

February 16, 2017

**Nova Scotia Government
Introduces Legislation to Impose Contract on Teachers
Stand with Nova Scotia Teachers in
Defence of Their Rights and
Quality Public Education for All!**

- Mira Katz -

**Halifax Rally
Oppose Anti-Worker Legislation
Against Teachers**

STOP THE ATTACK ON WORKERS' RIGHTS!

Union members will rally to defend the right to free and fair collective bargaining, against McNeil's 7th piece of anti-worker legislation and in support of the Teachers

Nova Scotia Legislature
Thursday, February 16th at 5:00pm

Bring noise makers, banners and signs! Bring a co-worker!



[Facebook](#)

**Nova Scotia Government Introduces Legislation to
Impose Contract on Teachers**

- **Stand with Nova Scotia Teachers in Defence of Their Rights and Quality Public Education for All! - Mira Katz**
- **McNeil Government's Anti-Education Legislation Results in Province-Wide Teacher Strike - Nova Scotia Teachers Union**

Ontario Court of Appeal Denies Benefits to Stelco Retirees

- **Vindictive Abuse of Canada's Seniors**

- **Denying Worker Pensions and Retiree Benefits Is Criminal - *K.C. Adams***
- **Workers Are the Essential Human Factor in the Economy - *Rolf Gerstenberger***
- **Excerpts from Ontario Court of Appeal Order Denying Benefits to Stelco Retirees**

Manitoba Government Austerity and Privatization Agenda

- **Oppose Use of Legislature to Attack Public Sector Workers! - *Peggy Morton***

Quebec Paramedics on Strike

- **An Important Fight Against Downward Pressure on the Conditions of All - *Pierre Chénier***

Nova Scotia Government Introduces Legislation to Impose Contract on Teachers

Stand with Nova Scotia Teachers in Defence of Their Rights and Quality Public Education for All!

- *Mira Katz* -



Nova Scotia teachers rally against passage of anti-worker legislation outside the provincial legislature, Halifax, February 14, 2017.

Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil and his Liberal government have introduced legislation to impose a contract on Nova Scotia's 9,300 public school teachers. Members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union in three successive votes declared a decisive majority No! to the previous government contracts and have now called a one-day strike on Friday February 17. Teachers have said with authority that the government side refuses to deal properly with the substantive issues of income for the teachers, their working conditions and the learning conditions of the students. Teachers point out that working and learning conditions in public schools in Nova Scotia have been deteriorating under successive anti-social austerity budgets and regimes. This anti-social austerity and attacks on public education must stop! has been a battle cry of the teachers and their thousands

of supporters amongst the students and concerned Nova Scotians.

Modern society depends greatly on an educated populace. Quality education for all can only be achieved when that is the aim of the education system and those in control. The aim of the Nova Scotia Liberal government is to attack public education and impose austerity on it through use of police powers masquerading as legislation. A government disgraces itself and loses all legitimacy when it sets itself up as a police power dictating relations within the economy and dictating how public education should be run in contradiction with those directly involved -- the teachers, students, other education workers and parents.



McNeil and his Liberal government declare they know what is best for students and public education and will impose their dictate on the teachers and society. But the aim of McNeil is not to improve public education and provide a quality working and learning environment for teachers and students. The Liberal government's declared aim is austerity reflected in a callous disregard for the working and learning conditions in Nova Scotia's public schools and the rights of teachers to a say on their terms of employment.

Teachers and their students know best the conditions within their working and learning environment. Their views should be respected and aired publicly, thoroughly debated and assessed by all. Public opinion should be created and mobilized behind the aim to improve public education and develop the best working and learning conditions for all teachers and students without exception.

Using the legislature to suppress the mobilization of public opinion in favour of quality public education for all and impose a government dictate is extremely regressive and proves the Liberal government is unfit to govern. Imposing a self-serving dictate on an important section of the working people is wrong and should never happen. It negates teachers' right to a say on their working conditions and to decide on those working conditions through extensive discussion, deliberation and vote. It negates students' right to participate in having a say on their learning conditions and deciding on those learning conditions in cooperation with their teachers.



