

REPORT

Brent Farrington, Québec National Executive Representative
Canadian Federation of Students(-Services)
Monday, October 10, 2005 to Thursday, April 13, 2006

1. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND STAFF COMPOSITION

For the reporting period October 10 to April 13, the Québec Executive Committee consisted of the following:

Chairperson	Vacant (since October 10) Margaret Carlyle (since February 25)
Deputy Chairperson	Bianca Mugenyi
National Executive Representative	Brent Farrington
Local 79 Representative	Adriana Decker
Local 83 Representative	Sian Jones (since October 10) Veronique Allard (since December 8)
Local 91 Representative	Katherine Boushel

For the reporting period October 10 to April 13, the staff of the Québec Component consisted of the following:

Office Coordinator	Jessica Roy (since October 18)
Communications & Research Coordinator	Tim McSorley

2. INTERNAL AFFAIRS

a. Special General Meetings

January 26, 2006

A meeting was held to adopt a budget for the 2005/2006 fiscal year and to accept the audited statements for the 2004/2005 fiscal year.

February 2, 2006

A meeting was held on February 2 to hold elections for the Component's Chairperson and to discuss impeachment procedures for the at-large executive. The by-laws were amended to allow the locals to recall and at-large member of the component to election with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote.

February 6, 2006

A meeting was held on February 6 to adopt a change to the by-laws of the Component to acquire director's liability insurance to ensure that all members of the executive committee count as directors of CFS-Q Inc.

An addition was made to the by-laws adopting a process for filling any vacancy in at-large executive positions of the Component.

The member locals also struck a committee of the whole with the mandate of planning and prioritizing the mandates of the Component.

b. Québec Chairperson

On February 25, the Component held elections for the vacant Chairperson position. Margaret Carlyle was elected Chairperson and has since initiated her mandate. The chairperson position had been vacant since August and had caused a lot of administrative problems for the Component.

c. Hiring of Staff

Office Coordinator

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On October 18, the Component hired Jessica Roy as Office Coordinator, a post which had been vacant since late September.

d. Local 83 Provincial Fees

In a referendum held in November at Local 83, the membership voted in favour of paying Component fees. The Local's members had not paid fees to the Component since 2001, causing tension with other locals within the province.

3. MEMBERSHIP ISSUES & DEVELOPMENT

a. Potential Members

Bishop's University Students' Representative Council

The Bishops University Students' Representative Council (BU-SRC) recently held a meeting to discuss its membership within their Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), at the meeting councillors questioned whether their money was being utilized in the best interests of their members. The President of BU-SRC has struck a committee to review CASA in comparison them to other national student organizations including the Federation.

Concordia Student Union – Engineering and Commerce Students

While the Concordia Student Union (Local 91) has been a member of the Federation since 1999 due to Québec accreditation law, students in the accredited faculty associations of Engineering and Computer Science (ECA) and Commerce and Administration (CASA) ha never been members of the Federation. Recently the President of the CASA has expressed interest in becoming members of the Federation. While they are only faculty associations their combined membership is 10,500 students, which would increase Local 91's membership from 19,500 to 30,000 members (about 26,000 FTEs).

Confédération des associations d'étudiantes et étudiants de l'Université Laval

La Confédération des associations d'étudiantes et étudiants de l'Université Laval (CADEUL) a démontré un intérêt envers l'adhésion en fédération. Un nouvel exécutif espère retrouver de la représentation au niveau provincial et fédéral. Malgré que l'adhésion ne pourra pas avoir lieu pendant quelques années, ils seraient la première association francophone étudiante au Québec à devenir membre de la fédération.

Dawson Student Union

The Dawson Student Union (DSU) has expressed interest in potential membership within the Federation. The DSU is arranging themselves after recently being recognized by their administration and once their organization internally they will being the process of becoming members of the Federation.

Student Society of McGill University

The Student Society of McGill University (SSMU) has expressed interest in potential membership within the Federation. As that *le mouvement francophone* has of late excluded Federal oriented issues, the SSMU is in the process of evaluating other federal representation options.

b. Current Members

Local 79

In August Local 79's council of representative passed a motion to hold a referendum asking the membership if they would like to continue to be members of the Federation. Due to technical issues the referendum never proceeded to a vote. In a council meeting held in early April the council passed a motion mandating the incoming Vice President External to ensure that any

technical issues with holding a referendum question be satisfied by the end of the fall 2006 academic term.

