



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Right to Learn

OVERVIEW

The right to learn is a core value in a modern and progressive society. It is the foundation upon which that society tackles the complex challenges it faces and ensures that prosperity is sustained and shared. Post-secondary education plays a pivotal role in both sustaining and advancing those goals. In our capacity as educators, we are not only advocates for and mentors of our students, we are also advocates for the reforms needed in our institutions to secure those goals. At the same time, we continue to defend our members and the important contributions they make in ensuring that the right to learn is not just talked about, it has meaning and impact in every institution and community. At this year's convention we will focus on how the right to learn affects our student, our members and our communities.

As the largest association in BC's post-secondary education sector, FPSE has a significant role to play in advancing the right to learn. From our inception more than thirty years ago, FPSE has maintained an active voice on post-secondary education policy issues. Our goal has always been to support and advance policies that protect our members and to ensure the greatest

possible access to high quality post-secondary learning opportunities for every resident in BC. We recognize that to achieve those goals FPSE needs to provide not only strong and effective labour relations support to its members, it must also press governments—mostly the provincial government, but also the federal government—to implement policy and funding choices that strengthen both the opportunities for access and the quality and diversity of program offerings at our colleges, universities and institutes.

At this year's Annual General Meeting, delegates have an opportunity to debate and discuss the important resolutions brought forward by our Locals and various FPSE Standing Committees. We also have an opportunity to discuss how our ideas for public policy reform affect the right to learn. We know from prior work that we have done on public policy issues that achieving meaningful change for our members, students and institutions will take a commitment of resources, staff and membership mobilization, but those are commitments that our Federation is always prepared to make.

Post-secondary education plays a key role in the social and economic life of our province. At its most fundamental level, post-secondary

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education provides an opportunity for students to learn, create, research, innovate, but most of all, gain the confidence needed to sustain life-long learning. Post-secondary education is also a hub for both students and the community to gain access to new skills through greater collaboration. For many BC communities, our institutions are also major employers, providing good jobs and contributing to stable and sustainable economic growth.

At our 2014 convention we need to identify plans and strategies that make our institutions more affordable and accessible for students and more accountable and transparent to the communities in which they operate. We know that for more than a decade radical and regressive changes have become commonplace within our institutions, changes that have adversely affected students and undermined the working conditions of our members. This convention needs to focus on how we can work collectively to change those conditions and improve the lives of our students and our members.



CINDY OLIVER

NEW GOVERNMENT, UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS

While the benefits of post-secondary education are often well recognized, the interplay of effective public policy and funding to support and grow the post-secondary education system is not. Since 2001 real per-student operating grants—the provincial government’s most direct form of support for public post-secondary institutions—has dropped by more than 20%. The decline in funding has had a cascading effect on everything from affordability and access to program offerings and student debt.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since the last AGM, the funding situation that our institutions face has been squeezed even more. While BC's Finance Minister, Mike de Jong, described his 2014 budget as "boring", the reality for post-secondary education is anything but boring. Over the next three years the total operating grant transferred to post-secondary institutions will drop by almost \$50 million. Moreover, total enrolments across the system are also projected to decline from approximately 206,000 students currently to 201,000 by 2016.

The government's flat line approach to budgeting is not confined to post-secondary education. Other sectors, including health care, K-12 education, and direct government services all face ever tightening program expenditures over the next three years.



Included in the Ministry of Advanced Education's three year Service Plan is a detailed list of mandate priorities that will be part of the Letter of Expectations that each institution receives. Several of those priorities indicate that further pressures will be placed on post-secondary institutions. Included in those priorities are:

- In concert with the Boards of BC's colleges and universities, set targets for post-secondary graduates that will enable our province to match the skills we need with the skills we are graduating.
- Continue to minimize overheads within our publicly funded universities and, where possible, consolidate functions across different post-secondary institutions.
- Include the requirement for post-secondary Boards to undertake an institution-wide core review of their programming to ensure student seats are being filled.

Affordability continues to be a major challenge for BC post-secondary students. Tuition fee revenues are projected to rise by over \$100 million over the next three years. The projected drop in total enrolment across the system points to the affordability and access crunch that comes with ever-rising tuition fees.

A puzzling trend included in the Ministry's three year Service Plan is the steady and dramatic rise in the number of international students enrolled in BC's public post-secondary institutions. The Ministry estimates that currently about 100,000 international students are enrolled in BC



AGM 2013, NANAIMO

colleges, universities and institutes. By 2016, that number is projected to increase to over 140,000 students. What is not clear in the Service Plan is how that increase will work its way into other projections that show total funded enrolments declining between now and 2016.

