

# MARTIAL LAW MONTREAL: Quebec Emergency Law an Attack on Freedom of Assembly and Expression

Bill called "draconian" and an assault on fundamental freedoms

By [Tim McSorley](#)

Global Research, May 18, 2012

[Montreal Media Coop](#) 18 May 2012

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

*The Quebec government has [introduced legislation](#) which they say is necessary in order to restore social order during the ongoing student strike, but which critics are denouncing as threatening the right to protest in Quebec.*

"This bill, if adopted, is a breach to the fundamental, constitutional rights of the citizens," [said](#) Louis Masson, president of the Quebec Bar Association. The Quebec Bar Association is just one of the organizations that have spoken out since the law was introduced to parliament last night.

The debate began around 9pm Thursday and is ongoing (watch live [here](#)).

Among other things, the law will require all organizers of a demonstration of 10 people or more to submit their itinerary, including route, date, time and duration, to police eight hours in advance, and to refrain from demonstrating within 50 metres of any teaching establishment.

This morning, in a press conference, student leaders and unions also [spoke out](#) against the law.

"If we are no longer able to protest in our society, it becomes a totalitarian society," said Louis Roy, head of the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), which represents most university and college teachers in the province. "We are telling our members to defend their fundamental right, the right to demonstrate," he added.



Students and supporters march through downtown Montreal. These marches may be fewer and far between once a new emergency law is adopted. Image via La Riposte on Flickr.

One of the spokespeople for the organization representing the majority of the 155,000 students on strike said they may participate in civil disobedience to challenge the law. "[We]

are not excluding the possibility of disobeying this special law,” said Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, co-spokesperson with the Enlarged Coalition of the Association for a Solidarity Among Student Unions (CLASSE).

As of 12:15, a petition calling for the law to be stopped had 23,000 signatures. The organizers of the petition, online at <http://loi78.com> are trying to reach 100,000 signatures by 4pm today.

The proposed law, known as “Bill 78: A Law Allowing Students to Receive the Education Provided by the School Which They Attend,” contains 36 articles. Several of these articles are raising concerns, including:

- Any demonstration including 10 or more people would need to submit its route, location, time, date and duration to police at least eight hours in advance for approval. Police would be allowed to order modifications to the protest.
- Protest organizers, as well as any student association or federation of associations that participate in a demonstration, are accountable for the actions of all participants in the demonstration, under threat of fine.
- All protests that may hinder access to classes, whether directly or indirectly, are not allowed within 50 metres of the grounds of any teaching establishment. All protests within schools that hinder access to classes, stops the resumption or continuation of classes are also banned.

Read the entirety of the proposed legislation [here](#).

These rules apply to both any action or omission which may lead to classes being disrupted.

The law would also require teachers to report any disruptive actions, which has already led union leaders to denounce that their members would be transformed into a pseudo-police force.

Should any student association be reported to be taking part in these kinds of activities, the government reserves the right to suspend all student union fees (at the rate of one semester’s worth of fees per day that the law is broken), as well as access to campus offices. Both fees and access to offices are provided under the Quebec student union accreditation law.

The bill also stipulates that any person who, by act or omission, aids, or by encouragement, counsel, consent, authorisation or order, brings, another person to break any of the provisions of this law is also held accountable and is liable to the same fines.

Fines for breaking any aspects of this law would be:

\$1,000 to \$5,000 for individuals

\$7,000 to \$35,000 for leaders, employees or representatives of any student association or employees’ association, leaders or representatives of an institution, or individual who organizes a demonstration

\$25,000 to \$125,000 for any student association, federation of associations, employees' association or institution, or moral person, organization or coalition which organizes a demonstration

In case of recurring offenses, fines would double.

If this bill passes, which it most likely will, since the Liberal party holds a majority in parliament, it is still unclear when it will go into effect. Montrealers have held 23 straight night-time demonstrations, with the 24th scheduled for this evening. Each of the demonstrations would have broken multiple provisions of Bill 78 on several occasions.

It is also unclear how the bill will define indirect actions hindering classes. When asked whether wearing a red square in class would violate the law, Education Minister Michelle Courchesne said that that would be up to the courts to decide.



On March 22nd, over 250,000 people marched in Montreal against the tuition fee increase. Another similar mass demonstration is planned for May 22

Even those who support the law, such as the Conseil du Patronat du Québec, have expressed concerns that it does not actually lead Quebec out of the tuition fee impasse. On CBC Radio Montreal today, the head of the council said that the government still has not presented a solution to actually end the student strike.

CLASSE has already been calling for a major demonstration on May 22nd, the one hundredth day of the strike. Unions expressed their support for the May 22 action and for challenging the regulations, and comments online and in the media are brimming with anger over the law. Should the government not change route and negotiate with students leaders, all signs point to a continued strike and a very large demonstration on May 22.

The original source of this article is [Montreal Media Coop](#)  
Copyright © [Tim McSorley](#), [Montreal Media Coop](#), 2012

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Tim McSorley](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long as the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)