

The Quebec University Manifesto

For a free, accessible, democratic and public university

l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSE)

le Conseil québécois des syndicats universitaires (CQSU-AFPC)

la Fédération des associations étudiantes universitaires québécoises en éducation permanente (FAEUQEP)

la Table de concertation étudiante du Québec (TaCEQ)

le Conseil provincial du secteur universitaire (CPSU-SCFP-FTQ)

la Fédération des professionnelles (FP-CSN)

la Fédération du personnel professionnel des universités et de la recherche (FPPU)

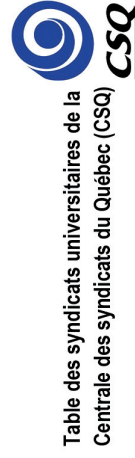
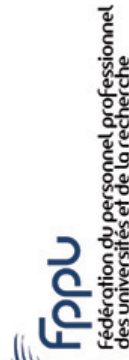
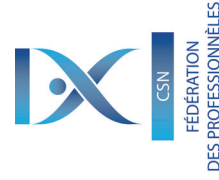
la Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN)

la Fédération québécoise des professeurs et professeurs d'université (FQPPU)

la Table des syndicats universitaires (TSU-CSQ)



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For many years now the Quebec university has been constantly changing. Governance, tuition fee increases, under-financing, privatization: we are currently witnessing an unprecedented attack on the principles and missions that have underlain the role of Quebec universities since their foundation. We must “adapt,” that is to say abandon the universal public education system that arose from a unique social and political mobilization in the history of Quebec.

In fact, by invoking the current budgetary situation of Quebec, economists and politicians are now trying to deliver our universities to the laws of the market. On the one hand, they claim to represent the “great collective values that we maintain in regard to higher education” (namely fairness, accessibility, excellence and effectiveness) and on the other hand, they propose to uncap tuition fees and put a cap on public financing. The same pretention to good common sense, the same ideology that relegates education to the rank of a consumer good and the university to the role of a simple catalyst of economic growth.

We are students, professors, lecturers, members of professional, technical and administrative staff as well as teaching and research assistants and we will not be fooled! The dishonest use made by the government and its “lucides” of the principles of accessibility and fairness very badly masks the political project they propose: namely, the death of what remains of the original mission of our universities.

No false consensus, nor hypocritical lucidity: we are raising our voices to claim loud and clear the university we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. This manifesto is a promise. This is a promise not to abandon the fight as long as the Quebec university is not independent, public and universally accessible.

The university's mission: towards a free university

In all periods and under every regime, from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, the university has demanded and generally obtained a margin of autonomy before the reigning clerical, political and economic powers: university autonomy and academic freedom. First defended against interferences by the clergy and the state, this principle has been at the heart of the mission of the university since its birth. As an autonomous institution, it participates in the critical reflection of society on itself. Its contribution to collective debates depends precisely on this independence in regard to different centres of power. The main threat that weighs on universities today is the disappearance of this fundamental freedom.

For some decades, the university has been profoundly changing: the institutional mission of critical reflection as well as the constitution and transmission of shared knowledge is progressively disappearing to the advantage of a new purpose. The compromise, arising from the Quiet Revolution, between the transmission of a civic culture

We demand that the government of Quebec:

- promote, through adequate financing, the balance between teaching and research within each university;
- fairly finance basic and applied vocations of university research.
- recognize and respect the academic freedom proper to the university;
- recognize universities' autonomy in defining their own structures and in their decision-making, with due respect to their foundational missions;

- preserve the central principle of collegiality in the administration of post-secondary institutions and, consequently, favour a broad-based participation of members of the university in decision-making bodies.

- abandon its plan to impose a new tuition fee increase in 2012;

- undertake a reform of Aide financière aux études (AFE) with the goal of reducing, indeed eradicating, student debt;

- perform an in-depth review of AFE's parameters.

We call on the government of Quebec to:

- proceed to a massive reinvestment by the state in Quebec's university institutions, a reinvestment financed by fair and collective means.

We demand

- the holding of a broad-based, democratic debate taking the form a States General on Quebec's universities, with the aim of establishing a long-term development plan.