The BC government announced several months ago that a thorough review was underway at the Industry Training Authority (ITA). That review has been completed, but has yet to be released by the Minister responsible for ITA, Shirley Bond. Along with many affiliates at the BC Federation of Labour, FPSE will be pressing the Minister for the release of the report on ITA and will be looking for meaningful reforms to be included in the recommendations.

PUBLIC SECTOR BARGAINING SQUEEZED ... AGAIN

In February FPSE convened a meeting of the Bargaining Coordination Committee (BCC) to ensure that Locals are well-positioned to move ahead with their 2014 contract talks. FPSE Labour Relations Staff Representatives have been working to support those efforts. As well, FPSE has been compiling the research and background documentation for the 2014 talks, research that includes an overview of key economic and salary related issues along with extensive background information on contract language. Key elements in this research material are drawn from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) database that includes both current salary

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

and compensation comparisons from across Canada as well as detailed reviews of contract language on such diverse issues as employment security, academic freedom and workload. Having access to the CAUT data helps advance our efforts in Local bargaining as well as substantiate our demands on system-wide compensation issues.

A number of external developments will have a direct impact on both the pace and direction of 2014 negotiations. For example, the recent court decision in the on-going negotiations between the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and the provincial government could set an important benchmark for education sector contract negotiations. In that decision the court found that the province was undermining good faith bargaining and ignoring the court's directive to restore class size and composition provisions in the BCTF's contracts with school districts. Once implemented, the court's decision will require the government to make a substantial change in classroom conditions in the K-12 sector, a change that could have significant implications for the government's current push for long term agreements in the provincial public sector.

Just as significant in terms of its impact on the 2014 round of contract talks is the pattern established by the BCGEU in its direct government services contract negotiations. In the fall of 2013, the BCGEU reached a settlement that included a five-year term with base salary increases of approximately 5.5% over the life of the agreement. The original pattern settlement emerged from the health care sector where paramedical professionals announced their support for a five year agreement.

While the BCGEU and health care settlements reflect the government's priority for long term

settlements, unions in the broader provincial public sector continue to work on ensuring coordinated bargaining in the 2014 round of contract talks with various provincial government entities. BCC is monitoring these developments and participates in the BC Federation of Labour's Public Sector Committee meetings where bargainers from across the provincial public sector have an opportunity to discuss developments in their sector and compare issues that arise from their bargaining tables.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

One of FPSE's most significant investments in member services is in the area of contract administration, especially the grievance and arbitration system. By the end of March 2014, we anticipate that our outside legal costs will exceed half a million dollars. While the costs are sizeable, the implications of what we advance through the grievance and arbitration system is fundamental to the labour relations integrity of our system. Although it is tempting to simply look at the list of grievances and arbitrations as a series of unique Local conditions, the reality is that what goes forward through these challenges has system-wide implications for every Local. In fact, there is good evidence to suggest that in a number of instances, our employers are more deliberate and coordinated in their challenges of our contracts than many would suspect them to be.

The best and most recent example of this is the challenge that FPSE took on at Local 11 where the employer, Northwest Community College, tried to circumvent the collective agreement by issuing layoff notices to the entire faculty as part of a plan to address budget issues at the college. While the issuing of the layoff notices at first seemed clumsy and ill-considered, it

became more apparent as events unfolded that the administration's actions, if left unchallenged, would have resulted in not only an undermining of the collective agreement, it would have led to the wholesale conversion of regular faculty to contingent status. What the employer hoped to achieve at NWCC was to use the layoff event and the college's so-called budget crisis as a way to effectively re-evaluate which faculty members would have access to available teaching positions. By forcing AWU members to reapply for teaching positions, administrators would have set the precedent at Northwest that would have quickly cascaded through the entire system as administrators at other institutions would look to replicate the changes achieved through this backdoor layoff procedure.

Unlike many grievances and arbitrations, however, the situation at Local 11 called for a broad based strategy that not only challenged the administration's interpretation of the collective agreement, it also challenged the employer's actions under the BC Labour Code. Both strategies required an intense commitment of Labour Relations Staff resources as well as substantial outside legal costs. Although a final tally of those costs is not yet complete, we anticipate that pushing back against what the employer at Northwest tried to do will have cost FPSE something in excess of \$200,000.

