingness on management's part – despite their public stance – made this impossible. The Common Front's objectives are still the same: safeguarding the right to free collective bargaining, avoiding disputes and above all reaching a negotiated settlement as soon as possible. This is why we are filing for mediation: to continue bargaining and push the talks forward.

What is mediation?

In the mediation process, a neutral person works with the two parties to help them reach agreement on a mutually acceptable settlement.

The purpose of the process is to encourage constructive discussions by the parties in a spirit of respect for individuals and their role, by focusing on the identification of points of convergence and possible solutions.

The parties are, however, still responsible for the content of the discussions or any potential agreement. A mediator is not an arbitrator: he or she has no power to impose a settlement.

How does mediation work?

The process begins when the Minister of Labour appoints mediators, and lasts for 60 days. A negotiated settlement may be reached during this period of time, but if not, the mediators turn in their reports. The reports are made public and the Minister of Labour is notified about them.

The parties may also agree to extend the period of mediation if they judge that a settlement is still possible.

Mediation can deal with all the matters negotiated and agreed upon at the national level except salary rates and scales, which by law are explicitly excluded from mediation.

The kind of mediation we want...

We want mediation in which the parties try to identify solutions to reach a settlement. There have been numerous bargaining sessions at all the tables: the major issues are known to both sides. We think that bringing in a neutral person can help break the deadlock. We also think that a rigorous mediation process will make it clear that the union proposals are realistic and legitimate, and that some of management's demands for rollbacks can only paralyse negotiations.

We must therefore use the mediation process as a way of continuing to defend the legitimacy of the solutions we are proposing and build a favourable balance of power so we can reach a negotiated settlement.

We have to carry on with the objective of achieving satisfactory collective agreements!

For mediation to be fruitful, we need to back it up with various activities. The local administrations represented by the management bargaining committees have to realize that it's time to settle! Public services in Québec need to be improved, and the people who deliver them must be respected, recognized and valued at their true worth!

Our next actions must convince employers to move towards a settlement!

So join us! Massive participation is crucial!