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and the training of a skilled workforce is disintegrating. University and education, in a general manner, are at present only evaluated through the lens of the economy: the priority is given to the efficient production of profitable knowledge. Instead of higher education, and institutional space for shared debate and reflection, universities are becoming vast laboratories for research and development at the service of businesses, to the detriment of general and basic education. Supported by governmental and private funds, research itself becomes unilaterally directed by the economic imperatives of profitability and efficiency. And it is more than the university world that is confronted with this logic: the CEGEPs of the province are also not immune from this market logic. How many time has it been necessary to fight for the integrity of general education or to limit the influence of businesses on the development of programs?

While the world economy is being globalized and the Quebec economy sees its manufacturing migrate abroad, we are encouraged to plunge head first into the knowledge-based economy. The university should thus become the spearhead of the new Quebec economy. Education, just like health and the environment, would then become like a raw material from which we must draw a maximum of profits. It is now time to make money with ideas. When the "lucides" and the government invite private enterprise and university communities to "make a commitment in favor of our universities," they seem to mean that this is first and foremost to fund the most lucrative research for the new cutting-edge fields, notably biotechnology, telecommunications, engineering and marketing. This is done to the detriment of fundamental education, knowledge, culture, accessibility, equality of opportunity and critical thinking.

The unanimity behind the question of under-financing should not mask the debate on the purposes of the university. The questions of financing and managing institutions must be addressed in the context of a far-reaching redefinition of its mission. To the hegemonic and unilateral vision of the knowledge-based economy, we oppose ours: a plural and democratic mission that places education and the transmission of knowledge at the center of the 21st-century.

The university must propose to the community diversified programs, fairly financed and free from all interference from the private sector and its requirements. The wealth and diversity of study programs offered in our universities must not be called into question by the economic principles of profitability. In this sense, education and fundamental research, as constitutive elements of the university pursuit of general knowledge, must be financed to their just value. Life in society must not be reduced to economic dimensions and the diversity of study programs must reflect this conviction. Hence the importance of fairly financing the diverse forms

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of academic education, without granting priority to “high value-added” sectors and the financing of projects with commercial economic benefits.

The first mission of the university is not to procure for individuals an enviable salary. We rather consider university education constitutes a way to access all knowledge from which it is possible to fully contribute to the development of society. As citizens, without regard to their social or geographic origin, everyone who wishes to do so should enjoy the equal opportunity to participate in public affairs.

To preserve and reinforce the university’s critical institutional mission at the heart of Quebec society, acknowledging that the university’s primary function is not the formation of a workforce in view of economic development or future personal accumulation of wealth, we demand that the government of Quebec:

- **officially recognize that university teaching establishments in Quebec have as their primary mission the development and transmission of knowledge and culture as well as the formation of critical thinkers, with an eye to contributing to social and human development.**

Between under-funded and ill-funded

A strange unanimity is arising about the financing of our universities. Economists from the Institut économique de Montréal to representatives of the chambers of commerce as well as rectors and principals themselves, all agree to sound the alarm and demand massive refinancing. In this debate, prudence should be at the forefront. Financing? Yes - but various questions remain. What type of financing? Financing for which university? To whom and to what should this financing be directed?

The dangerous decline in the university mission that we have witnessed in the last decades is no stranger to the profound changes in the sources of financing of our higher education institutions. The progressive slippage of university financing from a model of direct subsidies from the state to a model based on student rates and partnership with the private sector is directly responsible for the degradation of the university ideal. In the search for private funds, resolved to attract the favors of the granting agencies and engaged in a heated fight for reputation, excellence and renown, institutions throw themselves into the arena of inter-university competition: it’s a massive seduction operation. In order to attract more students, which are now considered to be clients, advertising campaigns strive to become more and more original. The university itself today bears the name of its philanthropic benefactors: buildings identified with the names of corporations and businessmen multiply. The skilled creditor always keeps an eye on his investment: henceforth, even curricula can be subject to the supervisory power of the private funder. At the same time, mandatory ancillary fees are mushrooming, while administra-

according to the needs of all the programs offered that, each in their manner, participate in the realization of its primary mission and contribute to building a society with dimensions that are just as plural. A university financed by public funds, according to a fair and non-competitive formula. A university administered by those that make it exist in a democratic and autonomous manner. A university truly accessible to all Quebecers.

