

**Letter to the editor  
All Media  
For immediate release**

**The priority for education must be ensuring university students pay a fair share so that funding is equitably distributed**

Montréal, March 10, 2011 - In the inaugural speech that he delivered on February 22nd, the Premier of Québec reiterated his government's focus on education. We were very pleased to hear it.

This message concerns everyone in Québec. Each of the province's social and economic stakeholders must do its part if we are to meet the challenge of providing quality education.

This ambitious objective cannot be achieved, however, unless our universities have the resources required to fulfill their mission to teach and conduct research. There is general agreement that universities in Québec are underfunded by 500 millions\$ every year.

At this critical time of preparation for the 2011–2012 budget, the leading associations that represent Québec businesses have a message for the government concerning university funding. This budget must contain clear evidence that the government is making education a priority and, specifically, that it is concerned about the quality of university teaching.

During public consultations held last fall, we showed that:

- The Québec government spends more on university funding than other provinces;
- Businesses in Québec participate in joint research projects to the same extent as businesses in the rest of Canada, in addition to funding continuing education. In 2008-2009, businesses provided 11% of the research funds. It was 8,7 % in Canada.
- Students in Québec pay less for their educations than students in other provinces.

In fact, student fees account for 25% of all university revenues in the rest of Canada. In Québec, this figure is only 12.7%. Student fees in Québec average out to \$2,415, compared with \$5,138 in the rest of Canada. Despite this difference, university attendance is no higher in Québec than in other provinces.

We therefore urge the government to use the upcoming budget speech to indicate its intention to raise Québec university student fees to a level comparable with the Canadian average over the next three to five years. Together with the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities, we encourage the government to maintain its current level of funding for higher education and adapt the student-aid program accordingly, so that students from low-income families continue to enjoy the same access to university studies.

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