

NEWS RELEASE

Negotiations fail: Optometrists withdraw from the public system, effective November 22.

Montréal, October 23, 2024 — The Association des optométristes du Québec (AOQ) regretfully announces that 85% of its members have decided to withdraw from the Régie de l'Assurance-maladie du Québec (RAMQ) following the failure of negotiations between the AOQ and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) to renew their five-year fee agreement. This agreement sets the rates and conditions for optometrists' participation in the public health plan, which covers the population under 18, those 65 and over, and social assistance recipients.

“Optometry services will continue to be available, but people currently covered by the public plan will no longer be covered as of November 22 and will have to pay for the services, which we regret,” said AOQ President Dr. Guillaume Fortin.

“Our operating costs have risen three times faster than the government's fees for services, so our fee per RAMQ patient visit is now only \$3.50,” added Dr. Fortin. The previous agreement expired in 2020 and talks to renew it have stalled. 55% of optometrists' patients are affected, a proportion that is growing.

Dr. Fortin concluded: “Our demands are based on the results of an independent study carried out jointly with the government, which approved the methodology. We are asking for reasonable and fair treatment, so that we can continue to play our role throughout Québec and help to relieve congestion in the system, not least by treating some 180,000 eye emergencies every year,” Dr Fortin added.

Reimbursement to optometrists by the RAMQ represents 0.16% of Québec's health budget, or \$11 per Quebecker per year.

As of November 22, 85% of Québec optometrists will cease to participate in the public plan.

Founded in 1966, the Association des optométristes du Québec (AOQ) represents the social, economic and professional interests of its 1,500 members. It also promotes awareness of the role of optometrists and leads public awareness campaigns on eye and vision health. Easily accessible throughout Quebec, optometrists play a critical front-line role in detecting, treating and preventing visual disorders and certain eye diseases.

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Source: Association des optométristes du Québec

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