In order to advance the collective debate and to lay the groundwork for the university of the 21st century, we invite all members of Quebec society to participate in a broad-based consultation of the people on the matter. We find the planned consultation announced last March by the Minister of Education outrageous, because it lacks by all measures the necessary dimensions to address this issue, given the scope of reflection needed and the fact that the dice are already loaded, as we have been told that the question under discussion will be the modalities of a tuition increase, an end-goal we cannot endorse.

Considering that a true consultation cannot consist in a discussion on the sole issue of tuition increases, nor can it address piecemeal the problems afflicting Quebec’s universities, we demand

- **the holding of a broad-based, democratic debate taking the form a States General on Quebec’s universities, with the aim of establishing a long-term development plan.**

We refuse the neoliberal vision of education and the university because we refuse the neoliberal vision of society. The change the university has been subject to is only a reflection of the profound changes that have shaken Quebec for many years. The last Liberal budget is the apogee of this and its consequences for education are particularly worrying for us.

The reflection we need to undertake on the university of tomorrow is also a reflection on the society we want, the world in which we want to live. What will remain of Quebec when its institutions of higher learning have become workforce-producing machines for leading industries? For if the university is foundering, it’s above all because our society as a whole has been dragged adrift. The university we want is also the world we want.

- **officially recognize that university teaching establishments in Quebec have as their primary mission the development and transmission of knowledge and culture as well as the formation of critical thinkers, with an eye to contributing to social and human development.**

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good reasons to ask serious questions on the orientation taken by our universities, when 45% of the amounts dedicated to capital assets come from operating funds. The government of Quebec is obviously not ignorant of this new situation. The financial priorities of our higher education institutions must be reviewed in-depth and, to do this, the government must reiterate the historical mission of Quebec universities and ensure that they retain their public and democratic character.

We have not forgotten the political choices made by the government during the reception of federal transfers. While many millions of dollars were transferred specifically to finance health and education, the Quebec government chose to cut consumption taxes.

The current situation of public finances is systematically presented to us as something inevitable. The cuts in public financing and the increased presence of the private sector seem to arise from fatality. This is false. These are quite specific political choices made by successive governments that have caused the current situation. They have caused problems and now, they propose to us an even more destructive solution: our answer is a categorical refusal. We are not blind before such hypocrisy and we militate in favor of a massive reinvestment in our institutions, financed by fair and collective means. The solutions are numerous and the examples that we mention here are from being exhaustive. The fight against corruption in the awarding of public contracts, the increase in the royalties of the companies using our natural resources and many other means can be envisaged inasmuch as they are part of a truly fair and just vision of public finances.

Considering that the under-financing that our universities have been suffering from for many years is a threat to quality university education in Quebec, we call on the government of Quebec to:

- **proceed to a massive reinvestment by the state in Quebec's university institutions, a reinvestment financed by fair and collective means.**

The university we want for the world we want

This manifesto is intended as more than a simple response to the recent attacks targeting the Quebec university. We proclaim today the university we want. And this is radically not the same as the one proposed by the government and its lucid advisors. Today, we proclaim our firm intention to block their destructive projects for Quebec. We will defend as long as we must the university, its historical mission and its founding principles.

We defend a university that, through the transmission of fundamental knowledge, contributes to the development of society in a free, disinterested and democratic academic spirit. A university financed

tions rivalizw with each other to give them original-sounding names. Call them technological, administrative or institutional fees; they all are symptoms of the profound change in the mode of financing of our universities. On this issue, the college network is subject to the same assaults: ancillary fees multiply and pre-university education, such as the technical, is modeled more and more on the specific needs of the market.

Proportionally, the state reduces its participation, while we ask more and more from the student population and we require more work from the various staffs. The administrations, for their part, are constrained to play the game of national and international competition. Real estate megalomania, multiplication of public-private partnerships and redirection of financing towards high-tech fields are risky adventures for universities as much as wonderful business opportunities for private enterprise. To the extent that financing is always granted to universities according to the number of enrolments, we should not be surprised that they swallow up staggering amounts in advertisement. Their survival, now, depends on this.

