Here we are!

NEGOTIATIONS 2023

Central table agreement

CSQ
Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

Following the general meetings held with all affiliates of Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ), the agreement in principle reached at the central table was supported by 78% of the members. Although the settlement reached on intersectoral matters is not perfect, it must be emphasized that the agreement submitted to members for their approval met most of the objectives we had set and introduced the biggest wage settlement since the late 1970s. This explains the outcome of voting at general meetings.

Now that the agreement has been ratified, there is still some drafting work to be done. Until the collective agreements are signed and available, we feel it would be appropriate to provide you with a document outlining the details of the settlement reached at the central table. The gains achieved at virtually all sectoral negotiation tables[1] are in addition to those presented here.

DURATION OF THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

The collective agreement is for five years, from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2028.

SALARY, BONUSES, AND INCREASES

Salary parameters

A salary increase of 17.4% over five years was negotiated for all workers in all sectors, plus purchasing power protection of up to 1% for each of the last three years of the collective agreement (up to 3% total).

All government offers were for a five-year period. They were 9% in December 2022, 10.3% in October 2023, and 12.7% on December 6, 2023.

In the final negotiation blitz, we managed to secure a jump of over 4%, taking the final offer to 17.4%. With compounding (the impact of increases applied on top of previous increases), salaries will rise by 18.6% over five years.

This is the biggest increase over the life of a collective agreement since 1979, not to mention the fact that we haven't had a purchasing power protection clause in decades.

1. Sectoral negotiations with the Cree and Kativik school boards have continued in 2024, as have those with Fédération de la santé du Québec (FSQ).

	1st OFFER 15-DÉC-22	2nd OFFER 29-OCT-23	3rd OFFER 06-DÉC-23	AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE
April 1, 2023	3% + lump sum	4.3% + lump sum	4.3% + lump sum	6%
April 1, 2024	1.50%	1.50%	2.30%	2.80%
April 1, 2025	1.50%	1.50%	2.10%	2.60% Up to 1.0% more in purchasing power protection at March 31, 2026, if inflation exceeds 2.6%
April 1, 2026	1.50%	1.50%	2%	2.50% Up to 1.0% more in purchasing power protection at March 31, 2027, if inflation exceeds 2.5%
April 1, 2027	1.50%	1.50%	2%	3.50% Up to 1.0% more in purchasing power protection at March 31, 2028, if inflation exceeds 3.5%
Total	**9%**	**10.30%**	**12.70%**	**17.40%**

It is important to note that there will be a 6% increase in the first year of the agreement, to be paid retroactively in accordance with the terms of each collective agreement once signed. This means that by 2024, all workers will see their pay increased by a minimum of 8.8% (6% on April 1, 2023 + 2.8% on April 1, 2024).

To see how your salary range will be enhanced, you can consult the CSQ web calculator at https://negociation.lacsq.org/calculateur-salarial/ (in French)

Purchasing power protection

In addition to the general increase parameters, the Common Front secured a purchasing power protection mechanism built into the salary ranges for each of the last three years of the collective agreement.

The formula is simple: if inflation exceeds the increase parameter for each of the years concerned, a salary adjustment of up to one percent (1%) will be applied to the salary ranges on the last days of each agreement year (i.e., March 31, 2026, 2027, and 2028).

Thus, on March 31 of each of the last three years, inflation between April 1 and March 31 of each year will be compared with the salary increase paid in the previous April. If inflation exceeds the increase, an additional increase of up to 1% will be added.

This means that an additional adjustment of up to 3% over the life of the collective agreement is possible if inflation exceeds the projected increases for each of the last three years.

Here is an example of how the purchasing power protection clause applies to a wage of $30 an hour.

	SALARY AT MARCH 31, 2023	$30/HOUR
Year 2023-2024	**April 1, 2023: 6.0% increase**	$31.80
Year 2024-2025	**April 1, 2024: 2.8% increase**	$32.69
Year 2025-2026	**April 1, 2025: 2.6% increase**	$33.54
	March 31, 2026: If inflation is 2.9% for the year, an additional 0.3% increase is added	$33.64
Year 2026-2027	**April 1, 2026: 2.5% increase**	$34.48
	March 31, 2027: If inflation is 3.7% for the year, an additional 1% increase is added	$34.82
Year 2027-2028	**April 1, 2027: 3.5% increase**	$36.04
	March 31, 2028: If inflation is 4% for the year, an additional 0.5% increase is added	**$36.22**
Total	Total additional increase of 1.8% over three years	A total increase of 19.2% overall (or 20.7% with compounding)

Since inflation for the current fiscal year (April 1 to March 31) will not be known on March 31, the employer will have 180 days from its publication by Statistics Canada to adjust salaries retroactively to that date.

