

PUBLIC SECTOR BARGAINING: PUBLIC OPINION IS ON OUR SIDE

The Front commun has released the findings of a survey on Quebecers' perception of public-sector contract talks. The survey was carried out by SOM from July 26 to July 31, 2023, and reached 1,089 respondents.

Good news: the survey shows that Quebecers generally support the objectives of public-sector employees.

Quebecers are in tune with our demands

- A very significant majority of Quebecers (87%) believe that the government must improve its employees' working conditions in order to remain competitive in the labour market.
- They also believe that salaries should, at least, be indexed to the cost of living (86%).
- Three quarters think that public-sector wages should be equivalent to those in the private sector (77%).

Better working conditions make things better for everyone

In the context of today's labour shortage, respondents seem to clearly understand the relation between the quality of work conditions and the quality of services provided to Quebecers.

- Three quarters (75%) of Quebecers believe that improving the working conditions of public-sector employees will have a positive impact on the quality of services they provide.

About the government's offers

- The survey indicates that over half of all Quebecers (56%) agree that the government's offer to increase pay by 9% over 5 years is not enough.
- Also notable is the fact that very few respondents would describe the government offer as generous ("generous/very generous," 10%). In other words, the government's offers are far from gaining Quebecers' support.
- In addition, only three Quebecers in ten believe that the government is doing a good job managing negotiations with the unions, while almost half (48%) believe the contrary.

About our demands

- As for union demands, 55% of Quebecers believe that in terms of pay, they are not exaggerated (39% find them sufficient and 17% insufficient).
- Only 38% believe that Front commun demands are either generous or very generous.

Front commun demands are based on a catch-up pay increase and protection against inflation (2023-2024: \$100 a week or CPI + 2%; 2024-2025: CPI + 3%; 2025-2026: CPI + 4%).

Is the government an employer of choice? No, not really!

- While most Quebecers think that public-sector jobs receive recognition (62%), the majority (52%) would not want the Québec government as their employer.

This tells us that the government has its work cut out if it wants to become an employer of choice.

“These results confirm what we notice when we talk to people: Quebecers value their public services, and they know that our working conditions are not satisfactory,” said Front commun representatives. Speaking with one voice, CSN first vice-president François Enault, CSQ president Éric Gingras, FTQ president Magali Picard and APTS president Robert Comeau commented: “Our discussions are becoming more confrontational, and in that context, the survey findings are important for the 420,000 workers we represent. For months we’ve been saying that the government’s offers are disconnected, and it seems that a large proportion of Quebecers think the same. The key take-away is that right now, public opinion is clearly on the side of the workers.”

“Negotiations are a two-way street,” added the Front commun spokespersons. “At the bargaining tables right now, the government isn’t acting as if it wants to become a good employer. Instead, it’s relying on a tired old strategy that gives priority to public relations. But there are limits to that - as the survey shows, Quebecers aren’t being taken in. We’ve been negotiating for almost a year, and it’s time for the pace to pick up. Québec deserves better!”

A march to defend Québec’s public services on September 23

The Front commun is organizing a big national demonstration in Montréal on Saturday, September 23, and is inviting all Quebecers to join their voices with those of public-sector workers.

The future of our public systems matters to everyone - we’re talking about our schools, health care, social services, and higher education.

Let’s all turn out on September 23. Together as one, we can tell the government we’ve had enough!

Join us in Jeanne-Mance Park in Montréal, at 1 p.m., and be part of the next step in a historic movement!

Because the government is still completely unresponsive after almost a year of contract talks, each of the Front commun unions has decided to seek a mandate for strike action, up to and including an unlimited general strike. To obtain this mandate, the unions will be holding multiple general assemblies beginning September 18.

You will soon receive full details regarding your general assembly from your union representatives.