The important piece to this story is that the final decision from the arbitrator completely vindicated the Local's position that their employer had violated the terms and conditions of their collective agreement. As well, the arbitrator found that in a number of instances the employer's actions were so egregious that punitive awards to faculty were warranted. And while reinstatement and other forms of compensating actions were

a great relief to those faculty impacted by the employer's reckless actions, just as significant was the precedent established for other Locals who could have faced similar measures from their employer had the efforts by Local 11 to challenge their employer not succeeded. And finally, it's important to emphasize that as a collective of faculty associations, FPSE has the resources, both in terms of Labour Relations Staff and outside legal counsel, to take on critical assignments like this and make a positive difference not just for Local 11 members, but also for faculty throughout our network.

Having the resources necessary to take on employers like the administrators at NWCC is critical to our success as a Federation. The combination of our experienced Labour Relations Staff Representatives, our ability to match outside legal support to the particulars of an individual Local and the issue at hand, our capacity to coordinate our grievance strategies through the Grievance and Arbitration Review Committee (GARC), all provide the necessary capacity to defend our members as critical issues emerge.

PRESSING GOVERNMENT FOR BETTER FUNDING

Affordability and access remain major priorities in the campaign work that FPSE has undertaken over the last twelve months. It was with those priorities in mind that FPSE organized its 2014 lobby in Victoria this year. The session included a round-table discussion with the Minister of Advanced Education, Amrik Virk, about the priorities he has set out in his latest Service Plan. As well, the meeting provided Locals with the opportunity to press the Minister on his government's approach to ESL funding. In December of 2013, the Ministry had announced

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



AGM 2013, NANAIMO

that over \$17 million in funding for ESL programs would be lost over the next twelve months.

While the session with the Minister allowed Locals to give blunt assessments directly to him about the impacts that his fiscal priorities are having on students and our public institutions, the session has not yielded any substantial change in the Minister's approach to post-secondary education. Additional sessions with senior Ministry staff were similarly frustrating and provided little indication that this government is prepared to re-think key elements in its policies or the funding of post-secondary education in BC.

The session with the Minister also reinforced the view held by Presidents' Council that what the government is doing with ESL funding is symptomatic of a larger problem. The province has allowed funding to shrink and has allowed administrators to look for other ways to shore up institutional budgets. In the early part of the last decade, the emphasis was on tuition fees. The provincial government deregulated those fees, allowing post-secondary administrators to increase them dramatically. Over a four year period average tuition fees more than doubled. However, even those increases weren't enough and so administrators have shifted again, this

time emphasizing international education, where international students pay 3-to-4 times what a domestic student pays.

Although the Minister and his senior staff appeared to be unwavering in their current stance on post-secondary education funding, it is clear that the public campaign that FPSE launched on the funding cuts to ESL is having an impact. In late February, the Minister was forced to announce transition measures—albeit far from what our institutions need to maintain current programs—designed to bridge institutions for the next twelve months. The transition measures amounted to \$10.6 million this year. Despite the announcement, our campaign continued to press the government for additional funding. In March, the Minister added another \$6 million to the funding commitment. However, like his initial announcement, both funding commitments would only be for the current year. Future commitments to ESL were not included.

It is clear from both of these funding announcements that our campaign efforts on ESL have struck a raw nerve with the provincial government. New Canadians are a potent political force and the cuts to ESL have mobilized resentments within various communities about how this government is treating them. Our efforts over the next twelve months need to continue to build on that opposition to the ESL cuts and ensure that future funding is maintained.

Part of the success of our ESL campaign rests on the way we have brought different elements and allies together. The ESL campaign has focused its mobilization efforts on a number of platforms. In the initial phase, we launched a series of targeted radio ads that focused on critical ethnic communities in the Lower Mainland and southern

Vancouver Island. The campaign also makes extensive use of social media to not only build awareness on the ESL issue, but also mobilize students and faculty to take action; to date over 1,500 letters have been sent to the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Jobs, Skills Development and Labour (both Ministers have shared responsibility on ESL programs). The campaign has also used social media to distribute video testimonials from faculty and students in which they talk about the importance of ESL at their institutions and the drastic impact that cuts will have to their communities.

While FPSE has played a lead role in the launch and design of the ESL campaign, we have been supported in those efforts by other allies. The BCGEU and the Canadian Federation of Students BC have joined with us in supporting the campaign. The BCGEU has cost-shared both the development and broadcasting of the radio ads as well as some of the costs associated with the video campaign.