Workers' Forum calls on the working people throughout the country to condemn the Nova Scotia Liberal government's use of the Legislature to suppress the rights of teachers and students and to attack public education and the modern right to quality education for all. This must not pass!

For background information on the resistance of teachers in Nova Scotia and BC see [Workers' Forum, February 9, 2017](#) and [Workers' Forum, December 8, 2016](#).

(Photos: NSTU, Rally4Teachers, C. Saulnier.)



McNeil Government's Anti-Education Legislation Results in Province-Wide Teacher Strike

- Nova Scotia Teachers Union -



Teachers rally at the legislature, February 15, 2017.

The complete lack of respect displayed by Stephen McNeil and his government towards teachers, students and their families has left NSTU members with no choice but to initiate a one-day province-wide walk-out on Friday, February 17.



"In the entire 122 year history of the NSTU, our members have never faced a more anti-education Premier than Stephen McNeil," says NSTU President Liette Doucet. "The legislation he introduced yesterday limits teachers' right to strike, erodes their ability to negotiate a fair contract and prevents them from advocating for reforms to improve learning conditions for their students. The result is the first province-wide teacher strike ever in Nova Scotia."

Teachers will use the day to ensure government MLAs know the full impact of the McNeil government's actions on Nova Scotia's public education system and public sector workers in the province.

"We believe this legislation is unconstitutional and we owe it to our colleagues past, present and

future to take this stand. Stephen McNeil says he wants to hear from teachers, so on Friday teachers will spend the day ensuring the Premier and his Liberal caucus gets the message -- his government's bully tactics can no longer be tolerated."

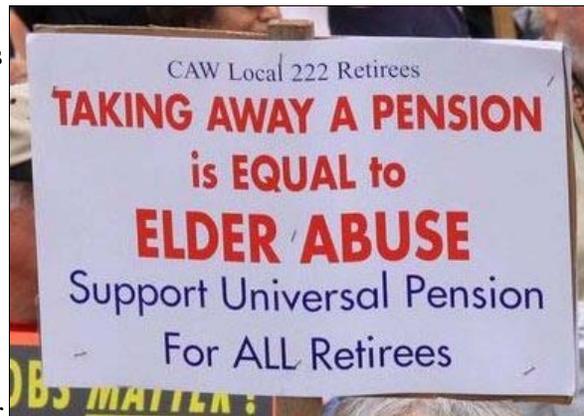
(February 15, 2017. Photos: NSTU, D. Lewis.)



Ontario Court of Appeal Denies Benefits to Stelco Retirees Vindictive Abuse of Canada's Seniors

Stand together in defence of rights as one working class, young and old

Three judges of the Court of Appeal for Ontario have denied a motion to reinstate the health benefits (OPEBs) of retired Stelco steelworkers and salaried employees. Union lawyers argued in court that the original official reason to deprive retirees of their OPEBs, a crisis of company liquidity, was no longer valid. For the past year the company has had roughly \$200 million in cash on hand, while the OPEBs require only \$2 to \$3 million per month.



To continue to deprive retirees of what is theirs by right when even the original bogus reason no longer exists reflects something sinister behind this decision. It appears to many that this vindictive dictate is designed to humiliate retirees and trample on their dignity as long-serving steelworkers producing value for the economy and society but no longer capable because of old age. The court ruling declares "who is boss," and the boss has a divine right to trample on your rights with impunity so don't even think of resisting because the boss and court jointly hold state power and you workers, young and old, have no power.



The original unjust ruling and its further approval create an atmosphere where the company and state have police powers to deprive retirees and workers of their rights with impunity and no government of laws or any legal arrangement can stop them or hold them to account. It says to seniors that the arrangement founded in law that the company and state made with you in exchange for your capacity to work during your working lives, where certain living conditions are guaranteed until passing away, is unilaterally cancelled. The court ruling imposes a dictate of police powers. It demonstrates loud and clear that the oligarchs and their hirelings in the federal and

provincial governments are dictators beyond the touch of any government of laws, who can act with impunity to deprive workers of their rights.