Teaching, the university's primary and most fundamental activity, has been relegated below the «production of knowledge», of practical knowledge in particular. Research itself is undergoing a profound change – basic research is being progressively forsaken in favour of heavily subsidized, immediately profitable applied projects. It's notable just to what point nothing has been envisioned to compensate for this already palpable imbalance between applied research on the one hand and basic research with a social scope on the other. As of now, the watchword for research funding in Quebec has become «the maintenance and reinforcing of the links between researchers and businesses to insure a better exchange of ideas and knowledge, in order to develop products and services that will find takers on the market». «Low-yielding» disciplines are evidently being cast off in this gold-rush, and it's increasingly only the richest universities that have the means to maintain those fields. For the others, the choice is terrible: the bursary or philosophy? The response is unsurprising.

The proposals that want to save the university through the reinforcement of user fee hikes and privatization will only add oil to the fire: we thus reject them with vigor. To the collective role of our universities must correspond collective financing: it is up to the state to guarantee the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education for all citizens, throughout all the territory. Public, this refinancing must absolutely be accompanied by profound thinking on the purpose of postsecondary education. The survival of the university and the safeguarding of its primary mission are at stake. If the university must be financed collectively, it must especially match its high constitutive ideals.

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Considering an increased attention paid to applied research or focused on its productive character, we demand that the government of Quebec:

- **promote, through adequate financing, the balance between teaching and research within each university;**
- **fairly finance basic and applied vocations of university research.**

Governance or collegiality?

The breaking wave of privatization hitting our universities will not stop at funding and end-goals. In the past year, the very organization of CEGEPs and universities has been cast into doubt: bills have been tabled at the National Assembly to calque university decision-making bodies on the managerial model of private businesses. Inspired by the theory of the New Public Management promoted by the World Bank and the OECD, this bill will soon bring the invasion of private logic into the very heart of our universities. We are not fooled by the invocation of the principles of transparency, independence and accountability reporting by the government and the "Lucides." Although we adhere to these basic principles, we know very well what they hide when they are presented by the promoters of the privatization and commercialization of our postsecondary institutions: the loss of control of our institutions to market interests, these external members that, apparently, have a higher ability than university communities to administer our universities. Now here is a "cultural revolution": economic performance now has precedence over the quality of education, academic freedom and financial accessibility to education.

The term "independent" that the government uses to describe external administrators to the university community masks rather badly what is their main quality, namely fidelity to the dogmas of the economy. Accountability cannot be reduced to budgetary reporting. The situation at the Université du Québec à Montréal was a striking demonstration. It is not the impartiality of representatives of the internal community that was at fault, but rather that of external members. In fact, the support of the latter to the real estate projects of management promoted the financial disaster, whereas the protests of the internal community were not heard. If we must fill the gaps and ensure that possible conflicts of interest do not occur, the recourse to administrators connected to the business world is not a solution. On the contrary, they increasingly imperil the development of our universities. Those who administer the university must know its history, culture and fundamental mission. Those best placed to organize our higher education institutions remain those that know its daily reality best, those that work and study there, who live there, and hence the importance that boards of directors be made up of a majority of internal members representing all the university community and each of the categories of staff. The current debate on university governance must be made

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The government and the media are singing the same song: there is no money, the coffers are empty. This is false: wealth exists in Québec. It is sufficient to have the political will to go and get it where it is. If we hear today that there is no money for the university and all public services, it is precisely because certain political choices were made.

We haven't forgotten the \$1 billion tax cut on capital that, above all, benefited the large corporations of the province. We do not forget that 50% of them still do not pay any taxes. We have not forgotten the taxation participation of businesses in the budget of Québec went from 62% to 21% between 1964 and 2009. These political choices, among others, are directly responsible for the current state of public finances. It is high time that Québec businesses, particularly the biggest and most prosperous among them, do their fair share in the financing of public services, notably education.

We have not forgotten the \$9 billion that slip through the hands of the tax authorities each year in tax evasion. No need to mention that those who practice this are not part of the middle class, but rather the most prosperous businesses and the group made up of some of the wealthiest individuals in Québec. It is time the Québec government takes the means to call to order those who try to escape their collective responsibilities by practicing tax evasion. Even on our own territory, the loopholes are many. Tax shelters of all kinds multiply and make the Québec government lose precious funds each year. We should remember, among other things, that the annual maximum limit for a contribution to an RRSP is \$21,000 per year, an amount that evidently remains sheltered from taxation. Who has the means to deposit \$21,000 per year in an RRSP while 70% of the population lives with less than \$30,000 per year? Asking the question is also to answer it. Here, as elsewhere, the government has the means to stop these practices.

