

Report on the meeting with Marcel Proulx Tuesday, August 14, 2007

Attended by:

Joanne Castonguay

Bob Beauchamp

Jacques Marengère

Daniel Charron

Ed Cashman, REVP

Pierre Lebel, PSAC

This meeting, which was held at the MP's office in Gatineau, began at 9 a.m. and lasted about 45 minutes. The REVP, Ed Cashman, thanked Mr. Proulx for supporting the anti-scab legislation during his last presentation. Mr. Proulx indicated that the Liberals are working on a new bill and are trying to strike a balance between what would address employers' fears and satisfy the unions at the same time.

Question	MP's answers
<p>Quality public services How can the MP intervene so that the negotiations between the government and PSAC in the public sector do not result in a confrontation? Is he willing to raise this matter in the house if negotiations do not go well?</p> <p>Is the MP in favour of abolishing pay zones for employees and operational services?</p>	<p>When informed of the limited number of days during which the employer agreed to meet with union this fall, Mr. Proulx stated that this approach would not achieve progress during negotiations. He believes that the Conservative government has little interest in reaching agreement with its employees because it does not want to be perceived by the grassroots as giving out attractive salaries and working conditions.</p> <p>The MP indicated that he understood the union wanted to abolish pay zones and introduce, if necessary, cost-of-living bonuses in certain specific markets. However he did not specify whether he would support the union on this matter.</p>

<p>Negotiations at the House of Commons Conciliation is getting underway. Is he willing to lend a hand once again if the need arises?</p>	<p>The members thanked Proulx for taking an official stand on working conditions at the House of Commons. The MP did indicate that he would continue to follow this case. However, he did think that the health and safety provisions currently in force on Parliament Hill are sufficient.</p>
<p>Placement agencies The federal government is making excessive use of temporary placement agencies. It is of great concern in our area where more than 60% of these hires take place. It is the MP in favour of having tighter control over how often these agencies are used?</p>	<p>According to Mr. Proulx, the use of these agencies points to a human resources management problem in the Public Service. It is an inadequate solution to staffing problems. He believes that it could create a situation where senior public servants would favour certain candidates who come into agencies and be offered positions. Mr. Proulx believes that the hiring process must be improved because the current situation is unfair to current employees as promotion opportunities pass them by. The MP made reference to the recent Leahy report on the public service and invited PSAC to schedule a meeting with him to see to what extent they could put their heads together to help improve the staffing process and the Public Service.</p>

<p>Sale of federal buildings PSAC is opposed to the sale of federal buildings to the private sector. We organized a demonstration on June 12 on Sparks Street. Is the MP in favour of selling off federal buildings?</p>	<p>The MP agrees with PSAC, which believes that the evaluation process relating to the feasibility of the sale of federal buildings is beset with conflicts of interest, as the banks which suggested the sales are the ones overseeing the transactions. Mr. Proulx believes that the money derived from the sale of the buildings will be used to purchase (military and other) goods, which means they will be trading off the long-term appreciation of the value of the buildings to cover short-term expenses. It will then cost more to lease the buildings which previously belonged to the government. The MP is also fearful that, once the (rents in the) leases go up, the government will use this excuse in an attempt to reduce the size of the Public Service and transfer services to the private sector, where the employees' working conditions, more often than not, are not as good.</p>
<p>Greater justice in the taxation system Is your party in favour of quality public services accessible to all, which are funded and delivered by the public sector? What does your party intend to do to make our taxation system fairer to reduce the increasing spread between the rich and the remaining population and to ensure that there is enough money in our collective piggy bank to maintain our public services?</p>	<p>Mr. Proulx indicated that the Liberals' platform will contain measures on taxation and income tax that will restore equity which, in his view, was derailed by the Conservative government. The MP believes that, as a society, we must not increase the income tax of the less well off as the Americans do. However, he did not want to elaborate on the measures that the Liberals would implement.</p>

Pay equity with separate employers

Is the MP in favour of a quick resolution to pay equity matters with certain separate employers? These include the Canada Post, the Office of the Auditor General, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Communications Security Establishment, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, the Statistical Survey Operations in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

As far as the pay equity issue with employers is concerned, MP Proulx repeated that he does not believe the Conservatives are inclined to give any advantage whatsoever to Public Service employees. He did admit, though, when the Liberals were in power, they were not enthusiastic about resolving the pay equity issue for Treasury Board employees. In his estimation, the Chrétien government waited and went along with the decision handed down by the Human Rights Tribunal, because it had to deal with different opinions within the Liberal caucus.

Mr. Proulx believes that this pay equity issue at Canada Post and with other employers must be resolved and that an agreement must be reached. He believes that the same rationale applies to these employers and to the Treasury Board. All of these agencies are part of the Government of Canada: if this is done for one group, it must be done for all groups. Mr. Proulx is committed to working with PSAC to make progress on the pay equity cases.

<p>North American Security Partnership Is the MP in favour of these discussions that are held in camera and outside Parliament on such fundamental issues that affect Canada's security and economy?</p> <p>How does he intend to intervene to ensure that citizens are consulted and that they have their say on the matter?</p>	<p>Mr. Proulx is not against discussions being held at the highest levels of security and integration issues. It is only when the decisions impacting citizens are made and not ratified by Parliament are problematic in his estimation. He believes that the government can make decisions without always having to refer back to Parliament, because that is the government's role. However, when these changes have some impact on society, Parliament must be advised.</p> <p>He concluded by saying that he believes the Conservatives are an ideological government intent on reducing standards. For example, he fears that pesticide standards will be lowered so that they are in line with those in force in the United States. He opposes that type of approach, as he does not agree with bringing something in line with the lowest common denominator.</p>
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The members and Mr. Proulx also raised the issue of French as a working language in the Public Service. He agreed with employees being able to work in the language of their choice in the Public Service.

Finally, the MP for Hull-Aylmer indicated that he was willing to cooperate with PSAC representatives in cases where they would be making reasonable demands. He repeated that, in his view, the federal Public Service must be dealt with as a whole, even though workers are grouped together in separate agencies.