Local 91

The executive at local 91 has expressed disappointment with the performance of the component. The local feels that the component should be more respectful of each local's sovereignty. While tensions are still high within the component productive steps have been taken by locals to improve the situation and to amend the components by-laws such that similar problems do not repeat themselves.

c. Fee Remittance

Below is a listing of fees remitted from each of the Locals to the Québec Component:

Local 79 \$7.43 per student

Local 83 \$7.50 per student

Local 91 \$0.21 per credit

Below is a listing of fees remitted from each of the Locals to the National:

Local 79 \$7.43 per student

Local 83 \$6.50 per student

Local 91 \$0.21 per credit

4. SERVICES

a. Discount Programs

International Student Identity Cards (ISIC)

ISIC cards have been distributed at all member locals for several days in both academic terms. The Component distributed a record setting number of cards at all locals. With the recent changes regarding TravelCUTS, the Component has launched a poster campaign at local 83 and local 91 advising the membership that they should choose to get their ISIC card at the Student Union offices rather than the TravelCUTS.

StudentPhones.ca

StudentPhones has been actively engaged in signing up new clients and increasing sales in Québec. The Component has been successful in booking spaces in more prominent areas on campus' of the locals to aid in growth in Québec. The Component is also in discussion with local 91 to set up a permanent kiosk in their rental space.

b. Homes4students.ca

The Component has poster for homes4students.ca at each of the locals. The locals have been encouraged to incorporate submissions for housing listings to homes4students.ca; however, no easy interface exists, which would allow for a mass upload of data. Local 91 is interested in placing its nearly 1200 listings for the Montreal area onto the website, but are hesitant to engage in the process with the current interface.

c. Common Handbook

Local 91 has been in the process of reviewing signing into the common handbook project. Local 83 has been participating the common handbook for the **last 2 years**, and plans to stay in the project pending confirmation of local 91 joining into the project.

d. National Student Health Network

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Local 83 has asked for an audit of the current health plan with ASEQ (Student Care.Net/Works). If the Local decides to leave their current insurance broker and join the National Student Health Network they will be the first student association in Quebec to leave ASEQ.

5. COMMUNICATION

a. 2005-2006 Student Union Directories

The Student Union Directory has become a highly valued and popular service among member locals in Québec. Member locals reported that they were satisfied with the changes in design to the new directory. With the growth and development of the locals into the Québec student movement the directory has become a popular item and sales to non-member associations should increase next year.

b. Component Website – www.education-action.net

The Component's website has increased its contents and has been re-organized to encourage easier navigation for members. The improved site allows for clearer campaign profiles, but also features an e-mail sign-up function, links to services information, and downloadable materials and research.

6. SOLIDARITY WORK

Dawson Student Union

The Dawson Student Union (DSU) has been in negotiations with the Dawson College Administration to get their duly owed fees. The Administration was unwavering in their stance, so the DSU pursued legal action with the Québec court system against Dawson College for violating accreditation law. The day before the court heard the case the Dawson Administration settled out of court with the DSU. The settlement granted the DSU 90% of their duly collected fee to be used as the DSU deemed appropriate and guaranteed that the remaining 10% would be distributed to the club and associations under the DSU's banner. The DSU is thankful to the solidarity they felt with student associations across the nation, they are especially thankful to the Federation for adding them with their struggle.

Coalition of Student Voter.ca

The Component created a coalition with all Anglophone student associations to encourage students to inform themselves of the parties and ensure that they vote in the 2006 Federal Elections. The coalition was composed of the Dawson Student Union, the Student Society of McGill University, the Concordia Student Union, the Concordia University Graduate Student Association, the Post-Graduate Student Society of McGill University, and the Component.

Coalition Régional de Étudiants du Québec

The Component has actively engaged in a campaign aimed at ensuring that the Société de Transport de la Ville de Montréal (STM) extends their "student" bus pass rate to all full-time students. Under current regulations the STM only offers the reduced rate pass to full-time students under the age of 25. This campaign has resulted in collaboration with the Coalition Régional de Étudiants du Québec (CRÉM). This collaboration has allowed the Component to build new ties to various students unions within the metro-Montreal region.

Coalition for Accessible Public Education

The Component funded actions held and hosted by the Coalition for Accessible Public Education (CAPE) to commemorate the Student Strike from April 2005. Collaboration with CAPE allowed the Component to network with various CÉGÉEP student association as well as collaboration with CADEUL and ASSÉ.

