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Quebec Paramedics Uphold the Dignity of Labour

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Quebec paramedics are grappling with difficult working conditions, having been without a collective agreement for over three years, in addition to an exodus of paramedics to other professions due to insufficient pay and excessive workloads. For example, in the National Capital region, the workload reached 143 per cent in April 2026, a six per cent increase over one year, increasing the number of cases of burnout and departures.

In Quebec, the term "paramedic" refers to a paramedical ambulance technician who provides both safe transport and advanced prehospital emergency care. A paramedic is a recognized professional who must have completed a three-year program in pre-hospital emergency care or, for those with prior health care experience, an Attestation of College Studies (ACS).

Although Quebec paramedics have been on strike since last year, essential services to the public are being maintained, including responding to 911 calls as normal. However, the paramedics will stop performing various non-essential tasks, such as paperwork. They are also going on rotating strike with management staff replacing them.

The paramedics' struggle deserves the support of all. Their working conditions are the conditions of frontline care to the people. They are fighting not only to defend their rights as a collective, but also to defend the right of everyone to a modern health care system.

On the eve of May Day, International Day of Working Class Unity and Struggle, TML interviewed François Perron, paramedic and Vice-President of the Federation of Health and Social Services of the Quebec Confederation of National Trade-Unions (Eastern Townships) about their battle. François has been a paramedic in the Sherbrooke region for 10 years.

TML: Can you tell us about the current situation facing paramedics who have been on strike since last summer and without a contract for over three years?

François Perron: Our demands focus primarily on wages, equity with the public sector (specifically that paramedics should receive the 17.4 per cent increase that the public sector negotiated in 2023 to cover 2023-2028), and recognition that the service we provide is essential. The government's initial offer represented an actual pay cut – a five per cent reduction in wages. We are fighting to get that 17.4 per cent other public sector workers fought to get, but the government doesn't want to spend more.[1] The government tells us it has a financial framework to adhere to and that our demands exceed that framework. And that's what's really the major sticking point right now. It all adds to the decline we have been experiencing for over three years due to the rising cost of living. It seems we are being asked to give up what is rightfully ours. It doesn't change the fact that our demands are fair.



We look after people, we work with the public and we want that to be recognized. We want to be respected. It is an essential job. And precisely because it is essential, we cannot go on a full strike as a means of exerting pressure. We are just like other essential workers, such as firefighters and police officers. Meanwhile, the government has its own definition of what is "essential" based on what it says is available money and concludes it cannot give us any more. We do not accept that.

There is also an issue of back pay. For example, I have staff with at least 12 years of service. In 2022, they were at the top of the pay scale. In the current economic climate, everything is more expensive, much more expensive. These are people with families, with children, so it's a huge source of stress. That's one of the main sticking points. The union leadership met, looked at what the government put on the table and refused to accept it.

As we like to say, if you've never wrapped a body during a work shift, you shouldn't be deciding how much paramedics earn. If you've never seen a person choke to death on their own blood, you shouldn't be deciding how much paramedics earn. If someone has never tried to punch you in the face for trying to assess the state of a patient, you shouldn't be deciding how much paramedics earn.

If someone has never begged you not to let them die, you shouldn't be deciding how much paramedics earn.

I'm going to read you an excerpt from a letter I wrote on April 14. "It has been three years and 13 days since the collective agreement expired. The one that's supposed to cover 2023 to 2028 is already well underway; in fact, this contract, which has not yet been signed, has less time left than the time that has already elapsed. Over the past six years, paramedics have been without a collective agreement or in negotiations for five years. Five years out of the last six. Now they're dangling the prospect of a Professional Order of Paramedics that will tell us how wonderful and clever we are.[2]



"We act professionally with or without a professional order. We are professionals, with or without a professional order, and let me say that the government does not treat us as professionals, and the talk about a professional order at this time is a diversion. It is neither the priority nor the solution to the problems the pre-hospital system is currently facing.

"A paramedic with 16 years of seniority or more has not had a pay raise in four years. In 2022, the inflation we were experiencing was just the tip of the iceberg compared to what we're facing today. Why add so much stress to a profession that already has more than its fair share? They call us 'guardian angels,' 'unsung heroes,' 'essential workers,' the 'first or second profession people

trust the most,' yet treat us like gum stuck on the bottom of a shoe. I don't want the pre-hospital system to reach the point where we have to say 'we told you so.' We are doing more with less and less; we are already efficient and 'high-performing.' The work we do needs to be recognized before 'less' is no longer enough. We are not talking about making weapons, we are not talking about a factory or a plant. We are talking about looking after people, looking after the 'real people' politicians talk about endlessly."

