

PUBLIC SECTOR BARGAINING: FRONT COMMUN ANNOUNCES SEVEN UPCOMING STRIKE DAYS

The Front commun is announcing a new series of seven strike days from December 8 to 14 inclusively. By holding this final series of strike days before calling an unlimited general strike, the unions hope to achieve a settlement before the holidays.

With 420,000 members on strike for seven days in health care, social services, schools, and CEGEPs, this would officially be the longest public-sector strike in 50 years.

Mobilization has brought results

Our historic mobilization on November 21, 22 and 23 has brought significant results. Not only have we seen a change of tone on the part of government in the public space, but the strike days have also destabilized the premier and his MNAs. The fact that we ratcheted up the pressure certainly had something to do with the emergency meeting held between François Legault and CAQ MNAs, without the presence of any political staff, on November 22 (<https://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2023/11/22/un-caucus-des-ministres-sans-personnel-politique-pour-parler-franchement>).

On the following day, Premier Legault told the media that he was willing to put more money on the table. Front commun spokespersons then rightly pointed out that serious offers are made at the bargaining table - that's where they can be discussed. However, the premier's statement does clearly illustrate something the Front commun has been saying for a long time: the money is there. And if the government has been forced to move back from a line it's been holding for a year, that's because of the pressure created by your mobilization. Now is not the time to let go - we need to keep going.

Conciliation

Our request for conciliation also changed the situation. One effect of the conciliator's arrival was to add two new days of contract talks last week, on November 22 and 23, and several sessions this week including those on November 26, 27 and 29. Each of the parties undertook to explain their point of view and clarify their positions. Although no issue has officially been settled, these frank discussions have enabled us to stop going round in circles and have forced the government to give clear answers to our demands. Our bargaining teams welcome this change at the table, but now they need your support so that we can move towards a concrete settlement. We need to maintain the pressure and keep on mobilizing.

What's next?

The Front commun has always wanted to settle before the holidays, and the mandate we were given by our members allowed us to use strike action according to circumstances at the bargaining table. That's the logic behind our final series of strike days. The government needs to understand one thing: this is our last warning. If contract talks continue, the government will have to take the blame for the consequences of its inertia and face the massive mobilization of our 420,000 members. It's worth remembering that the Front commun's mandate to call an unlimited general strike at the appropriate time is a very strong one, approved by a vote of over 95%.

Unions belonging to the Front commun have convened their respective decision-making bodies in the first days of the week of December 18 in order to take stock of negotiations.

We'll see you on the picket lines starting December 8. Together as one, we'll tell the government that we won't back down.