Our lobbying session with the Minister and his senior staff also provided Locals with the opportunity to highlight some of the problems associated with increasing administrative density at local campuses. The concern detailed by Local Presidents is that, in an era when funding pressures continue to climb, so to have the number and costs of excluded administrative positions. Moreover, Local Presidents expressed their view that if the core reviews that the Minister was pushing local institutions to undertake found savings from a reduction in these excluded positions, they wanted some assurance from the Minister that those savings would be re-directed into programs and not clawed back into the provincial treasury.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZING

While provincial public sector bargaining continues to be a major priority for Labour Relations Staff, the Federation is also working hard to support bargaining efforts at the various private colleges and institutes that have recently been organized. FPSE Labour Relations Staff have played a key role in navigating a number of successful certification applications through the Labour Relations Board. FPSE Staff Reps have also provided major assistance in first contract negotiations at Local 21, as well as the renewal of many existing contracts. At Local 21's largest sub-local, ILSC, our staff support has been critical as the members contemplate possible strike action to secure a fair settlement in 2014.

FPSE's funding of Local 21's organizing efforts continue to yield positive results. In the

months leading up to this year's convention, more certifications have been organized and more members have become active within the Local through organizing and lobbying efforts. The new certifications give Local 21 over 350 new full and part-time members, a major accomplishment for a Local that has to contend with a Labour Code designed to meet the priorities of employers, not workers.

The organizing experience that FPSE has developed not only builds on the impressive track record that Local 21 and FPSE have garnered over the last several years, it also positions FPSE to make a strong case for labour law reform. We know from direct experience just how distorted the law has become and where change is needed to restore balance and fairness for workers. Our perspective and insight on these points will form part of our lobby efforts over the next twelve months.



AGM 2013, NANAIMO

FEDERAL TORIES TAKE AIM AT UNIONS

The Harper government has made it clear that it intends to aggressively attack union rights in Canada, an attack that has serious implications for our movement and for the values we work to advance in our workplaces and our communities. The most significant first offensive in that attack was the passage of Bill C-377, legislation that will put an enormous administrative burden on unions and severely limit their capacity to advocate for members or advance progressive campaigns. The legislation passed the House of Commons and is now moving through the Senate. Once the legislation is proclaimed, it is likely that a court challenge will be launched by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

At its convention in May CLC delegates will have the opportunity to re-affirm their commitment and support for the Congress's broad based fight back efforts against the Harper government. Those efforts began in the fall of 2013 when the CLC sponsored a massive ad campaign, Fairness at Work, which highlighted the importance of unions and the positive impact that unionization has on workers, their families and their communities.

The CLC has also been working with affiliates to re-structure in ways that make better use of existing resources. More importantly, the CLC is reviewing plans that will help re-energize the way in which the public views unions. Those efforts are critical to the long term future of our movement and its capacity to fight for progressive change in our country.

The CLC's campaign to improve and strengthen the benefits of the Canada Pension Plan has also

been a testament to the commitment that the labour movement has to improving the lives of all workers, not just those who are union members. Although the campaign has garnered the support of key provincial governments, as well as a broad cross-section of thought leaders in Canada, the Conservative government continues to resist the call for reforms to CPP. The CLC hopes to make this one of the critical issues in the 2015 federal election, an election that will test the capacity of the labour movement to mobilize support within the ranks of its members, as well as in their communities.

The need for progressive alternatives to what the Conservative government is doing to Canada has never been greater. The steady, deliberate and punitive ways in which the federal Conservatives have attacked public services is having a profound effect on our society. Whether it is the unilateral attack on income security for seniors or the wholesale gutting of environmental oversight, the Conservative government is out to reverse the course of social and economic successes that have taken decades to secure in this country. The CLC's work in countering those attacks positions our movement to not only advance sensible alternatives, but also ensure our voices are supported in the House of Commons and in every community across the country.

CAUT, CAF AND NATIONAL ISSUES

Like other national labour organizations, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has found that the Harper government's approach to public policy, fiscal priorities and legislative reform has been characterized by a constant assault on labour rights. A major priority for CAUT over the last year has been its

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Get Science Right campaign. David Robinson, Associate Executive Director, will be leading a workshop at our AGM devoted to the details of this campaign. What CAUT's efforts have highlighted is that the Harper government's pro-commercialization approach to research is creating major distortions in what research is funded and in how faculty are allowed to pursue knowledge creation and dissemination.

CAUT's campaign highlights the intersection of changing federal research funding rules and academic freedom. By placing emphasis on commercialization, the federal government is undermining the ability of faculty to undertake pure research. This kind of research is a critical first step in the process of inquiry, but it is a step that the Harper government is determined to ignore.