TML: What is your message to workers for May Day?

FP: For May Day, International Workers' Day, my message is that we must demand to be respected.





Note

1. The Common Front of public sector unions reached an agreement with the Quebec government in December 2023 for annual wage increases totaling 17.4 per cent over five years, covering 2023 to 2028. The wage increases agreed upon were six per cent on April 1, 2023, 2.8 per cent on April 1, 2024, 2.6 per cent on April 1, 2025, 2.5 per cent on April 1, 2026, and 3.5 per cent on April 1, 2027. The last three years include an inflation protection clause up to a maximum of one per cent.

2. In April 2026, the government of Quebec officially resumed the work to establish a professional association for paramedic ambulance technicians. This proposal is seen as a distraction in the current context, as the government refuses to provide them with the working conditions and pay necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

(Translated from original French by TML.)

Government Workers Denounce Layoffs and Rampant Cuts to Federal Programs



Federal public sector workers protest outside Liberal Party convention, Montreal, April 11, 2026

Federal government workers, organized in the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) and the Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE), are raising their voices and organizing demonstrations and other forms of protest against the government's actions, as experienced workers are facing waves of

workforce reductions while outsourcing spending soars. They are pointing out the irrationality of what is taking place, the hypocrisy of firing long-time public service workers and losing their knowledge and experience while hiring more consultants who are paid far more than the public employees they work alongside.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has decreed that the federal public service workforce should be reduced by 40,000 and that government departments must find 15 per cent in "savings" with the aim of achieving \$60 billion in cuts in government spending over five years. Notably, the Department of National Defence, the RCMP, and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) are largely shielded from these cuts and will actually see major increases to fuel the militarization of the economy and strengthening police powers against the people.

Reports indicate the Carney government had already issued notices to about 18,000 federal government workers by January, and more since, saying that their jobs may be cut. Workers report that there is no consultation, no transparency and no one knows what will be hit next or when or why. The three largest unions representing federal government workers indicate that 30 federal departments and museums have issued such notices. PSAC says that as of January 23, approximately 7,400 of its members received notices in December and January, while 5,365 members of PIPSC and 5,116 members of CAPE are facing job cuts.

In most cases no discussion has taken place with the workers who will be affected nor with the unions, even where collective agreements require it, and unions are finding out about the notices as the workers receive them. Workers have referred to the way they are being targeted as akin to the "Hunger Games."

Across the federal public service, workers are denouncing the cuts and the manner in which they are being carried out, without regard to the services that people depend on or the workers who provide those services who are considered disposable.

Cuts to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Harm Workers, Farms and the Planet



Public sectors workers in agriculture sector participate in action outside Liberal Party convention, April 11, 2026

On January 26, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) announced the closure of seven federal research sites across the country. The cuts to AAFC include the shutting down of seven research

farms and centres: the Nappan Research Farm in Nova Scotia, the Quebec Research and Development Centre in Quebec City, the Guelph Research and Development Centre in Ontario, the Portage la Prairie Research Farm in Manitoba, the Scott Research Farm and Indian Head Research Farm in Saskatchewan, and the Lacombe Research and Development Centre in Alberta. The government gave no advance notice to the Agriculture Union, a component of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (AU-PSAC), or the workers and gave no explanation.

The AU-PSAC responded with a press release titled "Cuts to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Harm Workers, Farms and the Planet." It reads in part: "The Agriculture Union unequivocally denounces the recent job cuts at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), impacting roughly 1,043 people across the country. Our union represents 2,500 employees at AAFC, all of whom are essential to the health and resilience of our agricultural sector. 494 of our members are affected by this round of cuts. Our AAFC members are the backbone of Canadian agriculture research. They assist farmers by mitigating the impacts of climate change and drought, performing groundbreaking research, and keeping our food production industries competitive on a global scale."

The press release quotes Milton Dyck, National President of the union, who said: "These cuts will sabotage important gains we've made in agricultural research and set research on Canadian food products back by decades. ... We have been warning the federal government for months about cutting an already-decimated department. There is simply no more room to cut." Staffing numbers at AAFC have already decreased by 14 per cent between 2012 and 2025.

The union points out that: "Indian Head and Nappan were two of the five original research farms established by the Canadian government in 1887. Shutting down these centres represents the loss of over a century of knowledge and expertise. The research centres slated for closure were responsible for breakthrough discoveries in sustainable beef production, crop sustainability, food safety and nutrition, and no-till farming. ... These cuts at AAFC damage research into the fast-changing needs of the agriculture sector, whether it be changing environmental conditions, development of new varieties of agriculture products safe from disease, or food safety. While our partner nation to the south is slashing research, we should not be."

