

An open letter to the Québec government:

Defend public, accessible post-secondary education now

On behalf of workers, academic staff and students across Canada, we jointly call on Québec Premier Jean Charest and Minister of Education Line Beauchamp to promptly resolve the student strike by reversing the decision to increase tuition fees in Québec.

For over two months, students in Québec have been striking to oppose the government's 75% tuition fee increase over five years. The hike effectively shatters the principles of accessible education on which the system currently rests on in Québec and moves towards a model of user-pay funding.

In light of the recent breakdown of negotiations, we are increasingly concerned that your government is ignoring the growing voices of an entire generation committed to the very principled and just value of accessible education.

Students in Québec have taken it on themselves to defend the next generation's right to education. They have put their semester on the line to fight for a vision of the world where no one is excluded. They have made a convincing case, they have garnered public support, and they have presented government with several alternative solutions to the tuition fee hike.

Despite this, the government has continued to grasp onto arguments to justify the hike even though they have been widely refuted. Increasing tuition fees does not provide for shortfalls in funding to the education system. It merely transfers the responsibility from the government to individual students. Increasing tuition fees forces students to take on debt, thus replicating the very social inequalities that the education system is meant to alleviate. Increasing tuition fees signals a shift in priorities where the government is progressively removing its responsibility to provide accessible education.

We are dismayed that the government of Québec has continued to demonstrate contempt towards young people and bad faith in the negotiation process that it has claimed to be committed to.

We believe that every Canadian should have the right to get an education regardless of how much money they or their family makes. We believe it is in the best interest of our society to allow everyone to be skilled, educated and to reach their full potential. And we believe it is the government's responsibility to support education as a social good.

We support the exemplary work done by students in the province during this strike and will stand in solidarity with them as long as needed to stop the tuition fee hike.

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