

BLOC-NOTES

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December 19, 2012



to all members
of affiliated unions

Second Thematic Meeting ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF THE DISCUSSION

Following a first thematic meeting focussed on the quality of teaching in higher education at the end of November, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MHERST) convoked participants to a second meeting on the issues of access to and participation in higher education. For this meeting, which took place in Trois-Rivières on December 13-14, the MHERST asked for contributions from eight organizations: the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN); the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ); the *Université du Québec* (UQ); the *Fédération des associations étudiantes universitaires québécoises en éducation permanente* (FAEUQEP); the *Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante* (ASSÉ); the *Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec* (FECQ); the *Association des collèges privés du Québec* (ACPQ); and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

The CSN representatives at the meeting were Pierre Patry (CSN Treasurer), Sylvain Marois (FNEEQ Vice-President and head of its Regroupement Université), Marjolaine Côté (*Fédération des employés et employés de services publics* (FEESP) Vice-President and Treasurer), accompanied by Michel Tremblay (*Fédération des professionnelles* (FP) President) and Julie Audet (union advisor in the Labour Relations Service of the CSN). FNEEQ President Caroline Senneville also attended as a special guest of the Minister.

The CSN's presentation was jointly made by Pierre Patry (CSN Treasurer) and Caroline Senneville (FNEEQ President). You can watch it on the MHERST website, near the beginning of the video recording: <http://webcasts.pqm.net/client/mesrst/event/584/fr/>.

Resources for this meeting can be found on the FNEEQ website dedicated to the preliminary work for the summit (<http://bit.ly/WjtWE3>) and you can view all of the presentations made during this meeting on the MHERST website (<http://bit.ly/SXhxGB>).

Debating the issues

While the discussion included geographical accessibility, it goes without saying that the issues surrounding financial accessibility were addressed by numerous participants! A major increase in tuition fees appears to be rejected by a very large majority of participants, but as positions ranged from a freeze or indexation (not very clearly defined) to eliminating tuition altogether, the debate is certainly not settled yet! The Minister noted that he had put in place a working group to evaluate the costs of eliminating tuition so that, by the time the summit begins in mid February 2013, we will be in a position to evaluate the situation.



Caroline Senneville, présidente de la FNEEQ

In summary, we were able to make our case that there is agreement that the spectacular progress made in Québec over the past forty years coincides with the creation of the cegep system, which is an essential component of higher education in all regions, as well as the creation of the UQ system, that everyone deplores the lack of resources for special-needs students, on the need to support student retention, on the importance of coordinating the development of the system and to question the growing phenomenon of outlying campuses of



both universities and colleges. The areas of distance, adult and continuing education were raised, indicating in passing the need to recognize the value of lifelong learning. The issue of the educational services offered to First-Nations peoples was also raised.



Sylvain Marois, vice-président de la FNEEQ - Regroupement université

Next thematic meeting

The next thematic meeting will take place in Sherbrooke on January 17-18, 2013 and will address issues of university financing and governance.

You will recall that the Ministry has put in place a process seeking the broadest possible participation by setting up a Facebook page dedicated to the Higher Education Summit <https://www.facebook.com/sommet.gouv.qc.ca>.

Citizen Forums

Among other things, please remember that four citizen forums are being held in 2013, organized by the Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM). It is possible to register on line to take part in these forums at the UQ in Trois-Rivières and at the UQ in Chicoutimi on January 12, at the UQ in Outaouais on January 19 and in Montréal on February 2. An anglophone forum is also planned for Montréal. Registration is free but obligatory, and the registration form is available on line at the website of the INM at <http://www.inm.qc.ca/>.



Dare to Dream!

We are approaching the end of the year 2012, following a wonderful spring marked by solidarity under the symbol of the red square. While January looks as though it will be extremely busy and we will have to struggle harder than ever to continue to move along the road to social justice, we hope to continue to construct a world of solidarity made up of promising tomorrows.

We must dare to dream, for to work in education is to be a foot soldier in the struggle to make 2013 a promising year of hope and change. To you and yours, rest well and a happy new year 2013 to all!

A green banner with white and yellow text. The main text reads "Défendre nos idées" in a large, bold font. Below it, in smaller text, is "ENSEIGNER · MILITER · PROGRESSER". At the bottom, it says "La fneeq et le Sommet sur l'enseignement supérieur". There are also some faint background words like "passion", "préjugés", "société", "monde", and "respecter".

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