



October 6, 2008

Michelle Courchesne
Minister of Education, Recreation, and Sports

Madam,

We wish to express our deep dissatisfaction with the decisions taken by your ministry with regard to the allocation of federal transfers to the colleges. These decisions clearly do not address the real needs of the college system. In the current context, we find your allocation of these monies unacceptable.

Education is the core mission of colleges. However, over the past 15 years, teaching loads have steadily increased while resources have been steadily cut. We first suffered the cuts linked to zero deficits in the late 1990s. Since then, the 1994 reform, which was implemented at zero cost to the government, has added new program requirements and has significantly increased teachers' workloads, increases caused by the lack of correspondence between funding and academic organization, and by administrative measures such as changing the drop dates of courses and assigning additional non-teaching tasks to teachers. All told, the college system has lost hundreds of teachers over the last twelve years, this at a time when challenges are proliferating due to an increasingly heterogeneous student body, lower admission thresholds, and rising expectations in the areas of technology, training, and student success.

In this context, the decisions made by your ministry regarding the use of federal transfers to the college system are more than disappointing, and we insist today on denouncing them publicly in three of their aspects.

- With regard to the distribution of funds, it was painful for us to learn that only 10% of the money was to be spent on teachers while the rest was to go to areas that in terms of the college mission can only be described as "peripheral." This means that the central part of the mission of colleges is virtually being ignored! It is simply unfathomable and unacceptable that 90% of new funds injected into the system will not be spent on teaching, this at a time when current conditions are already seriously encumbering and overloading the teaching mission.

- Moreover, except for rare cases, this 10% will not reduce the current workload of teachers, because you have forced the colleges to spend these funds on projects that will do nothing to solve the classroom problems directly affecting students.
- Finally, Minister Courchesne, we cannot ignore the fact that teachers were never consulted on how best to use this money. This course of action deliberately ignores the expertise and knowledge of those who work in the front lines of education.

Your ministry agreed to the creation of a joint committee on the college teaching profession and participated in its activities. This committee fully demonstrated the extent and complexity of the current workload of college teachers. Shortly thereafter, the Boards of Governors of the colleges agreed on the need to recognize college teachers for their proper value. Logically, we expected that a substantial portion of the federal funds would be allocated so as, at the very least, to mitigate the teaching problems caused by the two major elements that increase the workload—too many students to teach and too many course preparations.

You have decided otherwise, and this decision increases the resentment of teachers, who have not forgotten December 2005 nor the obnoxious and unbearable Law 43 nor your refusal to discuss the workload issue during the past two years of fruitless negotiations.

Today, on World Teachers' Day, we want you to know that your decisions are unacceptable. Colleges can contribute meaningfully to the development of Quebec society only if their main artisans feel respected and only when teaching conditions allow us to provide quality education throughout Quebec.

In a short time, our representatives will be requesting a new meeting with you in order to discuss this issue. At that time, we hope you will consider appropriate measures for providing college education with a bit of oxygen.

Quebec Cégep teachers