

## Employer offers

### **It's time to pay attention to teachers' priorities!**

Quebec City, April 13, 2023 – The Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT-APEQ) and the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ) are denouncing the new employer offers, presented last week, as insulting to their members.

Even though the shortage of teaching staff is worsening yearly due to working conditions and replacement banks are being emptied across Quebec, the employers congratulated themselves for their “enhanced offers.”

“At best, these are clarifications that could have been made as early as December! The government is in denial if it thinks it can attract new teachers and keep those currently in our schools and centres by asking them to backpedal on their working conditions. We're not going to get there by making their workload heavier and denying the problems with class composition. The government needs to hear the plea from teachers!” explained Josée Scalabrini, FSE-CSQ President, in summing up the teachers' position.

Although the employers claim to want to speed up the bargaining process, they haven't proposed any solutions to the key issues identified by teachers, especially class composition and lighter workloads.

### **Review of class composition**

When the last collective agreement was signed, the unions secured the creation of a joint committee tasked with finding solutions to the class composition problems. Unfortunately, the committee found itself in a deadlock, and the conciliator for the file, Jean-Guy Ménard, submitted an important report to the Minister of Education last February. The report supports union demands by recommending that the Minister take action to prevent the creation of groups with special needs. In it, Mr. Ménard describes the class composition problem as “highly concerning,” saying that the composition of certain groups is “excessive and unacceptable.”

“Since receiving the report, the government has been playing dead! It continues to ignore what should be the central issue in this bargaining process. We've been raising the flag

for years, the issue has been confirmed by an independent source, and even the Minister of Education has acknowledged it as the main issue that teachers talk about during school visits!” said Heidi Yetman, APEQ-QPAT President.

In fact, far from improving class composition, the employers’ new offer proposes to abolish a priori weighting of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), among other things.

### **Making the workload heavier will not solve anything**

Teachers are calling for help: the current negotiations must absolutely conclude with a significant reduction in their workload. Many breathed a sigh of relief when the Minister of Education formally rejected the idea of adding two students per class, as the Fédération des centres de services scolaires du Québec (FCSSQ) had suggested. Unfortunately, the Minister’s message does not appear to have been heard by the employer negotiators, whose new offer reiterated their desire to increase group size, in particular by requesting that the reasons for limiting the number of students per group be removed. What emerges from the employer demands is a bold-faced willingness to burden teachers more and more.

In vocational training and adult education, the employers wish to abolish the range of work time and will require that teachers work more evenings and weekends—usually the only time they have to pursue their own professional development.

### **To wrap up quickly, we need to pick up the pace**

Despite the government’s claim that it wants to wrap up negotiations before the summer, we still cannot get our counterparts to meet more frequently than every 7 to 10 days.

“If the government really wants to reach a settlement before summer, the employer negotiators will have to be more available. We’re ready to significantly increase the pace of meetings, but it takes two to tango,” explains Luc Gravel, Vice-President of Labour Relations at the FSE-CSQ and lead for sectoral bargaining.