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Vanier College Board denounces surprise budget cuts

Montreal, September 30, 2011. Responding to a unilateral demand by the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport that the public cegeps make an in-year cut of \$29.8 million from their 2011-2012 budgets, on Tuesday, September 27, 2011, the Vanier College Board of Directors passed a resolution strongly opposing this unannounced and unexpected reduction in funding. Although pressure from the cegeps has already led the government to reduce that amount to \$19.8 million, the new cuts come on top of a reduction of \$15 million already absorbed in the Spring by the public colleges to their 2011-2012 operational budgets.

Since the latest cuts target the cegeps and school boards only while leaving the universities untouched, the Board is asking that any measure introduced to deal with budgetary constraints be done fairly and respect the equity between and within different levels in the education system. Indeed, Vanier considers that the amount of the cut imposed on colleges is out of proportion with the relative weight of the réseau as compared to other levels of education in the system.

“For Vanier College, the proposed reduction could amount to more than \$500,000 which is in addition to the cut of \$450,000 already imposed on our budget last May, jeopardizing our capacity to finance the proper development of our institution,” states Vanier Director General Gilbert Héroux. He goes on to say that “Already, the initial permanent cut of \$450,000 led the Board of Directors to adopt a deficit budget last June, with the difference being covered through our accumulated surplus in order to comply with the requirements of the *Loi sur les collèges d’enseignement général et professionnel*.”

Drawing from the cegeps’ surpluses rankles. First, not all cegeps have a surplus. Second, not only is the use of these surpluses responsibly approved by the Boards of colleges to serve the educational mission of each institution, but as Gilbert Héroux explains, “The surpluses being targeted by the ministry are the result of careful and responsible management of funds by the Board and administrators of Vanier College and come not from ministry funding but from a host of self-financed activities which cover the lack of sufficient government funding.”

Furthermore, the current surplus amounts to less than 6% of Vanier’s total institutional budget and is made up for the most part of funds already committed to pay for a part of Board approved college projects (library and sports field) and liabilities (staff vacation and overtime banks).

Echoing the feelings of the other public cegeps, the Vanier Board states these cuts are in complete contradiction with the commitment made to education by the Premier of Québec during his February 23, 2011 inaugural speech and prevent colleges from being able to make a long term commitment to maintaining services to students. Fearing students will be the ones to ultimately suffer from the cuts Vanier College is urging the Québec government to ensure stability by all possible means in the funding of college education as a way to maintain the viability and the quality of services to students of the college system.