



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs et professeurs d'université

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May 24, 2012

MEMORANDUM 12:20

To: Presidents and Senior Administrative Officers
Local and Federated Member Associations

From: James L. Turk, Executive Director

Re: Quebec Student Protest and Government response

CAUT has been supportive of the efforts of student groups in Quebec to oppose the government's proposal to increase tuition significantly. Consistent with CAUT policy, we issued a statement early in the protest expressing our support for the students - http://www.caut.ca/news_details.asp?nid=1749&page=490.

At the April 26-29 CAUT Council, delegates overwhelmingly passed a motion "*That CAUT Council reiterate its support for the students in Quebec in their efforts to maintain access to a post-secondary education.*"

The situation took a dramatic change on May 18th when the Charest government introduced and passed Bill 78 -- legislation that seriously limits freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. We spoke out against the legislation, and it has been widely denounced by a variety of other organizations, including the Quebec Bar Association. CAUT's statement is on our website - http://www.caut.ca/news_details.asp?nid=1775&page=490

We are asking member associations, if they have not already done so, to issue a statement condemning Bill 78 as a serious violation of civil liberties. Please send a copy of your statement to Premier Charest and send us a copy as well. The Premier's address is:

The Hon. Jean Charest
Édifice Honoré-Mercier,
3e étage
835, boul. René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

More than 150,000 people have signed a petition opposing the law. We encourage your association to circulate to your members the petition against Bill 78 - <http://www.loi78.com>.

We also encourage your association to donate to the legal challenges being mounted against Bill 78 and in defence of those charged for engaging in peaceful civil disobedience. Cheques can be made payable to the "CAUT Civil Liberties Defence Fund" and send to our office, c/o

Gordon Piché. CAUT has made a donation of \$20,000 and issued a public statement - <http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=1089>.

Finally, you may wish to circulate information to your members about the website www.arretezmoiquelquun.com where individuals can post their photographs with an indication that they support disobeying Bill 78.

Academic staff associations in Quebec face special challenges as a result of Bill 78. As it is broadly and, in sections, vaguely worded, the full effects are not yet fully clear. But, sections of the Bill can result in violations of the collective agreement, can subject associations to serious legal liabilities, and impose legal obligations on academic staff associations. We will be providing advice to our Quebec members on these matters.

If you have any questions or want more information, please let us know.