Lawrence Goodridge, director of the Canadian Research Institute for Food Safety at the University of Guelph, commented: "The closure of this centre signals the retreat of the federal government from a critical domain of public health, food security and food production. ... What we're essentially doing is increasing the likelihood of outbreaks at a time when other agencies – whether in Canada or the U.S. – are being reduced. So the long and short of it is that, from my point of view, we can expect to see more incidences of contaminated food, illnesses and deaths in Canada."

In April, in response to vigorous opposition by AU-PSAC, the government reversed its plan to close the national reference and research centre for food allergens at the Longueuil laboratory at the end of the month. The workers had been notified of the pending closure at the end of January. Meanwhile there has been no reversal of other cuts.

Besides the government's utter contempt for the workers by giving them no notice, there is also its contempt for Canadians, Quebecers and farmers, who rely on the work done by the research farms



into crops, soil degradation, food security and other essential work. Far from the "nation-building" the Carney government claims as its mantra, this is nation-wrecking.

Nation-wrecking on a similar scale was carried out by the Harper government, which in 2011 announced cuts of 19,200 federal public service jobs, resulting closures of important longstanding facilities conducting key research in agriculture, lakes and rivers, fisheries and oceans, climate change and other areas, as well as destruction of research libraries, all of which have yet to be restored.



Montreal, April 11, 2026

Job Insecurity and Low Wages in Nova Scotia

A report released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives -- Nova Scotia on April 29 entitled "Decent or Precarious? Understanding the Quality of Employment in Nova Scotia," details the situation of workers in Nova Scotia and the growing number of workers who have no job security and whose wages do not meet their basic needs.[1]

Based on Statistics Canada's 2024 Labour Force Survey and the 2025 Nova Scotia Precarity Survey, an online survey that asked workers about schedules, on-call expectations, changes in hours and income, benefits and fear of losing work, the researchers found "a growing gap between how hard people work and the stability and security they experience. Wages are among the lowest in Canada, and poverty remains high, while the cost of housing, food, and utilities keeps rising faster than pay." Almost one in three Nova Scotia workers, about 131,000, are in precarious jobs and 43 per cent are in situations "just below the precarious threshold," meaning that one additional negative change such as a reduction in wages would put them into precarity.

Rates of precarity are much higher among temporary and part-time workers and more than half of young workers, those between 20 and 24, are in precarious jobs. In terms of sectors of the



economy, accommodation, food services and retail, which account for about 20 per cent of workers, have the highest rates of precarity. Unionized workers, currently concentrated in the public sector, have greater security and stability, are more likely to be in permanent full-time jobs and to have access to paid sick days, benefits and pensions. Workers most likely to be in precarious work are those not in a union, paid low wages, in short-term jobs and working in small firms. The report found that low wages remain a defining feature of precarious employment in Nova Scotia, with almost one in three workers earning \$20 per hour or less, nearly one in five in their job for less than a year, and 17.8 per cent working in small firms with less than 20 employees.

The study found that workers in Nova Scotia worked an average of 1,710 hours per year, slightly over the national average of 1,697, while their average earnings were lower than those of workers in every province and territory except Prince Edward Island. Nova Scotia has higher rates of poverty as well, with 13.8 per cent of Nova Scotians aged 18 to 64 living below the poverty line in 2023, compared with 11.6 per cent across Canada and second only to Saskatchewan at 14.2 per cent.

The study also identified the problem that government labour standards in Nova Scotia do not apply to all workers, are inadequate and outdated and lack enforcement, leaving many workers without protection.

The authors of the study call for raising the minimum wage from the current \$16.75 (rising to \$17.00 in October) per hour to \$20.00 per hour. Other recommended changes include; imposing limits on very short or highly variable shifts; improving rules around scheduling and on-call work; expanding access to paid sick leave, paid vacation and employment benefits, providing greater protection for workers in temporary or casual contracts, agency work and app based and platform jobs, enhancing enforcement of labour standards especially in sectors and regions where precarious work is most common, and supporting unionization, especially in low wage, high turnover sectors.

Note

1. The definition the authors use for "decent work" is from the International Labour Organization (ILO) framework, "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.' This concept encompasses the following key elements: 'it pays a fair income, guarantees secure employment and safe working conditions, ensures equal opportunities and treatment for all, includes social protection for workers and their families, offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration, and allows workers to express their concerns freely and to organize.'"

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