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Cancelled tuition hike big win for student association

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Martine Desjardins said the relationship between students and the Liberal Party will change now that Charest has stepped down from his position as party leader. (Radio-Canada)

Martine Desjardins, president of Quebec's university students association, says Pauline Marois' promise to cancel a tuition fee hike is a victory for the students group.

Marois, the province's premier designate, made the tuition fee promise a scant 24 hours after her election.

Desjardins said that while the issue of tuition fees has been addressed, FEUQ — the Federation des Étudiants Universitaires du Québec — has other items of importance to pursue with the new government.

The Parti Québécois also pledged to hold a summit on post-secondary education soon after forming government. The promise said the summit would take place, or be announced, within 100 days of the PQ taking power.

Desjardins added that Jean Charest's departure as premier will modify the relationship between the FEUQ and the Liberal Party. She noted conflict between the two groups did not revolve around Charest but more so "against the ideas defended by his government."

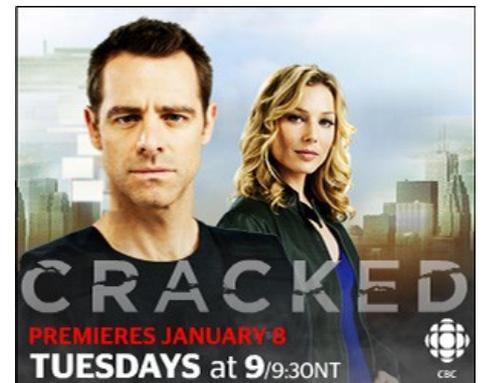
Desjardins attributes a part of Charest's demise to the work of students and a mobilization campaign that took place in his riding.

"It's certain that we were very present in the Sherbrooke riding during the election to make sure that Charest, who was elected with a weak majority vote in 2008, was not reelected," said Desjardins.

Another more militant student association, CLASSE — the Coalition Large des Association pour une Solidarite Syndicale Étudiante — has as its central mandate a goal to keep fighting for free tuition. But Desjardins said FEUQ plans a calmer approach on pressure tactics.

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Desjardins said she does not believe CLASSE's campaign for free tuition will negatively impact the FEUQ's plans. She pointed out that both groups had clearly outlined their differences during the student crisis.

The FEUQ president also said a consensus between the government and all student associations is possible.

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