CAUT has also been active in supporting the efforts of faculty associations across Canada that are involved in serious disputes with their administrations. The support ranges from providing staff and expertise to local bargaining tables to mobilizing strike support and financial

assistance to those associations that have decided to take job action in defense of their contract demands.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum's (CAF) efforts to elevate the discussion of trades training in Canada and ensure stronger commitments are made by governments and employers have continued to move ahead despite the withdrawal of funding by the federal government. CAF was originally created to ensure that there were strong national standards for trades training in Canada and to provide a forum for stakeholders to share information, debate issues and further opportunities for apprenticeship and trades training. Those strong national standards are embodied in things like the Red Seal program that ensures greater labour mobility while also ensuring that standards reflect the changing nature of technology and skill in various trades. However, those strong national standards are also something that many employers would rather avoid. By undermining CAF's funding, the federal Conservatives are simply complying with



AGM 2013, NANAIMO

the lowest common demands of employers, a strategy that's bad for workers and bad for Canada in the long run. The good news is that both unions and industry have come forward and pledged support to continue the work of CAF through financial commitments over the next three years. FPSE was one of the first to contribute and set the stage for others to do so.

CAF-led events over the last number of years continue to build the case for strong and effective training programs in every province. Those events also provide an important forum for our members to not just hear about what is happening in other provinces, but also consider how reforms in this province can reflect a best practices approach to what exists in other regions of Canada.

THANKS

The success of our Federation reflects the commitment and input of our members in a democratic decision-making process. I am honored to represent this organization and to be a part of that process. As part of my report to this year's convention, I want to acknowledge and thank those who contribute to the success of our organization.

FPSE benefits enormously from the talent and skill of our staff, who work to ensure that the priorities we identify at AGMs, at our Presidents' Council and in our Standing Committees are translated into action. The Staff Representatives who work on the labour relations front, Lesley Burke-O'Flynn, Weldon Cowan, Sean Hillman, Leah Squance and Zoe Towle, and our Communications & Policy Staff Representative Phillip Legg are all dedicated to meeting the needs of our members.

Administrative Coordinators Jenny Arsenault, Mary Bruegeman, Gisele da Silva, Angela Kenyon, Sara Rozell, and Nancy Yip, provide effective support to staff, committees and Presidents' Council, and they manage these responsibilities under demanding timelines as well. Our Financial Coordinator, Matt Toma, keeps our financial affairs in top shape.

Presidents' Council works tirelessly to keep the organization current and effective between AGMs. I want to thank members of the Council (their names are listed at the end of this report) for their dedication and support.

Our Executive Committee has played a critical role in the ongoing work of FPSE. Their advice, input, and participation in the work of Standing Committees and the issues before Presidents' Council, as well as a wide range of external commitments, ensure that our Federation is an effective voice for our members. My thanks go out to Vice-Presidents Dominique Roelants and Frank Cosco and to Members-at-Large Leslie Molnar and Terri Van Steinburg. They have all made enormous contributions to our Federation. My gratitude also goes out to our Secretary-Treasurer, George Davison, who has played a critical role in ensuring that our Federation has the capacity to provide thoughtful and balanced leadership, advice and counsel to our member locals over the last twelve months and whose opinion I value greatly.

And, finally, I want to thank the members whose support and activism is our core strength. Your commitment makes our Federation work and makes it possible for FPSE to be an effective advocate for post-secondary education.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PRESIDENTS' COUNCIL 2013-2014

1. Capilano University Faculty Association JOANNE QUIRK
2. Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association JASON BROWN
3. Faculty Association of the College of New Caledonia DAVID ROURKE
4. Douglas College Faculty Association LEN MILLIS
5. Kwantlen Faculty Association TERRI VAN STEINBURG
6. College of the Rockies Faculty Association LESLIE MOLNAR
7. University of the Fraser Valley Faculty & Staff Association VICKI GRIEVE
8. Vancouver Island University Faculty Association MARNI STANLEY
9. Okanagan College Faculty Association TIM WALTERS
10. Selkirk College Faculty Association DAVID FELDMAN, DOUG HENDERSON
11. Academic Workers' Union SHEREE RONAASEN
12. Camosun College Faculty Association KELLY PITMAN
14. Langara Faculty Association LYNN CARTER
15. Vancouver Community College Faculty Association KAREN SHORTT
16. North Island College Faculty Association SHIRLEY ACKLAND
17. Thompson Rivers University Open Learning Faculty Association JOHN O'BRIEN
19. Nicola Valley Inst. of Technology Employees' Association SHARON McIVOR
21. Private Sector Faculty & Staff Association (ESEA) BARI BLACKHART
22. Emily Carr University of Art + Design Faculty Association RITA WONG