7. CAMPAIGNS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

a. Keep the Freeze

The tuition fee freeze in Québec has managed to keep tuition fees accessible for over a decade; however, rumblings with the Québec Liberal Party, could be premonitions that the freeze will be lifted if the Liberal Party wins a second term. Subsequently, the Component has launched the “Keep the FREEZE” campaign. The campaign will start off as an information campaign with the creation of promotional items, flyers, fact sheets, and posters all aimed at gaining student support and attention against the potential ‘de-freeze’.

b. Student Reduced Rate Bus Pass Campaign

During the 2001 Montreal electoral campaign, the Union des Citoyens de l’île de Montréal, headed by Mayor Gérald Tremblay, promised that “Regarding the Société de Transport de la Ville de Montréal; we will make all full-time students eligible to the mass transit student fare, regardless of their age”. This promise was partially fulfilled. Since January 1st, 2002, full-time students, age 18 to 25 and living on the island of Montreal, are now eligible to a student fare, equivalent to 50 percent off the regular fare. While the Federation recognizes mayor Tremblay's effort, there still is an obvious discrimination towards full-time students over the age of 25 who, at 44,682 individuals, account for 35.56 percent of full-time students currently studying in one of the four Montreal universities. The discriminatory measure impedes older students chances at success as it represents additional financial pressure that is not resolved simply because he or she reaches 26 years of age. Indeed, a full-time student must cope with the same reality no matter his or her age including financial uncertainty, inability to work full time, and large debts.

During municipal election, the Component exerting pressure for the reduced rate bus pass to be extended to all students, thus the Component has launched a campaign to ensure that all students, regardless of age, can enjoy the student bus pass rates. Following the election the Component has collected hundreds of student signatures demanding that the rate cover all students.

c. International Students Work off Campus

In December, the Québec government announced that it had approved international students to work off campus throughout the province. While Québec was one of the provinces who was running a pilot project, international students were only allowed to work off campus in rural areas. The Component has worked with the Ministère de immigration and the Normé de Travail, to ensure that the implementation of the pan-Québec project will be smooth for international students.

d. Post-residency Fees

Graduate and post-graduate students are often charged full fees while they are taking one or no classes while they are finishing their theses. Locals 83 and 79 have launched information campaigns on their prospective campuses. The Federation has and will continue to aid in existing campaigns.

e. Campaign for Real Education Reform

This year, the Component is working on a campaign calling for education reform in Québec in the areas of loans and bursaries, increased government funding, and an end to differential fees. The campaign is primarily information based, bringing research on student issues to the eyes of students within the province. The campaign has already garnered significant interest from students and will be integral to future government oriented campaigns (tuition freeze, international student fees, ancillary fees).

Québec Bursary Program

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Québec's Bursary program has not kept up with the cost of post-secondary education. The youth unemployment rate has remained very high in Québec at 15-20%. Thus, many students must rely solely on loans and bursaries to pay for education and living expenses. This becomes a very difficult task due to the fact that the average loan and bursary disbursement amounts to only half of the poverty level for income over the period of a year.

The rate of CEGEP students receiving bursaries is down 50 percent from 1995-1996. 43 percent fewer university students receive bursaries today compared to 1995-1996. Many students cannot, therefore, afford to study, and are left out of post-secondary education. The Federation feels that the amounts of bursaries handed out must be increased to cover all students in need. The Federation has initiated a fax and information campaign at all locals.

Government Funding

Government funding for post-secondary education in Québec remains low. Since 1994, the province has cut \$2 billion from education spending. Although a partial restoration of funding was agreed to after large scale protests around Québec, the government has made it an annual event to threaten the promised new funding. Québec spends \$3,280 less than the U.S. spends, on average, per student on education. Canada now spends 30 percent less on Universities than it spent 20 years ago, while the U.S. spends 20 percent more than it did 20 years ago.

While the Federal Government must do its part for education funding (Prime Minister, Paul Martin, has cut over \$5.6 billion from education funding since 1994), the Québec Government must also do its part, and make full funding for education a priority. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey shows that the higher one's level of schooling, the higher one's income level, and the lower one's chances of being unemployed. The unemployment rate for those with a high school diploma is on average 10.2 percent, for those with a Bachelor's degree it is 5.5 percent. Individuals with a CEGEP or university degree earn more, and pay more taxes when they graduate, which benefits social programs such as education and healthcare. The Federation is in the process of finalizing an information campaign.

