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Recognition for skilled workers

THE WORK CONTINUES

Since the last issue of *Info-ouvriers* in June 2011, there have been three meetings of the joint working group, composed of union and employer representatives.

These meetings showed us that the approach chosen by the Conseil du trésor is very different from the inter-union approach. For instance, the Conseil du trésor has chosen a sectoral approach that will give it a view by “silos” rather than an overall understanding of the issue.

It has selected four indicators for identifying jobs in which institutions are liable to have problems attracting and retaining workers: staffing trends, overtime, turnover and the rate of contingent, precarious work. Using these quantitative data, the Conseil du trésor identifies a few job titles in different sectors: health, education and the public service.

We, in contrast, have chosen to analyse all of the 26 job titles listed in the letter of agreement, going beyond a quantitative study and taking into account the main factors that influence attraction and retention.

Diagnosis of the situation

Our December 1 inter-union report proposes a diagnosis of attraction-retention problems affecting all sectors of employment – health and social services, education and the public service.

We note that over a 10-year period, there has not been any growth in staffing, calculated in full-time equivalents (FTEs), for most jobs. Generally speaking, numbers of skilled workers (in FTEs) are declining. Except for handyman and licensed general handyman, any growth in personnel that there is during the reference period is very limited. In a number of job titles, there are almost no workers left. This situation is, in our opinion, explained by contracting-out and the non-replacement of employees.

We therefore conclude that the two leading causes of problems in attracting and retaining skilled workers are uncompetitive levels of pay and widespread contracting-out. Any attraction and retention revolves around the contractors, who offer more attractive rates of pay.

Next steps

The Conseil du trésor is supposed to be presenting a consolidated report soon, identifying vulnerable jobs by sectors examined. For our part, we invite the Conseil du trésor to look for solutions to the problems of contracting-out and salary, which have long been identified by our members. The time has come to sit down with the Conseil du trésor and recommend remedial measures to ensure that skilled workers will continue to be part of the labour force in our public systems.