

Newsletter

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The Employer's Offers: The obvious contempt of Martin Coiteux

Anger and outrage. That is how we can summarize the reception that Common Front spokespeople gave the Treasury Board's proposal for the renewal of the collective agreements of the 400,000 workers of the public sector that they represent.

"Today, the Quebec government has shown that it has no respect for the work of the women and men employed in the education, health and social services sectors as well as the civil service. The salary freeze that the government wants to impose would effectively, after 5 years, double the already huge salary gap between public sector employees and the rest of Quebec wage earners. They are no longer asking for an effort on our part to reduce the deficit, it is the sacrifice of our dignity as workers," declared Louise Chabot, CSQ president and spokesperson for the *Secrétariat inter-syndical des services publics*.

Completely ignoring the overall salary proposals of his employees to improve their working conditions and the provision of services, the President of the Treasury Board, Martin Coiteux, swept under the carpet any question of reducing precarious employment, as well as sub-contracting, professional autonomy, and the balance of family-work-studies.

A loss of purchasing power

The Couillard government is proposing a salary freeze for two years and an annual increase of 1% thereafter for a total of 3% over 5 years. This represents an important loss of purchasing power for all the wage earners in the public sector.

It is worth noting that public sector workers have more than generously contributed their share to balancing the public finances. Since 2009, their wages have evolved much slower than those of other wage earners in Quebec.

"The government has saved 4 billion dollars on the backs of the public sector workers since 2009. I believe we can call that a more than adequate contribution," stated an indignant Louise Chabot.

Meanwhile the Common Front organizations deplored the fact that Martin Coiteux has placed them in a false

dilemma: either accept the salary freeze or accept an increase in their workload.

"We reject this premise," added Louise Chabot. "We intend to demonstrate that an alternative exists to the false logic that Mr. Coiteux wants to box us into."

An ideological attack on the pension plans

In addition to attacking the incomes of public sector workers, the Couillard government intends to put the squeeze on their pension plans: raising the retirement age to 62; completely redrawing the rules covering the functioning of the plan; and calculating the benefits based on the best 8 years instead of the current 5 years. This new calculation will also jeopardize access to the regime for precarious and part-time workers. It would all come into effect on January 1, 2017.

"Given the healthy financial state of RREGOP, we are surprised to see this type of demand from Mr. Coiteux," declared an astonished Louise Chabot. "Apart from ideological motives, nothing can justify these demands."

It looks like a tough negotiations

The government is just as deaf to the proposals of the Common Front organizations aimed at ensuring adequate financing for our public services. "Our intention has always been to seriously negotiate with the government. But we will not hesitate to take the measures needed to make them see reason. If the government cannot understand without popular pressure, then we will be in our thousands when we take to the streets," concluded Louise Chabot.



To watch the video: <http://bit.ly/13umuzI>