We have not forgotten the erosion of the progressive character of our taxation system. We know that since the 1990s, taxation brackets went from 16 to 3. In 2007, the Charest government made the political choice of cutting the taxes of the most well off by \$950 million. Education, like all public services, must be financed by each Québec taxpayer according to his or her means. Solutions exist: if we established a taxation regime of 10 brackets, 87% of taxpayers would pay less tax, and the government would collect \$1.2 billion more annually. These figures are known by the government. If these measures are not applied, it is due to ideological choice.

We have not forgotten the political choices made by the government with a view to accelerating the privatization of universities or the millions swallowed up by the mismanagement of universities, directly brought about by the new imperatives of the knowledge-based economy. There are

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today, we must commit ourselves. Thus, we are categorically opposed to the new hike in tuition fees announced by the Charest government.

Considering the government of Quebec is committed to recognizing that education is a right and not an economic privilege by virtue of its adhesion to the ICESCR ratified in 1976, whose article 13c) specifies that: "Higher education must be made accessible to all in full equality according to the abilities of each, by all the appropriate means and notably the through the progressive introduction of free education," we demand that the government of Quebec:

- **abandon its plan to impose a new tuition fee increase in 2012;**
- **undertake a reform of Aide financière aux études (AFE) with the goal of reducing, indeed eradicating, student debt;**
- **perform an in-depth review of AFE's parameters.**

A collective institution, collectively funded

Too often, Quebec's current financial situation serves as a dishonest pretext for the disciples of the knowledge economy. The ship, they would have us believe, is punctured on all sides, so we must imperatively scuttle the university's institutional mission and its accessibility, just as with the entirety of public services and social programs. We propose the opposite route: let's plug the gaps. If the province's public finances are in a bad state, this is because of political choices made during recent years by different governments following the judicious advice of their lucid advisors.

We are proud of taking, once again, the opposite path. Education, just like all public services and social programs, is not a simple individual consumer good. Consequently, its financing must not rest on its "users," but rather on all of society. If the university is a public institution, if its fundamental mission is above all collective, its financing must also be so. Before the scale of the coming task, we do not put the saving of the university on the shoulders of the student population nor in the interested participation of private enterprise. Before a crisis of the university that could degenerate into a social crisis, it is through a sustained effort of all Quebecers that we will build the university and society we want.

Everywhere, we are called to "do our part." This is exactly what we are asking: that everyone in Quebec do their part - according to their means. The university should not have to beg for funds from generous philanthropists just to be able finance its projects. The list of solutions to the financing problems of universities is long and well known by the current government. If it does not implement these solutions, it is simply because it does not share our vision of education or our vision of society.

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within the framework of a larger discussion on the orientation and nature of our higher education institutions.

We refuse to allow our universities to be run according to the logic of economism, and we restate, more certain than ever, our engagement in favour of collegiality and democracy

Considering the importance of the independence of teaching and research, whose independence is essential to the credibility and functioning of scientific and university communities, we demand from the Quebec government that it:

- **recognize and respect the academic freedom proper to the university;**
- **recognize universities' autonomy in defining their own structures and in their decision-making, with due respect to their foundational missions;**
- **preserve the central principle of collegiality in the administration of post-secondary institutions and, consequently, favour a broad-based participation of members of the university in decision-making bodies.**

Education, a fundamental human right

The upheavals in the financing of universities have as a direct consequence the increase in the financial burden of students. As the state gradually reduces its participation, that of the student population increases, parallel to that of private enterprise. Under the pretext of wanting to settle the problem of under-financing, the government announces that tuition fees will be massively increased again in 2012, posing a false dilemma between the adequate financing of universities and the maintenance of affordable tuition fees. We refuse to make this choice; we refuse to oppose the quality and accessibility of education. We refuse to oppose the two principles that can and must go together, both in the field of education and in all public services.