It is important to note that the mechanism applies only in a positive sense. For example, if inflation for the last three years is lower than the planned increases or even negative, it will have no effect on the planned increases of 2.6% in 2025, 2.5% in 2026, and 3.5% in 2027.

A significant gain, even if the mechanism is imperfect

Securing a mechanism to protect purchasing power is a major gain in this round of negotiations. Such a mechanism to protect purchasing power on an annual basis has not been added to collective agreements in over 30 years. Although not permanent, this settlement represents an important step in this direction.

It should also be noted that few collective agreements have been able to incorporate such a mechanism recently. Only 4% of public sector collective agreements signed in Canada in 2022 and 2023 have such a mechanism.

Inflation: Different visions

Throughout the current round of negotiations, there was a major disagreement between the parties over inflation, particularly over including inflation for 2022.

The government views 2022 inflation as part of the previous collective agreement. The solution proposed to reduce the effects of this inflation was to offer a lump sum payment of $1,000.

The Common Front has always insisted that the effects of inflation for this year can be corrected on a recurring basis through real salary increases. That is why no lump sum is being paid. Instead, it has been factored into salary increases.

Although the agreement does not immediately reverse the impact of the recent inflationary surge (2021 to 2023), this temporary setback is corrected in the last year of the agreement. Moreover, in the medium term, the agreement protects purchasing power despite the disruption caused by the COVID crisis.

Bonuses and allowances

Each bonus, with the exception of percentage bonuses, and each allowance will be increased as of the same date and by the same percentage as the wage parameters. It should be noted that other improvements may have been agreed upon at the bonus and allowance sectoral tables.

SKILLED WORKERS

- The attraction and retention bonus to address the shortage of skilled workers is being increased from 10% to 15% as of the signing date of the new collective agreement.

For the first time since it was established, the bonus will be in effect for the duration of the next round of negotiations, until the day the 2023–2028 collective agreement is renewed. This means we won't have to debate whether to maintain it during negotiations, as was the case in 2020 and 2023, when the government threatened to terminate it during negotiations.

In addition, the bonus is being extended to two new job titles:

- Cabinetmaker/Carpenter-Cabinetmaker
- Refrigeration Machine Mechanic

The Electrical Mechanic job title is being added to the list of job titles in the letter of understanding. This means that the job title will be reviewed in terms of staff attraction and retention.

As regards the problem of applying the bonus for the Certified Maintenance Worker (CMW) and General Maintenance Worker (GMW) job titles:

- From now on, it will be specified that the bonus is to be paid to the CMW or GMW regardless of diploma or equivalency. This means that a CMW who does not have the relevant diploma or experience for the job title that qualifies for the bonus may receive it even without the required qualifications.
- However, for job titles in the electrical, stationary engineering, and pipefitting fields, the employee must hold a certificate of qualification.

SALARY INCREASES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

- A 10% salary increase taken into account by the pension plan (RREGOP) is being created for all networks.
- A 6.5% bonus, in effect until March 30, 2028, is being added for psychologists working full time, i.e., 70 hours or more every two weeks.
- The government has waived its demand for a mandatory increase in their workweek to 37.5 hours.

These new measures come into effect when the collective agreement is signed.

PENSION PLAN

As regards the pension plan, we secured a number of improvements and succeeded in curbing the government's attempts to reduce plan benefits.

Voluntary retention measures for experienced network staff

- The initial phased retirement agreement can be extended up to a maximum of seven years total. The current duration was limited to five years, and it was not possible to extend the initial agreement. Existing agreements expiring after December 31, 2024, may be extended for up to seven years total upon request to the employer, as may any new agreements entered into in the future. Thus, the initial agreement will still be for a maximum of five years, and a request may be made to extend it to seven years.
- The maximum age for participation in the RREGOP will be raised from 69 to 71 as of January 1, 2025.

