

*Statements by Ministers***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[Translation]***PUBLIC SERVICE****SIGNING OF MASTER COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT WITH PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA**

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to announce today that we shall soon be signing a master agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada that will cover some 170,000 federal employees. Never has such a large number of employees been affected by this kind of agreement.

When our Government took the reins, Mr. Speaker, it was faced with a difficult situation. The Public Service had just spent two years under legislative restrictions, and almost all of its 76 collective bargaining agreements were up for renewal.

In its firm resolve to improve labour-management relations, Treasury Board quietly started working on this mammoth task and managed to conclude agreements covering about 208,000 employees in 76 bargaining units, and did so while observing the principles of justice and equity. Salary increases have averaged an annual 3.55 per cent for three years, and are therefore below the inflation rate.

Mr. Speaker, following several rounds of intensive negotiations, in April 1986 the Government was able to conclude with the Public Service Alliance and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada an agreement on the principles governing master-agreement bargaining. Hon. Members will remember the statement I made on the subject in the House, on April 17, 1985.

Talks with PIPSC started on September 10, 1985, and an agreement was concluded on February 27, 1986. On July 9 of this year, we signed a master-agreement with PIPSC covering 7,000 employees in 18 bargaining units.

Negotiations with the Public Service Alliance started on September 5, 1985 and continued until early 1986. On March 4, 1986, the Alliance asked for a conciliation board which met for the first time on June 25. Thanks to the report published today, we will be in a position to sign a master-agreement very shortly with the Alliance.

[English]

With the advent of the master agreement system, collective bargaining in the federal Government becomes much more efficient. Future collective agreements will be easier to administer, and less time will need to be spent at the bargaining table.

In the case of the Alliance, the master agreement will cover approximately 80 per cent of the terms and conditions now found in 39 individual collective agreements. Issues such as rates of pay, hours of work, and annual leave continue to be negotiated at individual bargaining unit tables.

This innovative approach is a result of the strong commitment of the Government to establishing harmonious labour relations with Public Service unions. It is a tribute to the strong spirit of co-operation on both sides which has made the new bargaining system possible.

Under the terms set out in the binding conciliation board report being made public today, the following improvements are to be implemented. First, a dental plan will be introduced for all employees represented by the Alliance, with premiums to be shared on a fifty-fifty basis between the employer and the employee. Second, female employees will receive a 17-week maternity benefit to close the gap between unemployment insurance and salary level. Third, in future collective agreements any retroactive pay will extend to those individuals who leave the Public Service before the collective agreement is signed. Fourth, new provisions against sexual harassment and discrimination are included which confirm existing Treasury Board policies. Finally, various other provisions include improvements to shift and weekend premiums and other allowances.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the members of both bargaining teams. I also wish to thank the members of the conciliation board—Bruce Light, employer nominee; John Fryer, Alliance nominee; and, in particular, Martin Teplitsky, Chairman, whose excellent work, expertise and dedication were instrumental in bringing this unique process to a successful conclusion.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the Minister and congratulate the parties involved, namely the employer's representatives and the union spokesmen, for at last reaching a consensus on a master agreement. Like the Minister I acknowledge that we all strive for efficiency and that, with the generous co-operation of public servants, the Government has managed to come up with a proposition which the unions can live with. I think this should please everyone concerned.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) said he was pleased to unveil this master agreement. I wish we had been given the famous report of this conciliation board, but this was not to be. I cannot really comment on the contents of the report since I do not have it. I did get the Minister's statement and I thank him for that. I am still waiting for the report of the binding conciliation board.

Mr. Speaker, it should be emphasized that progress in this case was not as easy as the Minister would have us believe. He rose in the House in April 1985 to announce that he had concluded an agreement with the unions. We eventually found out that it was not quite an agreement. It was an understanding which was not finalized. Negotiations went on until early 1986 and they were finally put in the hands of a conciliation board in March this year at the request of the Public Service Alliance of Canada—and the Minister himself has admitted