



**Press release**

**For immediate release**

## **Public sector negotiations Yet another insulting offer**

Quebec City, October 29, 2023. – “Much ado about nothing: a pitiful bonus of just 1.3% over five years.” Acute dismay, but hardly surprise, marked the reaction of the Common Front’s spokespersons to this morning’s offer from the Conseil du trésor, which came as an affront. Once again the government has made it clear it hasn’t the foggiest notion of the difficulties faced by public services and the urgent need to save the sinking ship. What’s more, it has shown that it is completely out of touch with our angry and exhausted workers, who are groaning under the burden of public services that are more fragile than ever.

“This offer is yet another slap in the face to the 420,000 workers of the Common Front. It’s an insult. It’s too little, too late. Our people are done turning the other cheek,” thundered Common Front spokesmen François Enault, first vice-president of the CSN, Éric Gingras, president of the CSQ, Magali Picard, president of the FTQ, and Robert Comeau, president of the APTS.

Even though 100,000 people took to the streets in support of the Common Front on September 23, and despite an unlimited general strike mandate adopted by 95% of our membership and the announcement of a first strike day, the mountain has again brought forth a mouse. Since it was first elected in 2018 this government has always manoeuvred to get its own way, to keep the whip hand over everything.

“We don’t see anything in this offer that can head off a strike. We have to face it: a strike is the only way to make the government understand. Since that’s the way they want it, that’s what we’ll be giving them, loud and clear, come November 6” the spokespersons added, indicating that they would of course take the time to analyse the offer in detail and present it to their respective bodies, but there could not be the slightest doubt that it falls short of their members’ expectations.

### **Wage offer**

The wage offer, which went from 9% over five years to 10.3% over the same period, will do nothing to close the huge wage gap between the 420,000 workers of the Common Front and other Quebeckers.

“That new offer won’t get us out of the poorhouse the government wants to keep us in. They’re still running the same bad movie—a disaster movie.”

Let's not forget that the government has chosen to give parliamentarians a 30% catch-up raise, with additional annual increases on top of that, and that it has offered Sûreté du Québec police officers a 21% raise. All of that needs to be taken into account in any wage agreement to be reached with the Common Front.

"We note that these substantial offers have been made to male-dominated workforces, while public services, 78% female, are offered only crumbs. Once again, women are facing unacceptable discrimination."

### **Bonuses**

The only sensible thing Minister LeBel has done here is to extend certain bonuses until the collective agreement is renewed, but that's not a gain—it was already a given. For a government that claims to be a first-rate employer, it would have been a grave error to undermine the working conditions and employment climate of workers in troubled sectors. However, by putting an end to the COVID-19 administrative measures, the government is setting the cat among the pigeons.

### **Pensions**

While it is certainly good news that the government is backtracking on a "withholding" measure it had sought to impose on the Régime de retraite du personnel employé du gouvernement et des organismes publics (RREGOP)—namely, raising the age of retirement without penalty from 55 to 57 for people with 35 years' service—the plan is still seriously under attack, even though it is in excellent financial health, with such measures as a reduction in required pensions on the pretext of improving the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP).

### **Sectoral tables**

For these negotiations to succeed, we will of course need to reach agreement at the central table, but also at the sectoral tables. "Despite all the signals sent to these tables, such as the cutbacks recently carried out, the management party claims it has no mandate even to talk about its own demands. We really have to wonder how willing and able the government is to arrive at satisfactory agreements in the near future."

As always, the Common Front will be available to negotiate in order to move these negotiations forward quickly for the benefit of its membership.

For more information on the negotiations: [frontcommun.org](http://frontcommun.org).

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