

Quit sullyng tuition’s good name

If you’re planning on going out and protesting it, make sure you do it right



ADAM GAUMONT

Down with tuition: it’s a cry often heard on campuses across Canada these days—especially here at the U of A—but if you stop sticking it to the man long enough to think about it, it becomes apparent that this particular turn of phrase is counter-intuitive to say the least.

That’s because tuition actually means instruction, with the money you pay for said instruction being your tuition fees.

Far be it from me to resist linguistic change, however, as the meanings of most all of the words we use in the English language today have changed by degrees since their inception (including “tuition” itself, which comes ultimately from a Latin word meaning guardianship).

Indeed, as a sign of the times, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary—the “official dictionary of the Canadian Press,” don’t you know—has the monetary sense as the primary meaning of tuition, with the instruction itself coming in a close second.

Still, you can impress your friends at protest parties by saying “up with tuition” and then proceeding to explain the word’s etymology—provided, of course, that your friends are a bunch of English nerds. Otherwise, you’ll just end up being unpopular like me.

Fortunately, I’m beginning to find myself in good company in demanding more from my university (okay,

so technically speaking, it’s my *alma mater* now, to use some more fancy Latin words). Namely, the Students’ Union and its council (well, some of it, anyway), who have, with the recent Bear Scat/Tracks scandal—dare we say, Bearsgate?—decided to draw a line in the proverbial sand and insist that the University be responsible for providing students with a decent online registration service.

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Say what you will about the way they handled Bear Scat—and coupling the student response so far with good old-fashioned common sense, I’m going to say that they screwed it up big-time—the SU has, in sticking (probably too) tightly to their guns, undertaken a subtle but important shift in the way they do business. That is, a shift away from complaining about how much university costs, and towards coming to terms with this cost and demanding more bang for their educational buck.

Most, if not all, of the last ten or so SU execs—and certainly the last four or five—have focused almost entirely on the admittedly unjust increases to tuition fees in our province. But given the reality that there’s almost certainly

no way of getting the University or the government to actually rescind on these increases—as well as the annual caps that have been imposed on them—simply railing against these annual single-digit increases out of principle seems increasingly to be a waste of time.

If, however, you insist on jumping on the protest train, then at least try to take some free tuition from the French: student groups in Quebec are now threatening “an unlimited general student strike” in response to their government’s de-freezing of tuition fees for the first time since 1994.

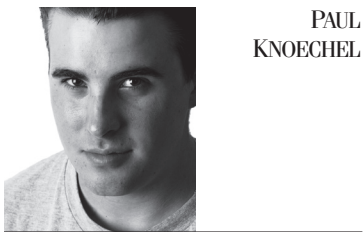
How Quebec students can live in complete denial of inflationary forces for so long is beyond me—as is how students can, strictly speaking, go on strike, seeing as they aren’t employed by the universities or producing much of anything (other than, perhaps, potential future value for the labour pool). I suppose threatening to withhold payment is the force at work here.

But the fact remains that if you’re going to protest something, you’ve got to go all out. And one of these Quebec student coalitions—the *Association Pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante* (ASSÉ)—is doing just that, going so far as to demand that tuition be free.

Though it’s a bit of a stretch, go big or go home I say. Why not demand the same here in Alberta, where our government could realistically afford it?

Instead, we’re content with thinking that maybe somebody should do something about that gosh darn tuition thing one of these days. At this rate, “tuition” will simply come to mean “increase,” and students and linguistic purists alike will have something new to complain about.

Rogue candidates would spice up elections



PAUL KNOECHEL

People just don’t seem to care about municipal elections. Not that that’s news, but I mean, people don’t care even a *little bit*. In fact, the last time that Edmonton held mayoral elections, the turnout was a paltry 42 per cent—and that was a marked improvement from the 35 per cent turnout the election before that.

At this point, the municipal government is practically chosen by aristocratic means, since a minority of the population is now representing the whole.

The general attitude is “Who gives a fuck?” despite the fact that the people sworn into office from these elections are in control of hundreds of millions of dollars and make decisions that significantly effect the people of the city, be it in their management of the roadways, public transportation, municipal employees, or even recreation programs.

Clearly, with the current attitude of apathy still prevailing in the face of all that the City Council is responsible for, we’re past the point where a simple advertising campaign could bring back some semblance

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of majority representation to the municipal elections.

We’re in Hail Mary territory here, and I’ve got just the play to run: all that we need to do to get people back to the voting booths is to grant the mayor and all those with seats on Council total immunity from the law.

No crime they commit, no matter how heinous, could ever be brought before a judge. No matter how many laws they broke in full view of the public, the police couldn’t lay their hands on them. Just imagine a city where the mayor could drive to work drunk. In a tank. On the wrong side of the road. Throwing hard drugs to school children. While uttering racial slurs.

All of a sudden, polling stations would be packed with every last voter in the city, each casting their ballots to ensure someone with a good conscience and desire to do good in the city would get into public office, and not some disgruntled clown with a vendetta against mimes.

Additionally, it would make the race for municipal office a much bigger and showier event. Mob bosses

would pour money into their campaigns in hopes that they’d be able to deal drugs and whack snitches with disdain for the police. The crazies would campaign like, well, crazy for the opportunity to take their insanity to the next normally illegal level. And all the while, the legitimate candidates would be required to work twice as hard in order to convince the public of their convictions and that they don’t harbour a secret desire to go to the nearest nursing home and beat up the residents. The entire democratic process would be once again revitalized.

Naturally, all those working for Elections and Census Services will ignore this groundbreaking new way to approach municipal elections, because they don’t really give a fuck about city elections either.

It’s a shame though, as the potential of electing a “rogue mayor” would really put the kick back in these elections—plus it would finally give me the opportunity to free myself from these societal shackles we call clothes. I guess I’ll just keep my fingers crossed.

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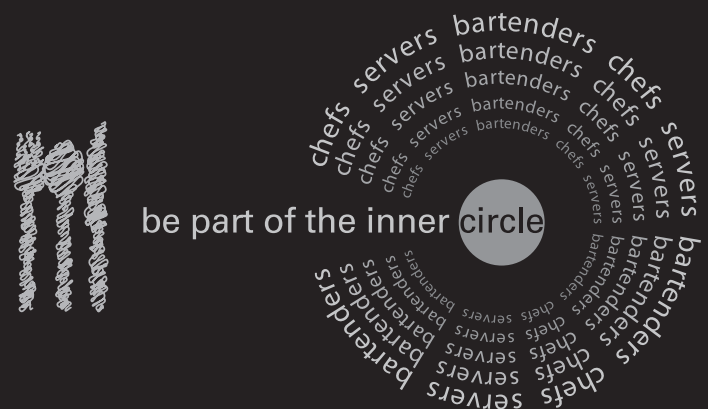


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