

PUTTING AN END TO PREMIUMS: THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO REDUCE WOMEN'S PAY

At the bargaining session that took place on March 8 – International Women’s Rights Day, as we all know – the government showed an outrageous lack of respect and sensitivity by digging in its heels and refusing to extend premiums that are due to expire on March 31 and September 30, 2023, while other provisions are maintained. This refusal will have a very significant impact on the compensation received by many public-sector workers, including thousands of women, starting April 1.

While the government asserts on every possible stage that it wants to find solutions to improve public services and stop employees from leaving in droves, it’s choosing to go ahead with this hateful and harmful measure. In a context where the government says it wants to acknowledge the value of the women and men working in our public institutions, it’s taking the opposite direction by choosing to punish them.

This despite the fact that health minister Christian Dubé himself acknowledged on February 15 that the health and social service system is finding it excruciatingly difficult to retain and attract personnel:

“Our problem for years has been the fact that people are quitting. Out of 30,000 departures, 20,000 involve resignations. I often say that our problem isn’t just attracting people, it’s also getting them to stay. Why did we see nurses leaving? It’s because the working conditions didn’t suit them.”

The government has been emphasizing for months that care is a priority. To reduce the salaries of nurses and medical secretaries in this context is not only contradictory, but shameful and offensive. While admitting that it is having problems in finding nurses for evening and night shifts, the government is putting forward only one solution: docking their pay. The end of the premiums will have a significant financial impact on many employees. Large amounts are often involved, reaching thousands of dollars in some cases.

In October 2022, the Front commun officially asked the government to avoid ending the premiums for the duration of contract talks. Extending them would send a message of flexibility and openness leading to the possibility of constructive dialogue at the bargaining tables.

The Front commun is also seriously concerned about premiums slated to end this fall in both health care and education. Specialized workers, who are already experiencing a remuneration gap of 30% in relation to private-sector workers, will be particularly affected. The loss of the premium for employees working with clients who have severe behaviour disorders will have a devastating effect on vulnerable clients. Particularly ironic is the government’s threat to end retention premiums for psychologists while claiming to be giving priority to this job title.

Rest assured that your bargaining teams will continue to put strong pressure on the government in order to make it see reason and agree to keep on paying the premiums after their expiry date.



What premiums are involved?

Premiums and budgets due to expire on March 30, 2023

- Attraction and retention premium for nursing and cardio-respiratory care personnel holding full-time positions on evening, night or rotating shifts
- Premium for medical secretaries
- Agreement outside the collective agreement on the 3.5% premium for nursing and cardio-respiratory personnel
- Specialization premium of up to 10.0% for hourly-paid teachers who provide customized training
- Budget for the professional guidance of newly hired nursing and cardio-respiratory personnel
- Budget for the training and development of specialized nurse practitioners' skills

Premiums and lump-sum payments due to expire on September 30, 2023

- Retention premium for the psychologist job title
- Premium related to certain specialized workers' job titles
- Premium for employees working in certain sectors / Premiums for employees in the personnel class of health and social service technicians and professionals who work in certain sectors
- Interim annual recruitment and continued employment allowance for employees working for an institution in the Far North
- Lump-sum payment for employees working with clients who have serious behaviour disorders
- Lump-sum payment for employees working with clients in residential and long-term care centres

