

Quebec university teachers (FQPPU) opposes the tuition fee increase

MONTREAL, October 25 – During a Federal Council meeting held on October 20th and 21st, the Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université (FQPPU) adopted a resolution by majority vote reaffirming its opposition to the tuition fee increase announced in the Government of Quebec's 2011 budget. The Federation is concerned that the increase, gradually imposed on all students starting in 2012, could result in declining enrollment, especially among Quebec students from poorer backgrounds, as has just happened in the UK with a decrease of 12 % of student applications.

Rising tuition fees will increase the fiscal burden of students and families, inflate student debt and create attendance problems (linked to the socio-economic status of students, the choice of institution, etc.). Despite measures improving student financial aid announced this Sunday, loans and bursaries programs certainly can not respond to increasing needs. Even if they have been growing steadily for forty years, the number of university graduates in Quebec did not achieve the superior results obtained in other better developed regions or countries. The progressive improvement should indeed be celebrated; yet, any regression towards fewer accessibility would be a major failure.

The Federation had expressed the same opposition to higher fees when the budget was filed in March 2011. It also objected to the project of a sharp increase in tuition during the university partners meeting convened by the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, Line Beauchamp, in December 2010, and to which was closely associated Finance Minister Raymond Bachand. Only four delegates from FQPPU representing university teachers were invited to this meeting. No specific consultation of faculty preceded the decision to increase tuition its inclusion in the Quebec budget.

Considering that access to university is a right for all individuals who have the abilities to pursue higher learning studies and that education is a determining factor in social diversity and collective well-being, FQPPU reaffirms its opposition to rising tuition, falsely presented by the government as the only way to ensure adequate funding of the university network, and imposed unilaterally in 2012. The Federation once again calls for a public debate on the broader issue of university funding.