

Education Town Hall
Minutes: February 14th 2012

Town Hall started around 6h07PM.

First Topic: Quebec Tuition Hikes

First to speak was SSMU VP External Joel Pednault, who informed the audience on tuition hikes and student associations' reaction around Quebec so far.

Joel Pedneault, SSMU Vp External:

Quebec government has been increasing tuition at universities since 2007. In 2007, they decided to start to increase by a small amount (100\$ a year.) About a year ago they decided to go higher. It will be around 1600\$ more per year to go to university (in 5 years.) The impact is mostly on Quebec resident students; international students will not see such a big increase. Government decided to finance education by making us pay more. Their implication becomes different; students will pay what the government used to pay, in a model more similar to the United States model.

In terms of strike, if the people go on strike for long enough, the government can either cancel the semester, or start negotiating.

There have been 8 strikes in the past.

The reason they usually do not cancel the semester is that it will retard the entrance of some students in the workplace. As an example, when Ontario decided to suppress Grade 13, it made a big mess because of the important amount of students entering university at the same time (2 full grades instead of one.)

This Monday, a lot of people have started that strike. University Laval and UQAM are among the ones who are starting the strike, and they will soon be joined by other CEGEPs and universities. Questions started after that. VP Pednault answered them, and some quick comments were also added at some points.

Ted Starr U4 secondary:

Is there a forum or a way that the Education Undergraduate Society or a student can go on strike, or it goes by Faculty?

Answer:

It is better to work by a departmental manner, instead of using the whole student union. SSMU was on strike in 2005, but will probably not be as of now.

Alison Court U3 Kindergarten/Elementary:

She asked if we have to do extra hours in the summer and redo their classes. Even the ones who did not agree with the strike?

Answer:

They might decide to have classes on weekends, or reduce the courses, but it is possible that the semester be extended. There might be a spillover into the summer.

Jordan Norris U4 Secondary

She thinks the problem has to do with Student Aid. She said that the tuition in Quebec is already lower than all the other provinces. She heard that Student Aid in poor and hard to get.

Answer:

The system has not evolved a lot since 1960's. To get a lot of money, you have to either get married or be an orphan to have a lot of student aid. If your parents make money, you will not get that much aid. It's a lot of loan and not that much grant.

Emma Fleming U4 Secondary

Are you striking for NO tuition hikes, or not that quickly?

Answer:

The best would be no increase, but making it slower might be better. Leave it frozen for a little while. In his personal point of view, it would be better.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 secondary

Answer: Is it the same stance for every student organization

Answer:

No, every association can advocate their own position.

Guillaume Fecteau U3 TESL

How is this increased amount of money going to be distributed?

Answer:

35% of the money will go to help to the effects of the increase.

66% goes to the improvement of research and faculties. A small amount of the money will actually go to the research and the classes.

Ron Morris, associate professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education.

Shouldn't the student movement's energy be going toward the change in terms of how the money will go to the improvement of the financial aid or to the improvement of finance aid for students? It is different to become a teacher and a doctor, and they are right now paying the same tuition fees. How is that possible?

Answer:

He agrees.

Jordan Norris U4 Secondary

If the fees do not increase, is it going to be hard for McGill to hold the same standards?

Answer:

McGill has a high standard for research, which attracts a lot of professors for that reason. There's already a lot of research going on, and this research would not be affected by the tuition increase.

The speaker brought brochures and explained the Red Square concept for people FOR the hike.

Eric, U4 Secondary Student

Would it affect our stages?

Answer by Vanessa Hartman:

It would definitely affect it, because it is a faculty thing. She explained that our program is a co-op program; we do need to be on the field. We are in a very unique program.

U4 Secondary Student

If we go on strike, can we still go on placement?

Susy Farag U4 secondary

She mentioned that your placement is like a class. You have to go to be in class.

Eric, U4 Secondary Student:

He knows that in UQAM, sexology students are on stage and they are still on placement and attend their seminars.

Theodore Starr, U4 Secondary

Asked if it would be taken to the OST.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

She said that it would have to go through Faculty Council and that she feels like the answer might not be positive. Say, U4 might stay on stage, but students who have their stage at the end of the semester might be affected.

Guillaume Fecteau, U3 TESL.

No petition, no rally, so it is hard to take such a radical stance without student rallying behind it.

