

BLOC-NOTES

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December 4, 2012



to all members
of affiliated unions

The Higher Education Summit: THE WORK BEGINS!

The preparation stage for the Higher Education Summit took off in earnest on Thursday and Friday of last week with the first thematic meeting focused on the quality of higher education.

Four preliminary thematic meetings are scheduled between now and mid-February, when the Summit will take place. The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MHERST) has determined not only the list of participants (professors and unions, students, institutions, nongovernmental organizations) but also the questions each organization must answer at each of these meetings.



Caroline Senneville, President of FNEEQ, during the thematic meeting.
Photo: Louise Leblanc

The MHERST is assigning a great deal of importance to comments received from the internet. In the plenary session, Léo Bureau-Blouin, the Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier for Youth, picked up on many suggestions made by our affiliated members (in particular, from university lecturers), as well as from FNEEQ. It's important therefore to use this tool and to take part in the discussion by posting on the Facebook page of the Summit (<https://www.facebook.com/sommet.gouv.qc.ca>).

At the end of the plenary session at each meeting throughout this consultation, two "Expert Witnesses" are called upon to summarize what has come out of the discussions and workshops. At this first meeting, they were Binh Ann Vu Van, a freelance science journalist and President of the Association des communicateurs scientifiques du Québec, and Diane Berthelette, a Professor from the Department of Organizational and Human Resources Management at UQAM as well as Chairman and Director General of the Centre de liaison sur la prévention et la prévention psychosociales (CLIPP). They emphasized that it can be very difficult to define "quality", and in particular "quality of teaching". A consensus needs to be arrived at on specific issues, including (but not exclusively) the student/teacher ratio, as well as the need to include the whole university or college community in the decision-making process.

They continued in their report to note that, in order for the participants to be able to conclude that the quality of education is very good, this must first be defined, taking into account its complexity and its many definitions. The issue of quality on satellite campuses must be addressed, ensuring that lecturers have access to the resources required for quality teaching and that students are always included, particularly when the quality of teaching is discussed. Overall, the subject most discussed and debated was whether an external organization should be created "with a mandate to oversee the quality of teaching". While there was some level of consensus on the need for a mechanism for coordinating universities, there was no agreement on what it should be called, its composition, its functions, or its mandate... Some saw this more as a forum for discussion and for raising awareness. Out of the workshops arose the consensus that more collaboration and less competition is definitely needed between Québec's universities. In conclusion, the challenge of quality in teaching is to develop indicators of intangible factors!



It should be noted that over 16 500 persons followed the proceedings on the internet. You can find all of the presentations from this first meeting on the Ministry's website at: <http://webcasts.pqm.net/client/mesrst/event/587/fr/>.

Access: The Issue at the Second Meeting

The second preparatory meeting will take place in Trois-Rivières on December 13 and 14. It will focus on the issue of access to and participation in higher education. The MHERST has requested a joint FNEEQ-CSN presentation at this meeting. We have been asked to respond to the question:

"In the follow-up to the Parent Report, the cegep system was established across Québec, providing as a result to all of its population, including those living in the regions and to francophones in particular, greater access to and participation in higher education. Almost fifty years later, what must be improved in order to further improve access to higher education and the success of its students"

The CSN Working Group on Education, in which FNEEQ is a member, will meet to finalize its presentation on December 4.

Citizens Forums

In order to allow the greatest possible number of people to express their opinion and to participate in the debate on higher education, the Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM) will organize four citizens forums in 2013.

These forums, open to all, will take place at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) and at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC) on January 12, 2013, at the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) on January 19, and in Montréal on February 2, in order that everyone can share their vision for higher education in Québec. An English-language forum is also planned for Montréal.

In addition, the INM is organizing a "Special Summit Winter School" for young people aged between 15 and 35 on the weekend of January 25-27. This will be modeled on the "Summer Schools" that the INM has organized since 2004. Approximately 500 young people will be invited to debate the same issues as the Summit. The 21 regional youth forums from across Québec will be special partners in this Winter School, to ensure regional representation and a broad diversity of participants.

The results of the proceedings of these forums and of the Winter School will be the subject of two reports to be submitted to the Minister before the Summit. Registration is free, but compulsory. The registration form is available online on the INM's website <http://www.inm.qc.ca/>.

FNEEQ invites all of its unions and their members to take part actively in all of these activities and encourages them to participate in the various citizens forums as well as in the Winter School.

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