The working class, young and old, stands as one against this state of police powers acting with

impunity to deprive workers of their rights. Workers demand a government of laws where rights are recognized, respected and guaranteed, within which the people can hold the government to account for any breach of its responsibilities and legal arrangements.

Denounce this vindictive attack on the rights of Stelco retirees!

Reinstate the OPEBs now!

Stand as one working class, young and old, to resist all attacks on rights and fight for the new!

Workers demand a democracy where their rights are guaranteed and they can hold the rulers to account if those rights are denied.

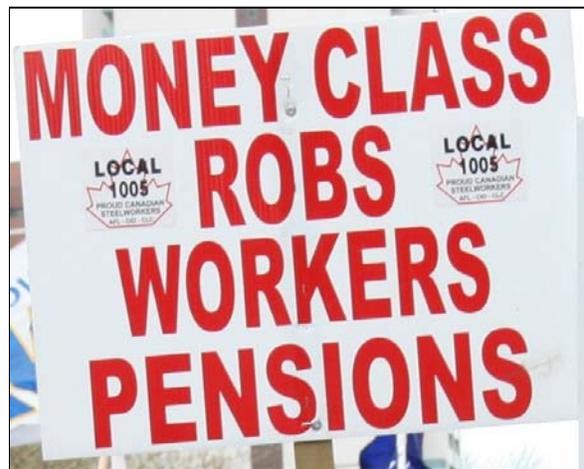


Denying Worker Pensions and Retiree Benefits Is Criminal

- K.C. Adams -

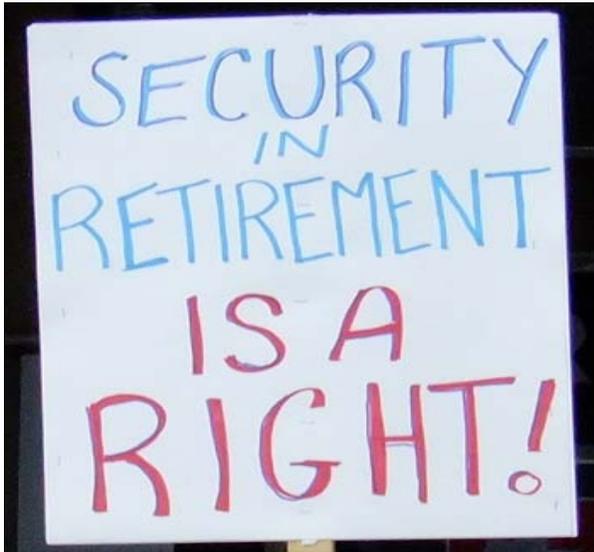
Young and old workers stand together in defence of rights

The oligarchs in control of Stelco and the Canadian steel sector together with the state have terminated the post-employment health benefits (OPEBs) of steelworkers and salaried employees. They have also stopped putting any new value steelworkers produce into the Stelco pension plans and want to eliminate defined-benefit pensions and OPEBs for all new and current workers not enrolled. The oligarchs are planning to make this attack on workers' rights permanent while under the police powers of the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCAA). They are conspiring to include the attack within an agreement to sell Stelco to a group of U.S. oligarchs calling themselves Bedrock, and within new collective agreements forced on active steelworkers at both the Hamilton and Lake Erie mills while still under CCAA.



The Bedrock CCAA plan of purchase and proposed new collective agreements entail permanently separating the pension plans and OPEBs from Stelco itself and any new value steelworkers produce. This will make retiree benefits vulnerable to reduction and effectively deny defined-benefit pensions and OPEBs to employees not yet enrolled. In accounting, this is called taking the pensions and OPEBs off the balance sheet.

