



PRESS RELEASE

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UNIVERSITIES CALL ON ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO MAKE EDUCATION A PRIORITY

Montreal, November 17, 2008 – In an open letter sent on November 12, 2008 by the leaders of Quebec's 18 universities to the leaders of five political parties vying for seats in the upcoming provincial election, universities call on the parties to make education in general, and university education in particular, a priority. Universities want to ensure that they can maintain their current levels of excellence in teaching and research.

"University teaching and research have been central in the progress Quebec has enjoyed in the past 50 years, and are becoming ever more so in the context of the knowledge-based economy. Universities must be given the means to continue to provide an education and to carry out research that ranks with the best in the world" says Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum, President of the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities (CREPUQ) and Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University.

The universities note that despite the major achievements of the past decades, Ontario still outpaces Quebec by 6.4 percentage points in the terms of the portion of the population holding bachelor's degrees. Comparable societies are aiming at a 50 % rate of access to university studies. And the underfunding of Quebec universities is widely acknowledged.

The 18 Quebec universities suggest that the priority they propose should be structured around 5 major issues:

1. Determine targets for access for all levels of university studies comparable to those of competing jurisdictions;
2. Support highest-quality teaching and research in order for Quebec to renew with the leadership it demonstrated in the 1980s;
3. Support the universities in their effort to increase the internationalization of university education and research;
4. Implement the recommendations of the report by the Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations that recognises that sound governance of universities reflects "the diversity of the histories, traditions, cultures and values specific to each institution";
5. Increase funding levels per student to the average per capita level at other universities in Canada.

KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

"Our ability to sustain a strong economy and meet the multiple challenges of our society in terms of health care, the environment and other issues depends ultimately on our ability to meet the challenges of our educational system, particularly in higher education" concludes Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum.

The universities request that Quebec's political parties take a stand and express their positions on these issues. Their answers will be published November 21, 2008 on the following website: <http://www.crepuq.qc.ca/elections-quebecoises-2008/>. The letter sent to the parties, the open letter signed by the leaders of Quebec's 18 universities and additional information about universities can be found there.

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