Male student from the gallery

He said that he thinks that the faculty should be helping to build something that would make sense to everybody and there is a sense of unity that should come with the idea of a strike.

Female student from the gallery

Asked if some of our faculties are on strike right now.,

Answer:

Some students from UQAM are on strike.

Emile G.-Ouellet, representant from UQAM:

1/4 of UQAM is on strike.
3000-4000 people from UDM.
Some

50-60 000 students will be on stage by the end of next week.

UQAM's Education and Science have their GA's next week and if it pass, 6 out of 7 faculties would be on strike.

Eric, U4 Secondary Student:

Is it a coincidence that mostly Francophone universities are on strike.

Answer:

There are already a lot of associations and faculties all through Quebec who are on strike. However, there is no obligation of going on strike.

Alanna Marcellus, U4 Secondary

If there is a strike say in Arts, would we miss our students on other faculties?

Susy Farag U4 secondary

There is also the professor who has a mandate and has to respect it, so classes might still take place.

Theodore Starr, U4 Secondary

After November 10, some students went on protest but classes were still taking place. So you could probably still attend classes.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair from the Department of Integrated Studies in Education.

He said we could work on days of strike instead of a general strike, because if a general strike happens, education programs are so interwoven that you have to take some classes before others and that might have a big impact on classes, but he said we could work on a plan to take action without affecting our classes and placements.

VP External Pednault:

Something to take in mind: McGill is different from all the other universities in Quebec. Faculty might not recognize the Strike.

Negar Banakar U1 Secondary:

We have to take a stance on this as a community, the effect on that Strike might be on us even if we are not part of this Faculty. She thinks that even if singular faculties work toward different goals, we could try and come up with something altogether.

Male student from the gallery:

He said that there has not been a lot of talk toward this issue and that this issue is very important to us and that we do have to do something, maybe using the platform we have now to come up with something.

Second topic: David Dillon Project

Another strong concern that was brought is the David Dillon Project and its disappearance. Jordan Norris, a student from the David Dillon project introduced the topic..

Jordan Norris, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

She said she is a fifth year student. She was lucky enough to do alternative placements during her 2nd, 3rd and 4th field experience. She said that these placements are important not only for

personal growth but also McGill's international status.

David Dillon (DD) Project is for Elementary/Kindergarten students. The goal is to create a different portfolio from the regular FE. The classes taken during the FE (Seminar, etc.) are replaced by an extra day at the school. This extra day gives the opportunity to witness the great events that are taking place in schools instead of being at McGill.

The merged model that has just been implemented is inspired by some features from DD. Starting earlier, extending the placement (4 weeks to do parent-teacher nights.) She thinks it is a great idea; however the main problem of this merged model is that it is NOT the same as David Dillon. Not all the features have been transferred, especially the fact that the students still come back to McGill on Monday.

Cancelling DD Project is a step back, even if it was a pilot project. The idea of being able to choose is a rich thing. It was asked: why was it suppressed and why weren't students consulted.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

The project was initially a research project. It was successful, what happened is that they used what they have learned was implemented into the merged model. Their view is that they have built up on it and that it was successful in the sense that things have been added to the regular field experience.

Jordan Norris, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

She thinks the main issue is that students still go back to McGill for a day.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

What David did was creating a great relationship with schools that have a lot of students. One of the issues was the small numbers of school in which we could implement a project similar of DD, because of the fact that they could not have a Student Teacher 5 days a week. The schools have an issue with it because they like the fact that the CT has the chance to reconnect with their classes one day a week and having a student teacher 5 days a week might be problematic.

Theodore Starr, U4 Secondary:

Is there a specific reason why the project has to end because of this?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

It was considered.

Theodore Starr, U4 Secondary:

Was there a specific reason? To cancel the program, there must be one.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

The thing is that the original pilot project was to research, one of our staff members was doing things in a specific way, and it would be hard to have someone replace David Dillon because his methods are working because they are his. There would be an issue of consistency because David would not be participating.

Alison Court, U3 Kindergarten/Elementary:

She feels like the idea of it becoming the same program is a flaw because she thinks that the fact that it is longer has not been effective. She said that she felt like she was the teacher and had to tell HER CT what she had to do in class and she felt that the merged model and DD project are two different entities makes it different in terms of creating a portfolio.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

The changes is not only about the length, but also about the preparation, the presence at parents-teachers interviews, new assignments; it is brand new for him, but he thinks that it is a great thing that DD permitted to do all those improvements.

