

# **Quebec - Teachers' Petition / Manifesto for the protection of democracy and of students' right to protest**

Tuesday 21 August 2012, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [Petition / Sign-on Letter](#) (Date first published: 8 August 2012).

We are professors at institutions of higher education. Our job is to open to our students critical horizons that question reality and offer different world views.

We do not see ourselves as mere agents of the reproduction of the social order, and especially as not officers of the repression with which Quebec's state power has decided to contemptuously attack the student community. The unjust Bill 12 (formerly Bill 78), which criminalizes what were until recently considered social rights and civil liberties, would have Quebec's professors play these roles.

We denounce this law by which the Quebec government is attempting to create a chain of obedience intended to systematically attack freedom of association, the right to demonstrate and, more broadly, any "concerted action" within educational institutions of higher education (in Quebec : colleges and universities). Now, no one can impede the right of a student to receive instruction. No one may contribute, directly or indirectly, to "slow down, degrade or delay" the resumption or continuation of classes. "Gatherings" that could disrupt classes are prohibited within a 50 meter radius of buildings. Teacher and student unions have the obligation to ensure strict compliance with these provisions, under penalty of exorbitant fines. The ministry may order the removal of all the resources of the latter, including dues payments. Finally, higher educational institutions must communicate any information the ministry requires under penalty of fines. Under the pretext of protecting the right of access to classes, this incredibly ferocious law thus establishes a mode of governance based on administrative, judicial and police repression of all those who would organize their forces to challenge its principles and its application or to defend any position adopted by a General Assembly, including positions concerning the accessibility of higher education.

We consider it unacceptable that Quebec professors are now forced to be cogs in this Orwellian system. On the one hand, the government tells professors to ignore the collective decisions taken democratically by student assemblies, to teach the students who present themselves in the classroom and to whom these courses are supposedly "due", and to thereby penalize those who abide by their vote to strike. This is a direct attack on the freedom of political conscience of professors. On the other hand, professors' academic freedom may be infringed not only at the direction of educational institutions but also by anyone who would denounce these professors for "helping or inducing a person" to contravene this law.

We reject such an abuse of our work. We defend and will always defend an education which silences no debate, an education capable of generating strong convictions and concrete practices.

We refuse to contribute to the production of a world characterised by the war of all against all, by market logic, by mutual surveillance, by informants, self censorship, and fear. We reject the idea that respecting the contract between an academic institution and a student, legitimizes the violence exercised by the state against collective political rights - rights to associate, to express one's opinion freely, to make collective decisions, to strike, and to demonstrate.

We reaffirm that decisions taken in a democratic way, by associations whose legitimacy is recognized by the law, are themselves legitimate.

We respect the strike vote of the students. We recognize their right to protest at their educational institutions and to interrupt the activities which are carried out there as the only means by which they have bargaining power.

We would not know how to teach in contravention of these principles.

*Please use your networks; circulate this to as many professors as possible both from here and from elsewhere. To be included among the signatories, write to the following email address:*  
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