The attack on retired Stelco steelworkers and salaried employees and the denial of defined-pensions generally for Canadian workers is a negation of what belongs to workers by right in exchange for their capacity to work. Young and old workers are being told and taught through this denial the false consciousness that the sale of their capacity to work is not an exchange for lifetime guarantees with those who buy their capacity to work and their state.



The oligarchs are forcing workers to accept the injustice that the sale of their capacity to work is an hourly, daily or weekly exchange that ends whenever workers no longer can work for whatever reason and without any state guarantees of a livelihood. This false consciousness says if workers' capacity to work is interrupted through injury, illness, unemployment or retirement then no arrangement or legal guarantees exist to defend their rights to a Canadian-standard livelihood. Workers are told that any arrangements can be overruled through exceptional circumstances and state police powers such as the CCAA.

In the Stelco case and generally, the oligarchs in power are declaring the arrangements and legal guarantees for a lifetime livelihood in exchange for workers' capacity to work do not exist. Workers, especially younger workers, are told they are on their own to fend for themselves without a direct connection with the socialized economy when unemployed and without any guarantees that current workers' production of new value will be available to sustain them under all circumstances until passing away.

***Down with the Criminal Attack on Workers' Pensions and Retiree Benefits!
Stand Together as One Working Class in Defence of Rights!***

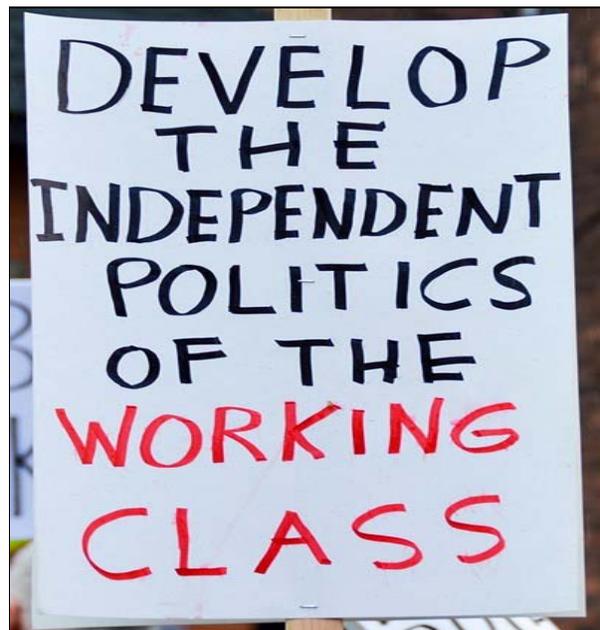


Workers Are the Essential Human Factor in the Economy

- Rolf Gerstenberger -

The oligarchs and their state use as a weapon in the class struggle the false consciousness of workers as things and a cost to their enterprises and the economy. This false consciousness declares that workers through their work-time do not reproduce the value of their capacity to work or produce the profit the oligarchs covet.

This false consciousness divides workers into categories of things such as their age, their conscience, the price of their capacity to work, their national origin, the colour of their skin, their religion, their health etc. Rather than workers having a social consciousness of themselves as one social class and essential human factor in the economy producing the entire value on which the economy and society depend for their existence, they are force-fed a false consciousness of



themselves as a cost to the economy and as things that can be divided in contradiction with their reality as one social class, the actual producers in modern society. This is meant to weaken workers' resistance in opposition to attacks on their rights and block them from organizing and bringing into being a new direction for the economy and the country's politics and governance.

When workers stand together as one class upholding their social consciousness as the essential human factor in the production of all value, and militantly defend their rights and build their independent organizations, institutions and media, they can perform miracles and deprive the oligarchs and their state of the power to deprive the working class of its rights.

Young workers soon become old workers as time marches on. Healthy and uninjured workers can become ill or injured. Spontaneously, young workers discover they are older and near retirement or unable to work for whatever reason and deprived of a Canadian-standard income. This fact of a working life inevitably interrupted should never be forgotten by any worker. It must become part of the social consciousness of the working class that young and old, healthy and unhealthy are one class united in defence of their rights. Workers are committed as one social class to reproduce themselves as the essential human factor in the economy, to produce the added-value on which society depends, and to defend the right of all members of their class to a Canadian-standard living from birth to passing away in exchange for their capacity to work.

