

StatsCan reveals Quebec has greatest fee increases

MATTHEW BRETT
The Link

MONTREAL (CUP)—Quebec is facing the highest tuition fee increase, the highest ancillary fee increase, and the highest international student tuition increase, according to Statistics Canada data released 18 October.

The Quebec government's decision to increase tuition by \$50 per semester over the next five years is the leading factor in Quebec's 4.8 per cent tuition fee increase from the 2006/07 academic year, according to the study.

"I do understand that for some people it is an extremely high amount, and it's difficult to pay," Concordia University spokesperson Chris Mota said. "[But] If you look at it from a budgetary standpoint, it's a drop in the bucket on what all of the Quebec universities need."

According to Mota, universities in Quebec are operating with \$375 million less than other provinces.

Raynald Lortie, the chief of education finances for Statistics Canada, was quick to point out that while Quebec is facing some of the steepest fee increases, the province's actual tuition fee levels are under half the national average.

But, Angelica Novoa, Concordia Student Union (CSU) President, explained that "the fact that we pay less than the average in Canada means that we are an example to the rest of Canada as to what accessible education means."

"Society in Quebec has decided as a whole to prioritize education."

University students in Quebec also faced the steepest compulsory fees—often referred to as ancillary fees—in the country. The study recorded a 25.1 per cent increase in additional charges in Quebec from the 2006/07 academic year.

A large part of the ancillary fee increase was incurred by a recently introduced Technology and Infrastructure Fee, which is said to go towards "smart classrooms" and wireless connectivity.

"It's absolutely unacceptable," Novoa said. "Universities across Quebec [...] keep charging ancillary fees to students without getting any benefit added from that money."

Universities in Quebec have seen a 300 per cent increase in ancillary fees over twelve years, according to the Quebec Federation of University Students.

Concordia University charged \$696 in ancillary fees for the 2006/07 academic year—\$267 of which were student-generated fees voted upon by student union members.

"Our students do seem to think certain causes, certain programs, are worth investing in," Mota explained.

During the CSU's 11 October council meeting, the Concordia Student Union voted for an authorization request for fee levies directed towards an emergency food bank and a free daily lunch at one of the university's campuses.

"We need to be here for the students in need, whether that be financial or academic," said Fauve Castagna, CSU Vice-President (Finance).

Students support false cabs

Brock University administration, Niagara police force warn against using illegal taxi services that have become popular with students due to low costs

STEVE WOODHEAD
The Brock Press

ST CATHARINES (CUP)—Illegal taxi services near Brock University are providing a less expensive option for students, while officials warn about the safety of these makeshift cabs.

As more and more of the illegal taxis are caught at the university, Campus Security is trying to educate students about the dangers of getting in an unlicensed taxi, which offer lower fares than their licensed counterparts.

"Students should understand that if there isn't a licensed taxi driver behind the wheel, it's just some guy driving a car," said Sergeant Mike McAllister of the Niagara Regional Police. "If it doesn't have a sign on top, don't get in."

McAllister explained that illegal taxi organizations, known to Brock students and Campus Security alike, aren't run like legitimate cab companies. Instead, he said the illegal taxis often operate only by cell phone and lack stringent background checks for their drivers. This, he further explained, makes them less reliable and highly suspicious to both Niagara Police and Campus Security at Brock University.

Unlicensed taxi services aren't allowed on Brock University property. Drivers caught dropping off a student are issued a trespassing notice, according to Mayla Parrent, assistant director of Campus Security.

But repeat offenders are often familiar to Campus Security officers.

"We do have a particular individual who is very well-known here at Brock and has been charged numerous times, to the point that he now has to appear in court," Parrent said. "And he still has the system beat—he drops students off at McDonald's across the street."

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SERGEANT MIKE MCALLISTER
NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE

McAllister hopes students in St Catharines will realize that the safeguards and licensing procedures used by legitimate taxi services are often ignored by the unlicensed cabs operating in the area.

"[Legal cab companies] are licensed through my office, which means the vehicle has proper insurance for carrying additional passengers, people are covered from a liability perspective, and the drivers are all checked through for possible past offences,

sexual or otherwise. We make sure they don't have drug issues and that they have a valid driver's license," McAllister said.

Niagara Regional Police and Campus Security have received numerous complaints about illegal cabs. The list includes reckless driving, selling drugs out of the cars, and sexual harassment bordering on molestation.

The lack of insurance coverage could also leave passengers without recourse to compensation in the event of an accident.

"The question to ask a student is, if you were to be injured while travelling with one of these drivers and you needed special medical treatment or equipment, who's covering you?" McAllister said, adding that riding in an illegal cab leaves students unprotected should something go wrong.

"These illegal taxis have no insurance plans; regular taxis do," he said.

Yet the issue for most students is still money. Since illegitimate cabs avoid the costly registration of their cars and drivers, they're able to undercut the prices of legitimate cab companies. As a result, other cab companies in town have introduced flat-rate systems for Brock students, depending on the destination.

Until more students refuse to call the unlicensed cabs, however, McAllister said that the situation can't be resolved.

"The worst hasn't happened yet, but I'm afraid it's going to."



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monkeys at his home, resulting in fatal head injuries after the terrorizing simians forced the man off a balcony.

The Deputy Mayor of New Dehli was recently attacked by wild



injuries after the terrorizing simians forced the man off a balcony.

At Gateway News meetings, which take place on Fridays at 3pm in SUB 3-04, deputy news editor Ryan Heise has undergone rigorous training in case such an outbreak of fur and fangs occurs. Also, no balconies.

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