Tuition fees

We declare, once again, that education is a universal and inalienable right, and not a privilege. In this sense, no economic barrier to its access should be tolerated. Whatever the gender, age, place of residence, religious or ethnic belonging, sexual orientation and socioeconomic condition, each Quebecer has a right to education. A large consensus emerges from the research conducted on this subject : tuition fee in-

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creases have a negative effect on participation in postsecondary studies. The first victims are people from modest backgrounds and those from families close to the median income, which cannot benefit from student financial assistance. We cannot claim that lifting the cap on tuition fees will not affect accessibility to studies. We should not forget that socioeconomic situation is still today an obstacle invoked by youth themselves to not commit to postsecondary studies or again a motive to abandon studies. This situation is unacceptable.

According to a recent study commissioned by the ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, a scenario of uncapping tuition fees to adjust them to the Canadian average would reduce the student population by more than 22,000 people (-9.6%), while free education would lead to an increase of nearly 18,000 students (7.8%). These statistics are revealing in regard to the effect of tuition fee hikes on the respect for the right to education. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of UNESCO, the government of Quebec must respect this fundamental right.

Those who are thus excluded from our universities quite probably come from the most disadvantaged classes in our society. In this regard, the case of Ontario, so often cited as an example, is quite instructive. When fees for medicine programs went from \$5,000 to \$14,500, the percentage of students coming from families having an income under \$40,000 went from 23% to 10%.

The compensatory measures often proposed would not act as a counterweight to the injustice created by a significant increase in tuition fees. The meritocratic logic that underlies many of them make it such that the least well off are excluded, since the most disadvantaged have, on average, a higher dropout rate than the better-off classes. We would thus be left with the search for "good poor people", while the main merit of the rich remains their wallets. Access to postsecondary education must not be a luxury that only the well-off have the means to buy. It consists of, we repeat, a universal and inalienable right. Given what is presented to us as an inevitable increase in tuition fees, we hear more and more talk about repayment that is proportional to anticipated income, of the cost related to postsecondary education. Far from lightening the debt burden of the student population, the measure aims, in the very words of its most ardent defenders, in increasing this burden. Defining education once again as a personal investment purchased in order to increase one's standard of living, this type of measure fits perfectly into the model of the knowledge-based economy. The systems of income-contingent repayment are only the varnish of charity that neoliberal economists apply to their project of the deregulation of tuition fees. Income-contingent repayment is nothing other than an ingredient for a recipe whose bitter taste we know only too well.

In the same vein, we are categorically opposed to all measures proposing the differentiation of tuition fees according to the program of studies. Once again, such programs lead us to an economic vision of education according to which students think of their

education as an investment whose returns will be an alluring salary. We reiterate that financial constraints must not be a factor in the choice of programs of study. The differentiation of fees can only accentuate this situation, seriously disrupting the equal opportunity to which universal accessibility contributes. Tuition fees are a serious threat to social mobility. Workers or professionals, from generation to generation?

Student Financial Aid

As for the current student financial assistance program: its crucial deficiencies do not allow it to limit the damage. Student demands concerning the program are well known: an automatic indexation of living expenses and their increase to the low-income cutoff. The current benefits have only been indexed six times since 1993-1994, and they are still well situated below the low-income cutoff of Statistics Canada. The recognition of "familial independence" from the moment of departure from the family home is also necessary to erase the injustice that almost half the Quebec student population is subject to since it receives no parental contribution.

Let us be clear: the current situation is already quite alarming. The time devoted to jobs by the student population has been significantly increasing over the years and has attained worrisome levels. The increase of the student contribution to the financing of education is directly manifested by a rise in student work. Prematurely propelling university students into the world of work will only accentuate this dynamic. Torn apart by an impossible quest for a balance between work and studies, the student population will once again see the time devoted to its studies reduced. At the same time, universities seek to maintain their financing as guaranteed by the number of students enrolled. The result as a student body that invests itself less and less in its studies; lowered requirements aiming at maintaining the cohort afloat, and a university that risks being shipwrecked. How do we even dare associate academic excellence with an uncapping of tuition fees?

However, an in-depth reform of Student Financial Assistance could not save the application of the right to education in Quebec. The only path ensuring real financial accessibility to studies is the one that leads to the reduction, even abolition of financial obstacles. The government of Quebec, moreover, officially committed itself in 1976 to renewing its membership to the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR). This covenant constitutes an extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sets out the fundamental and inalienable rights of each human being. It is thus in this direction that,

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