

**NEWS RELEASE****Association des optométristes du Québec to challenge ministerial order  
compelling it to participate in public health plan**

**Montréal, November 20, 2024** — The Association des optométristes du Québec (AOQ) will take the relevant legal measures to challenge the validity of the government’s ministerial order preventing optometrists in the province from exercising a right to which they are entitled: to opt out of the public health plan.

“Since every professional has the legal right not to participate in the public plan, we greatly deplore the government’s attitude,” said AOQ President Dr. Guillaume Fortin. “Negotiations have been at a standstill for nearly five years. We are dismayed by this authoritarian approach, as we have been waiting for a reasonable offer for years now. We will be immediately initiating the relevant legal measures to contest the validity of the order.”

The AOQ reminds the public that nearly 90% of its members have decided to exercise their right to withdraw from the Régie de l’Assurance-maladie du Québec (RAMQ) to protest the stalemate in negotiations to renew the five-year agreement on fees between the AOQ and the Ministry of Health and Social Services. The withdrawal was to take effect on November 21.

The agreement, which expired in 2020, sets the fees and the conditions for optometrists’ participation in the public plan, which covers the population under 18, those 65 and over, and social assistance recipients.

“Our operating costs have risen three times faster than the government’s fees for services, such that our compensation per RAMQ patient visit is now only \$3.50,” Dr. Fortin added. The affected groups make up 55% of optometrists’ patients, and that proportion is growing.

“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,” he concluded.

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

*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 Québec, 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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