Alison Court, U3 Kindergarten/Elementary:

She thinks that it is not happening, that teachers are all asking for different theories and that linking theory to practice is what the DD Project is about and not necessarily the merged model.

Susy Farag, U4 Secondary:

She thinks that there are still flaws in the merged model and that we want to work on them. But regardless of how many changes we make to the regular program, the fact is that the DD Dillon project can never be completely the same as the merged model and that it is impossible that it is reached in the regular program because there are most students there. She mentioned alternative FE in the secondary such as SOF and Evergreen, which she did and are reserved to the first students who register. She stressed the fact that is about options; the concern is that we are all really happy that improvements are being made to the regular system but from what we gather; DD Project is very unique and cannot be replaced.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

What is this difference?

Talia Kelly, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

David Dillon, the teacher, is what is different.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

It cannot be David who teaches all classes.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

Why reduce the number of options, then?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

Mentioned how it was said that the new model can work.

Emma Fleming, U4 Secondary:

She said the program is very intimate, that supervisors are all doing their own thing and that it is important, but the concern is that we are losing something very special, only available in the David Dillon Project.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

What we are facing is when you get someone who is very talented and unique, and you cannot always replace him.

Alexina Cameron, U4 Secondary:

Why cannot we have both? Can we introduce at least other options? A lot of us like the alternative teaching environment. Why not provide us the opportunities?

Jordan Norris, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary Student:

She brought her portfolio and wants to show how it is different. The connection is different. Supervisors, CTs and Instructors are not interacting as much in the merged model.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

His worry is how we can get every student the best they can get.

Susy Farag, U4 Secondary:

If we are not reinstating the project, recreate it. We have discussed it on Education Undergraduate Society and we have discussed it and the response is that students want to keep it. We want to say that both are possible.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

Keeping it around or not is not possible: it was a test by David Dillon.

Susy Farag, U4 Secondary:

Why not make it an alternative, like SOFE?

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

How is it different in the structure? How is it possible that the models are similar when Jordan, who was absent on Mondays, has supposedly done the same thing.

David Dillon, professor and founder of the David Dillon Project:

There were some changes in the Education Program. After working in schools for several years, he noticed that students were not ready when they were starting to teach. His idea was to get creative and really prepare those students. He made the proposal to the faculty. It was approved. He planned with the 4 schools he was working on, and these schools knew what they were getting into.

The Shoulder-to-Shoulder model proposed by Fiona Benson followed; this model has now become the merged model.

This year, it was the first year that students were required to spend the whole semester in classes.

He has been doing the pilot for 8 years.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

Do you feel that the merged model is different or similar?

David Dillon, professor and founder of the David Dillon Project:

It is hard to answer because he has not experienced the regular program. He haven't been asked about his project or came to him, so he does not know how it is different. He thinks the ones who know the difference are the students, and that what is important is how the students are experiencing it.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

The students have shown that they feel that whatever the administration is implementing is different from what students feel. Administration says that the D Dillon project inspired the merged model: however, students feel that it is still different but the problem is that this different option is not available anymore.

Jordan Norris, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

In her personal experience, she thinks that it is different.

Dean Helene Perrault

She thinks that this forum of discussion is great. The feedback she got is that she thinks that it would be better to coordinate our practices and keep the best practices. One of the thing is that McGill is the first University to offer those kind of alternative models and have students

experience those kinds of models. We are a progressive/research institution; you do not grow, you do not move, you do not improve. There has been a shift: the constructive way is to use the various inputs and create a different system. You also need to understand better how these objectives are met; she thinks that we do need experimental models to find out about how they can work better.

Susy Farag, U4 Secondary:

We are not saying that we cannot work on the regular changes: this year, we have seen that change can happen. There are a multitude of voices to be heard. We are not saying that we do not want it to stagnate; if right now, we have a model that works, it is better to have it for 20 students that not have it right now.

Vanessa Hartman, U4 Secondary:

If David Dillon is still willing to do it, why suppress it?

