
Quebec Students Protest Move to Court

Quebec CUP Bureau

by Heidi Modro

MONTREAL (CUP) -- The Quebec government is being hauled to court by a group of students for imposing a 130 per cent tuition fee hike last year.

Students from four universities are banding together in this last-ditch effort to reverse the government's decision to increase fees in the province for the first time in 20 years.

"We tried a massive strike last year and it didn't work, so this time we're going to use the court system to get the decision changed," said Nicholas Plourde of the Federation des Etudiants et Etudiantes du Quebec (FEEQ).

The federation claims the increase violates the Quebec Charter of Human Rights which guarantees "free public education." They say it also contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects the individual's right to education.

And it violates a United Nations pact signed by the Quebec government in 1976 that guarantees access to education to all and calls for more accessible universities, Plourde said.

"We're ready to go all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary," he said. "It's not up to students to shoulder the burden of university underfunding through a tuition increase."

Plourde said the federation's goal is to force the government back to the negotiating table to strike a new deal that would be acceptable to both parties.

The federation believes the solution to the province's university underfunding crisis lies in getting the government to increase funding and forcing universities to cut administrative costs. They're also asking students to pay a special tax after they've graduated.

Plourde said the federation claim will be heard by Quebec Superior Court in December. Federation members will kick in money to pay the \$10,000 in legal expenses.

A decision is expected by next spring.

"If they refuse to open up negotiations again, then we'll definitely go all the way with the court system," he said.

Plourde said that if the federation wins, the government will be forced to reimburse the money students have paid in extra fees this year.

But Luc Rheaume, an education ministry official, said the government is not worried about a legal battle.

"They have a right to try, but it's useless," Rheaume said. "They'll never get anywhere and we don't plan to renegotiate what has already been decided."

Quebec fees -- frozen at about \$540 since 1968 -- go up to \$890 this fall, and will increase to \$1240 in 1991-92.

Senior Class Main Event and Contest

Everyone is welcome to come and party at the Senior Class Main Event on Thursday, Oct. 4, 1990 at the Barn. Music is by Peter and the Rockets and it is Wet/Dry. Tickets are \$3.00 and will be available in advance. Start the long weekend right and come to the Senior's Main Event.

Also, the Senior Class logo contest will close on Oct. 11, 1990 at noon. Remember, drop off your designs at the S.U. office in the Barn. The winner will receive a Senior Week package.

Melissa James, Senior Class President