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FOLLOW-UP ON THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN APPLYING THE SKILLED WORKERS PREMIUM

Ever since the signing of our collective agreements, certain difficulties have arisen in various workplaces with regard to the application of the skilled workers attraction and retention premium. That is why the CSN made the appropriate submissions to Treasury Board representatives to try to illustrate and explain the difficulties that have been observed and to get its interpretation on how this premium is being applied.

Last December, the Treasury Board explained its general orientation to us: the skilled worker premium would apply broadly to days that are paid, but not worked (vacation leaves, holidays, special leaves, time off for union business, deferred salary leaves, stand-by pay and professional development leaves, amongst others).

However, the CSN continues to disagree with some of the Treasury Board's interpretations:

- When work is done as overtime, the premium only applies to that portion which is the regular rate;
- The premium applies when someone takes a sick leave, but not to the reimbursement of the balance of sick leave credits that are not taken at the end of the year;
- The premium is not being paid to people receiving income protection benefits;
- The premium is not being given during maternity, paternity and adoption leaves;
- Finally, employees in the health and social services system are not being paid the premium when receiving the allowance that is equivalent to the first hour worked, when someone is called into work without prior notice.

After consultations with our FTQ and CSQ partners, we agreed to continue our discussions with the Treasury Board in order to obtain an application of the premium that would be consistent with all the discussions that we had with them during the last round of bargaining.

Involvement of the Unions

During the most recent negotiations, the CSN sought to obtain attraction and retention measures for all skilled workers. Faced with the Treasury Board's refusal, we had to demonstrate the problems encountered in attracting and retaining people in each job classification. In the end, we won a premium that would apply to the job classifications whose attraction and retention problems could be clearly demonstrated – namely, over 70% of the skilled workers in the public sector.

Is the fight over? No way! That is why we agreed, in our collective agreements, that a parity committee would be set up between the labour federations and the Treasury Board to examine, as of next year, the effects of this premium and to assess whether it would be worthwhile to maintain it after 2020, or to modify it or expand it to include other job classifications.

The involvement of FSSS and FEESP Unions in this initiative will be indispensable. We will have to be in a position to undertake a meticulous follow-up of our employers' capacity to hire, indeed maintain the workforce in terms of all the skilled worker job classifications.