Those who purchase workers' capacity to work and their state under the current system of private ownership and control of the basic sectors do everything to sever the relationship between active workers and retirees at specific workplaces such as Stelco and nationally. They do not want a social consciousness developing that the exchange of a worker's capacity to work and its potential to develop from birth is a lifetime arrangement that must guarantee the rights and well-being of all members of the working class under all circumstances without exception.

The scheme of the oligarchs in control of Stelco, Bedrock and the Ontario government to divide young and old Stelco workers with differing prices in exchange for their capacity to work, and to sever pensions and OPEBs from the new value workers produce should be considered a criminal act and denounced as such by all Canadians. Those in government must be held to account for this criminal act. This pitting of young workers against old workers to split the working class is a retrogressive direction for the country both in this circumstance at Stelco and generally in all workplaces when dealing with wages, pensions and benefits.

To incorporate the retrogression of taking pensions and OPEBs off the balance sheet within a sales agreement with the Bedrock oligarchs and within retrogressive collective agreements forced upon current steelworkers and retirees under the police powers of the CCAA is criminal. The oligarchs in control of Stelco, Bedrock and the province think they can deprive workers of their rights with impunity because they are drunk with the police powers of the state within a decaying political system crying out for democratic renewal.

A working class organized, united and determined to defend its rights and the rights of all is duty-bound to hold those who purchase their capacity to work and the state to agreements that guarantee Canadian-standard livelihoods for life. Defined-benefit pensions and health coverage must become universal for all workers as a right guaranteed by a government of laws. A working class organized and united as the essential human factor in production of the value the oligarchs covet and which society needs for its survival, through actions with analysis to mobilize the entire working class, young and old, can deprive the oligarchs of the power to deprive them of their rights both in specific instances such as at Stelco and in general.

Workers are one working class, young and old, determined to defend their rights!



Excerpts from Ontario Court of Appeal Order Denying Benefits to Stelco Retirees

"These motions for leave to appeal arise in the context of the ongoing proceedings under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* involving U.S. Steel Canada Inc. ("USSC")."

"In 2015, an order was made suspending the payment of certain benefits, referred to as "OPEBs" (other post-employment benefits, for example, prescription, dental and vision benefits) to retirees. The USW, together with its local unions and representative counsel to the non-USW active and retired members, jointly brought a motion. They sought to have the payment of OPEBs reinstated on the basis that USSC's financial position had improved since the 2015 order was made."

"The CCAA judge dismissed the motion on the condition that USSC make a one-time payment of \$2.7 million towards the benefits. The moving parties now seek leave to appeal from that decision."

"It is rare that this court will interfere with a discretionary decision of a CCAA judge."

"Leave to appeal is denied."

(February 8, 2017)



Manitoba Government Austerity and Privatization Agenda

Oppose Use of Legislature to Attack Public Sector Workers!

- Peggy Morton -

Premier Brian Pallister's Conservative government in Manitoba is using shock and awe tactics to launch a broad attack on public services and the workers who provide them. On January 5, the Minister of Finance and officials invited Manitoba's public sector unions to participate in what was referred to as a Fiscal Working Group. The Group was to meet February 10 to discuss the province's fiscal situation. One day before the meeting, the Manitoba Federation of Labour was informed in an



email that the discussion would no longer be about options to improve the government's fiscal situation, but would instead focus on the government's legislative intentions. The letter threatens the workers and their unions, stating, "As you are aware, the government has stated publicly that 'everything is on the table' with respect to possible legislation."

The "everything" on the table includes:

- "Whether the legislation should cover the entire public sector or only select parts;

- "Which components of compensation should be included;
- "Potential reopening of collective agreements;
- "Extension of some collective agreements, likely those with wage freezes in place;
- "Mandated wage settlements on a go-forward basis;
- "Merit increases;
- "Pensions;
- "Reduced work weeks;
- "Possible off sets such as efficiencies"

Just days before this letter was sent, the crown corporation Manitoba Hydro announced brutal reductions to its workforce, saying they will eliminate 900 jobs in 2017.