Given that increasing pension plan maturity could have an impact on funding for plan members, it was agreed to:

- Ask Retraite Québec to evaluate different funding approaches to stabilize the contribution rate of our RREGOP plan members
- Establish, within 90 days of the collective agreements coming into force, an interunion working committee to make recommendations, particularly to change the funding method for our plan, taking into account the work done by Retraite Québec

In addition to the improvements made to the plan, it should be noted that the Common Front's strong engagement helped put the brakes on the government's attempts to reduce plan benefits. The government's attack on our pension plan was twofold:

1. Adding a minimum age criterion of 57 to the 35 years of service criterion, forcing workers to stay at work longer or suffer a penalty in the form of a reduction in their retirement pension
2. Seeking to reduce the pension paid by the RREGOP to workers, on the grounds of recent enhancements to the Québec Pension Plan (QPP)

PARENTAL RIGHTS

There have also been gains in parental rights. The new measures will come into effect when the collective agreement is signed:

- It will now be possible to take leave without pay or partial leave without pay before taking paternity or adoption leave, without forfeiting supplementary paternity or adoption leave benefits. This will encourage greater sharing of QPIP parental benefits between parents.
- One day for pregnancy-related visits to a professional will be added, increasing the number of days of leave without loss of pay from four to five.
- For college teachers, it will now be possible to terminate their leave without pay by extending maternity, paternity, or adoption leave by giving notice, even if the return date does not coincide with the start of a session.

The parties also agreed to set up a working committee to ensure that the collective agreement on parental rights is written with inclusive language and complies with the provisions of the law on surrogate pregnancy.

REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The government has refused to engage in discussions on regional disparities throughout the negotiations. From the beginning to the end of the round, the government remained strongly against our proposals on this issue.

In the employer's view, the plan is adequate and any changes to it must be subject to a complete reassessment, which was not its intention at this time. In the government's view, the acute labour shortage issues in certain regions should be addressed at the sectoral tables, but even at that level, no significant progress could be seen.

At the end of the discussions, only Oujé-Bougoumou was added to the list of localities benefiting from the food transport allowance in collective agreements where it did not previously appear.

GROUP INSURANCE

Effective April 1, 2024, the employer contribution to group insurance under the collective agreements will be increased by the following amounts:

INSURED PARTICIPANT ONLY	$150/year
PARTICIPANT AND DEPENDANTS	$300/year

For teachers in the school and college network, these amounts are therefore included in the collective agreement and establish the basis for the employer contribution to group insurance.

VACATION

Access to the fifth week of vacation has been brought forward, starting with the 2024–2025 annual vacation period, i.e., as of the next vacation period to come.

From now on, additional vacation days will begin to accrue as of 15 years of service or seniority, every year. This will give workers a fifth week of vacation six years earlier than before.

Given the government's opposition to additional leave due to labour shortage issues, this is a significant gain, especially since no changes had been made to the vacation plan for over 30 years.

LENGTH OF ANNUAL LEAVE	COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT 2020–2023	NEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT (2023–2028)
21 days	17 and 18 years	15 years
22 days	19 and 20 years	16 years
23 days	21 and 22 years	17 years
24 days	23 and 24 years	18 years
25 days	25 years and over	19 years and over

The improvements achieved through these negotiations are significant. Gains were made on a majority of issues brought to the central table, and almost all objectives have been achieved. The Common Front did not accept any setbacks in working conditions. Salary increases greater than those achieved in recent decades will, over the life of the collective agreement, offset the effects of unexpected inflation increases from 2021 to 2023. The purchasing power protection clause will also limit the impact on workers should inflation rise again.

These gains are in addition to those provided for in your sectoral agreements in terms of sector-specific working conditions and practices.

Overall, the combined agreements at both negotiation levels have resulted in the government nearly doubling its initial financial framework, from $5.7 billion in December 2022 (or 11.5%) to $11 billion in December 2023 (or 21.7%).

Although some sectoral negotiations will continue in 2024, most groups will be busy the next few weeks drafting the texts that will lead to the signing of collective agreements, and thus to the entry into force of the new provisions agreed upon in these negotiations.

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