Differential Fees

Differential fees were introduced in Québec in 1996. After massive student protests against impeding tuition fee increases, the Parti Québécois came up with a plan that divided students in Québec. Until then, students were united in their demands that tuition fees remain frozen. Then Education Minister, Pauline Marois, introduced a scheme where 'out of province' students were to be charged about twice as much as students that were 'Québec Residents'. Enrolment in universities has drastically declined in Québec since the government tripled tuition fees and introduces differential fees in the 90s. At the same time, participation in post-secondary education is up at least 15 percent in a majority of OECD nations, even in countries where the student age population is declining.

Differential fees only serve to limit the cultural exchange between students from different provinces. Differential fees only worsen the problem of an already low enrolment rate.

Education is a Right

In Québec the student strike may have ended, but concerns still remain. While students can claim major victories by having the government back down on income contingent loan repayments and debt forgiveness programs in favour of up front, needs-based bursaries, as well as securing a significant reinvestment in financial aid, the Component will keep pressuring the government on issues of concern in the deal. These include the \$136 million not being reinvested, as well as the use of federal funds – which could be used for other projects – to make up for provincial cuts.

f. Ancillary Fees

With the maintenance of the tuition fee freeze, administrations across the province are looking to subvert the freeze by raising ancillary (extra/administrative) fees. Anglophone schools within

the province of Québec currently pay well beyond the national average of ancillary fees. The Federation has begun an information campaign at all locals, advertising fees for which members can opt-out. The campaign has been met with great enthusiasm, and the Federation plans to increase resources directed at the campaign to increase the scale of the overall campaign in time for the commencement of the fall semester 2006.

g. Municipal Election

For the first time in 30 years students mobilized for a Ville de Montréal election. Two prominent issues were at stake for students; housing and transportation. Changes to transport fares and housing regulations could potentially leave students with changes to landlord/lessee agreements and with respect to transportation, a better deal for students all depending on which party is elected. The Federation was very active in the election process by registering voters, hosting debates, and distributing general information on the candidates.

h. Federal Election

The Component formed a coalition with Anglophone student associations in the metro-Montreal region called the StudentVoter.ca Coalition. The aim of the coalition was to encourage students to hit the polls. The campaign was incredibly successful and included mass media, pamphletting, and poster campaigns for disseminating information. The Component hosted a debate with local candidates which drew a crowd of 500 students. Special interest was put in the early weeks of the campaign to register students to vote. On the polling day the Component handed out flyers advising people of where to vote. Student participation in the election was particularly high in the metro-Montreal region.

i. Restore 4.9 Billion

The Federations ongoing campaign to restore the \$4.9 billion dollars, which has been cut since 1994, resulted in two days of action in Québec. The component played key roles in both actions; one was held on March 30 as a commemoration of the Student Strike of 2005, and the other was held outside the recent meeting of the Counsel of the Federation. Both actions called on the Conservative government to re-invest the \$4.9 billion.

j. Provincial Budget

The Federation has been working with la FÉUQ to ensure that all levels of government properly invest in post-secondary education. In the recently released Québec provincial budget, post-secondary education received an increase in funding of \$220 million dollars, which was earmarked for capital projects. The component will monitor distribution of the funds and ensure that the full amount promised is distributed to the Colleges, CÉGEEPs, and Universities.

k. International/Out of Province Tuition Deregulation

Across Canada, tuition hikes have deterred students from pursuing their studies or forced them into decades of loan repayments and Québec is no different – especially for international students. International students in Québec now face unprecedented costs and hurdles on their paths toward higher education. In 2001, Concordia University sought to increase per credit fees by over 50% for undergraduate international students at the John Molson School of Business and last fall the increase was fully implemented. At McGill University in 2002, plans were unveiled to increase international student fees by 37 percent over four years, costing students between \$9,000 and \$15,000 depending on their program of study. McGill University and Concordia University continue to charge international students exorbitant fees. In fact, on both campuses, the rates international students pay exceeds the proscribed governmental limits. The Federation will continue its efforts on this front and has launched press releases to local media. The Federation is also planning solidarity actions with the International Student Associations on both campuses and will increase the effort being put into the media campaign.