With these threats the Pallister government has declared no interest in conducting good faith bargaining and is not serious about a "dialogue" with the unions.

After the February 10 meeting, at which no cabinet minister or MLA was present, the government issued a statement attacking the union for speaking publicly about the government's actions.

"The integrity of this ongoing process requires direct and frank dialogue so neither the Premier nor the Minister of Finance will be drawn into premature speculation about potential outcomes," the statement said.

"Our government respectfully urges our partners in labour to follow the same course by focusing on the opportunity for actual discussion and cooperation rather than seeking charged and mischaracterized public conflict."

The Pallister government is well aware that the courts have ruled that governments cannot simply tear up collective agreements. Does it intend to do so anyway and draw the unions into a long legal battle? It may claim that the phoney dialogue/meeting at which no cabinet minister attended constitutes "consultation" with the unions within a narrow interpretation of the law.

The government has already indicated it is marching down the route of "public-private partnerships" (P3s) and favours privatization of public services. These methods are used to tear up collective agreements and wreck workers' organizations. Whatever the case, clearly the Pallister government is not interested in solving any problems facing society, and the self-serving use of the fiscal situation is a pretext for broad attacks on public services and the workers who deliver them.



To launch attacks on the workers who work tirelessly to protect the people in face of floods, blizzards and ice storms, care for the sick and elderly, educate our children and provide all the public services and programs on which society depends is a crime. The state-organized crime is not just against the workers who provide the services, but against society, because the public sector workers are the front line of defence of the services on which the people and society depend.

In an attempt to justify the unjustifiable, a Pallister government spokesperson said:

"Our government inherited serious financial challenges and unsustainable expenditure growth. As we address these issues and consider options including legislation, we have reached out to union leadership to secure views and constructive feedback.

"This is occurring through a respectful and ongoing process being co-ordinated through public service officials and union leaders. Government is not going to bypass this direct dialogue through premature public comments about potential outcomes."

What exactly is the government proposing to discuss? According to the government, "dialogue" consists of the government imposing the agenda, which is how the assault on the workers will take place and the unions are invited to make suggestions in this regard. This is unacceptable to say the least. Health care workers do not ask which patient should I look after and which should I abandon. Teachers do not ask which students are expendable or un-teachable. Firefighters do not enter a burning house coldly calculating which of the people inside they will try to save and who will be left to die. Workers make every effort to treat, teach and save everyone! That is their job and they are proud to do it as it presents itself.

The Pallister wrecking agenda puffed up with spurious claims of "unsustainable expenditure growth" and other empty chatter is alien to the working class. The Pallister agenda is to serve the financial oligarchy and not the people but he wants to hide his true aim behind a concocted "fiscal situation" to fool the gullible. The agenda is not to solve problems of nation-building but to suck society dry of all its assets and values for the benefit of the global oligopolies and class privilege of the rich.



Quebec Paramedics on Strike

An Important Fight Against Downward Pressure on the Conditions of All

- Pierre Chénier -



Paramedics and other health care workers demonstrate in Quebec City, October 27, 2016.

*Paramedics struggle to improve their conditions and oppose the government's
irresponsible actions*

Close to 1,000 paramedics, members of the Brotherhood of Pre-hospital Workers of Quebec (FTQ) went on strike February 2 in many cities in Quebec. Three days later, some 960 paramedics members of the Federation of Health and Social Services (FSSS-CSN) employed by Urgences-Santé in Montreal and Laval joined the strike. The FSSS has about 3,600 workers in the pre-hospital sector and strike actions have been held recently in Quebec City and Sherbrooke, and more are expected to be held in Quebec North Shore and Lower Saint-Lawrence.

Quebec paramedics have been without a contract since March 31, 2015. They are demanding significant improvements in their working conditions, which have deteriorated over the years. The working conditions are also those of the delivery of services so vital to the health of the population.