Negar Banakar, U1 Secondary:

She thinks it is also an issue in how we are defining the problem: we are not trying to define which one is the best, but get the best from them. We are at a higher level of learning: if younger students can go to Arts high school or Science-centered high schools to fit their interests, why can't we do the same for Education students?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

They spent some time trying to find a way to do such a thing, doing a multiple DD Project or types of FE. It is hard to do it because when you have students doing their FE in different settings, what you end up with is that you have people locked in what they want to do. But when there is differentiation, there is a danger for inconsistency. If students have a way to manage that, they could help us with that.

Negar Banakar, U1 Secondary:

Why is it different from regular alternative programs?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

David is working with specific schools. We do not have similar relationships with other schools.

Talia Kelly, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

How come it is not fair to have different alternatives when every course has multiple sections, with different teachers?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

He will still be teaching in the fall.

Talia Kelly, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

Is he going to be able to keep students on Mondays?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

It hasn't been discussed yet.

David Dillon, professor and founder of the David Dillon Project:

He will be mostly a seminar instructor.

Emma Fleming, U4 Secondary:

The big difference was the number of students and also how the supervisors were picked and how the small number of supervisors (4) made a difference in connection between students/instructors/supervisors.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

He reminded the improvements on the merged model including a better portfolio, parent-teacher nights, better ways of linking theory to practice and different course assignments.

Emma Fleming, U4 Secondary:

Mentioned how the small community feeling made it different.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

What are the differences in terms of philosophy?

Emma Fleming, U4 Secondary:

She directed the question toward the students who did the project. Is it so different?

Elizabeth O'Dwyer, U3 Kindergarten/Elementary:

Said it has to do with teaching philosophy. Each teacher has a different philosophy.

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

We need to have more discussion and discuss in terms of how these differences can be incorporated in the merged model.

Theodore Starr, U4 Secondary:

He asked about a way to have those suggestions included?

Ralf St-Clair, Department Chair of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education:

He will talk to Vanessa Hartman, who is also president of EdUS, about it.

Jordan Norris, U4 Kindergarten/Elementary:

Quick comment: is there a possibility to replicate the relationship David Dillon had with schools in terms of the merged model.

Andrea Taylor, career advisor of the Faculty of Education:

From the perspective of someone who works a lot with students, she sees a lot of portfolios. She did see a big difference in terms of portfolio between the regular FE and David Dillon. She thinks the greatest strength is portfolio and she said that most of the questions in terms of portfolio she received have to do with how to do a great portfolio and how it will be used in terms of hiring.

Topic 3: General Concerns

We then moved to General Concerns that were expressed by students.

Emma Fleming read through the list and discussed these issues with Caroline Riches and Fiona Benson.

We went through those issues:

CT Evaluations

Ct's are not allowed to be evaluated. Unions say: Cooperative Teachers are certified to be professional and students will not judge these teachers. The union only allow it to be called an "anecdotal" feedback form. They are certified – not up with the student to judge if they are good or bad. There is a form on the website, which will be revamped soon because access to some documents is problematic. Unions will not allow the physical encouragement of this feedback form. If anyone is going to pursue this it will be principals or the union itself. What we can do is make this form more visible: tell students about it.

The OST cannot refuse a CT: however, it can tell a CT he or she is not "needed". It is already hard enough to find CTs. Once in the profession – once a teacher and you have security you should try and change this. Demand professional development, demand resources for PD

Supervisor Evaluations

McGill supervisors are retired teachers

Then become supervisors by two recommendation letters from the field, they take training and the new supervisors are on a year probation. These people are in it for the love of teaching and do not get paid.

From student feedback, a supervisor has been removed on one.

They are not considered actual employees – considered “casual employees” they do not carry a McGill card

Putting in an evaluation sheet in the field experience package is a possibility

The OST wants to take the students’ feedback in consideration and encourage students to email them and voice their concerns.

Unannounced visits

They were requested from the field, the board. Not “surprised” – unannounced it’s not an ambush meaning that they get what they get and they cannot ask for the formal lesson plan.

Students need to understand partnership and the relationship OST has with the field.

Every training supervisor is told what is expected. There is only so much monitoring that can be done.

It will be made sure to make it clear the difference between announced and unannounced visits.

Journals / lesson logs

It is supposed to be a professional log that encourages professional reflection. These logs are supposed to be a log of your lessons and reflections on these lessons, not a personal journal.

Professional Portfolio

It is under changes right now and a master competency grid is being put together.

Town Hall ended at 8h03.

Respectfully submitted,
Guillaume Fecteau
Recording Secretary.