

Buenos Aires teachers to strike as school starts



Buenos Aires, March 2 (RHC)-- After three rounds of negotiations, teacher's unions in Buenos Aires province say the government's offer of a raise, "isn't enough to pay to turn the lights on." Seventeen unions, including the Unified Syndicate of Education Workers of Buenos Aires (Suteba), say that the government hasn't budged from the initial 15 percent raise offer it offered at the beginning of the talks.

Suteba leader, Roberto Baradel, says the government's final offer, "isn't enough to pay to turn the lights on." Baradel added: "the government thinks that an increase ... of 625 (Argentine) pesos (approx. \$42.50) will give teachers dignified salaries."

The Argentinean inflation rate has hovered around 23 percent for the past two years when it came down from its 40 percent high in April 2016. Making economic matters worse, the Mauricio Macri administration has feverishly slashed pensions, energy and transportation subsidies over the past year.

The secretary-general of the group of unions, Maria Laura Torre, called the government's offer "embarrassing." Torre said during a press conference: "The Minister of the Economy talks about 'decent compromise.' They want to pay us (\$40.00) more per month and on top of that, we can't get sick (referring to an incentive clause offered by the government). This is offensive. How are we going to talk about a decent compromise? ... They don't value our work."

"How are we going to continue?" asked Mirta Petrocini, president of the Buenos Aires Federation of Educators whose membership reaches 55,000 teachers. The teachers announced after the meetings they'll strike Monday and Tuesday of next week if the government doesn't agree to the unions' desired 24 percent salary increase that will automatically increase with the rate of inflation.

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