They seek a reduction in their workload, which has become quite impossible to manage with the number of calls and the increased intervention time while the number of staff and vehicles has not kept up. Because of the deteriorating conditions, people who require paramedics have suffered cardiac arrest and other serious issues while waiting longer than they should for an ambulance to pick them up. In this context, psychological exhaustion has become common among paramedics.

Workers are calling for the abolition of on-call schedules in the regions, where paramedics are on duty seven days in a row for 24 hours a day followed by seven days off. These schedules, besides destabilizing the lives of the workers, mean that the waiting time following a call is greater as the workers first have to leave their homes to pick up an ambulance.

Paramedics are demanding wage increases that bring them on par with those of the public sector and improvements to their pension plans. Due to the particularly challenging conditions in which they work, many ambulance attendants have to retire earlier than workers in other occupations and request arrangements to do so without penalty.

The demands of the paramedics are just and consistent with the important work they do for the people and the value they bring to society. Their demands are aimed at halting the deterioration of services under the anti-social offensive of successive governments.

After two years without a contract, normative aspects are largely settled but the monetary clauses are going nowhere. The employers, be it Urgences-Santé, which is a state-organized-enterprise, or the Corporation des services d'ambulance du Québec (CSAQ) representing the vast majority of private, not-for-profit and cooperative ambulance companies outside Montreal and Laval, all claim they do not have a mandate to negotiate monetary issues. The stated reason is the government's refusal to uphold its responsibility. Health Minister Gaétan Barrette of the Couillard government expressed this himself in a particularly cynical way in April 2016. He announced his Ministry was withdrawing from the bargaining table, except with regards to negotiation of the pension plan. Barrette blustered about an overhaul of service contracts that the government has with various employers, a redesign to consider them subcontractors, which would negotiate independently with the workers. In this way the government wants to weaken the united stand of paramedics and make them deal with all the different subcontractors who are all state sanctioned and financed enterprises. The government knows full-well the integrated nature of pre-hospital services and the overriding responsibility of the state, which is responsible for funding all paramedic companies, but is putting on this act to attack ambulance service workers.

The workers find themselves in the absurd situation where their employers say they do not have a mandate to negotiate and the government says it is up to the different subcontractors to negotiate. The service contracts expire on April 1, 2017 and the employers' bodies are saying the amount the government is allocating to them is being drastically reduced. For this reason they say they cannot make any wage offers for the last three years of a five-year agreement. Within this anti-social

atmosphere, ambulance workers are told wage increases will only occur if they give monetary concessions on other aspects of the contract, such as holidays and vacation time.

Minister Barrette's dictate to divide the sector into contracting companies is meant to drive down the wages and working conditions of paramedics, both urban and remote, and dismantle the uniform terms of employment workers had achieved in earlier struggles. This will only weaken the system and cause harm both to workers and the public. Ambulance attendants are not willing to accept this retrogression. They demand that the government stop this irresponsible cynical manoeuvring and negotiate agreements with the workers that are acceptable to them and improve the situation in the health care system.



"We want to conclude a collective agreement for the people we represent, with the priorities we have put forward," Jean Gagnon, the representative of the FSSS-CSN pre-hospital sector, told *Workers' Forum*. "Employers, including Urgences-Santé, must have negotiating mandates so that we can sit down and settle once and for all. It is up to the Ministry to ensure that we can negotiate with employers because our employers are only intermediaries in this process. This has been going on for two years. We had no choice but to go on strike."

During their strike, paramedics continue to provide emergency services to the population. However, ambulance vehicles will no longer be posted on-site at sporting or artistic events and will be dispatched only if required. Paramedics will no longer perform their administrative duties (such as filling out forms for billing patients) and will reduce their ambulance maintenance work to essentials.

The struggle of paramedics is an important feature of the workers' movement for a pro-social Quebec to resist downward pressure on society and deserves the support of all.

(Photos: CSN, FTPQ-592.)



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