

SOLVING THE PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM ISSUES



Q & A Questions and answers on the Phoenix pay system

1. What has UCCO-SACC-CSN done since the announcement of the implementation of the Phoenix system?

- Since day 1 of the announcement of this major change, we have spoken out at all tables where we sit to stress that this system will never replace the many public servants who used to work in every region and in every department.
 - Faced with the impossibility of maintaining the old pay system, we urged the Government to postpone the implementation of Phoenix, so proper checks would be made with the departments participating in the pilot project. This helped delay its operation from December 2015 to April 2016.
 - We are one of the few unions that obtained, as a result of our interventions, implementation of emergency pay advances for our members by CSC. Most other civil servants receive advances from the Pay Centre, which causes other processing delays.
 - UCCO-SACC-CSN has created a registry of problematic cases that we submit weekly to various levels that are responsible for making the appropriate interventions to validate that procedures were followed and to enable the implementation of the necessary corrective measures.
 - Every week, we hold meetings with various Deputy Ministers and senior officials of the CSC, PWGSC and Treasury Board and with members of Parliament and Government Ministers to assert our rights.
 - These meetings turned out to be profitable. The Government initially admitted the shortcomings of Phoenix and has subsequently opened satellite offices throughout the country, as we suggested.
 - Since July, we have created four factsheets, containing all the technical information we had accumulated over the first weeks of Phoenix operation, to help our members settle their pay issues.
 - We demanded that the CSC and PWGSC hold explanatory meetings for all employees, including managers, so that we can all understand the functioning of the new system.
 - In addition, following our request, PWGSC is assessing—with the CSC—the best way of providing training to managers who hold a key role.
 - We ask that a manager in charge of Phoenix in each institution and in each region answer questions from our members and ensure adequate follow-up with the Pay Centre.
 - Finally, several other applications are being processed by different decision-makers, for example, the list of codes on the pay “slip”.
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2. Who are those responsible for my pay problems?

- The first culprit of this disaster is the Conservative Government at the time that savagely slashed staff in the public service and that purchased this inadequate software to replace them.
- The other culprits are players in the current Liberal Government. When they realized, during the first implementation phase, of the coming debacle, they stubbornly went forward with the second phase. We recently learned of the existence of valuable bonuses, promised if the projected timetable was respected. This timetable and the promised bonuses likely contributed to the difficulties that we are currently experiencing.
- UCCO-SACC-CSN, whether at the national, regional or local levels, has no responsibility in this gigantic kerfuffle. Since the announcement of its implementation, particularly since May 4, 2016, we have been working extremely hard to counteract the negative effects of this failed system on the lives of our members.

3. Why is UCCO-SACC-CSN never in the media about Phoenix?

- This is a false perception. At every event or mobilization action, our national president, our national vice-presidents and even our regional presidents denounced in the media the dysfunctional Phoenix system.
- Often, when you see a member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) or of another union in the media, we are united on the message.
- We sit on the National Joint Committee (NJC), which is an umbrella group of all unions of the public service. This alliance includes PSAC which represents a large number of federal employees affected by Phoenix and those employees working in the Pay Centre.

4. Why has UCCO-SACC-CSN not pursued legal action against the Government?

- We obtained a legal opinion from the CSN's Legal Department that establishes that the ideal recourse for certain corrective measures are: an individual grievance and a policy grievance. The elected members of the national executive agree with this response.
- We believe that investing your contributions in very lengthy legal procedures that would be more than uncertain would not make sense for us all.
- It is true that the NJC has filed a mandamus application at Federal Court. However, UCCO-SACC-CSN, following advice from the CSN's Legal Department, decided not to take this path.

5. Why doesn't the CSN not pay us salary advances or overtime advances given the amount of contributions that we give them?

- Imagine for a moment a union replacing the employer? How would your union then recover these sums? Colleagues who have decided to be your spokespersons would then become CSN pay collectors. This would be nonsensical.

6. It's great to get advances, but I am outraged about getting only 60% of my salary. I deserve 100% of my salary.

- All correctional officers deserve 100% of their salary for the work they do on a daily basis. There are not many trades that have our share of daily challenges. Salary advances are calculated at 60% of the gross amount of your regular pay, therefore practically 100% of your net salary. If CSC paid you 100% of the gross salary, you would later have to repay a portion of this amount with a pay cut for taxes and contributions you regularly make on every pay cheque.
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- Do not forget that not all public service employees who are receiving advances. It is as a result of your daily support that we have union credibility and that we received advances from the CSC.

7. Why don't we form a common front against the Government?

- As mentioned before, we are part of the National Joint Council (NJC), which brings together all public service unions. A lot of work is being done in groups. We must keep in mind that all unions don't have the same problems as we do with Phoenix. However, all unions agree that Phoenix is a fiasco. Nothing is being excluded for the moment.
- It's a bit like the dynamic that we experience in an institution. Many pavilions in our institutions are different from each other. The institutions in our regions are different from each other. So we need to keep our differences in mind, while remaining united faced with the opponent.

8. I believe that my union is not doing enough mobilization and I am going to take this in hand.

- It is strongly recommended not to take matters into your hands by mobilizing. UCCO-SACC-CSN has always been strategic in the choice of mobilization actions and when to lead them, which has given us a lot of credibility. We need to know all the ins and outs before making a decision that involves confrontation with the employer.
- If you wish to take part in the decision-making process, your involvement according to the rules which we collectively gave ourselves is essential. To paraphrase a great American president, ask not what your union can do for you but what you can do for your union.

9. I have had some NSF's, penalties or interest on a loan or credit card. Who will pay for all that?

- Last week, the Government put a form online that you must complete to receive fees that you have to pay because of the failures of the Phoenix system. Here is the link:
<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/psm-fpm/pay-remuneration/phoenix-phenix/330-0321-eng.pdf>
- You must send this completed form with all the justifications required to the attention of these people:

Claim officer

Lisa St-Amour, Director, Financial Operations
Telephone—613 943-3053/email—lisa.stamour@csc-scc.gc.ca

Replacements

Sylvie Poirier
Phone – 613 992-8776/email – sylvie.poirier@csc-scc.gc.ca
Valérie Sina Ba
Phone – 613 943-2249/email – valery.sinaba@csc-scc.gc.ca

10. It's fine to be compensated, but will my credit rating be affected?

- This point is still being discussed with Treasury Board and the NJC which includes all present unions. We will keep you informed of developments.
 - We strongly recommend that you ask for an explanatory letter from your local management if you need to justify your delays at your bank.
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11. Will my 2016 tax refund be affected by “overpayments”?

- Discussions have been ongoing with Treasury Board and the NJC to correct the situation before the end of the 2016 fiscal year. Some instructions have been sent out by PWGSC on that issue. You can find all the information about the process here:

<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/remuneration-compensation/paye-centre-pay/trop-payes-overpayments-eng.html>

12. Why did my union stop publishing explanatory factsheets on Phoenix?

- Information in four explanatory factsheets was validated by CSC (since Phoenix is not a union creation). However, at a meeting with PWGSC, the Deputy Minister informed us of gaps in the procedures that CSC had submitted to us. It is for this reason that UCCO-SACC-CSN decided to put pressure on the employer by forcing it to assume its responsibilities and by requiring it to inform and train its staff on the various procedures in dealing with the Phoenix pay issues.

Unity is the key!

