

# CAMPAIGNS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS REPORT

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario  
Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

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## 1. CAMPAIGNS

### a. Drop Fees

Following months of student organizing in advance of the October 6, 2011 Ontario election, all major political parties made meaningful commitments to address the challenges facing post-secondary education in the province. The Liberal minority government made one of students' key priorities, up-front grants, the cornerstone of their election campaign. During the election, the Ontario Liberals announced a \$430 million investment into up-front grants for some college and undergraduate university students. The Liberals also promised to create post-secondary spaces by opening satellite campuses in Barrie (Laurentian), Milton (Laurier) and Brampton (a York, U of T, Ryerson supercampus). These campuses will offer undergraduate teaching only.

The Liberal grant will be worth \$1,600 for undergraduate and \$730 for college students who are eligible. Students who attend an institution that charges more than the average tuition fees will still receive \$1,600 and if a student attends a college but pays undergraduate tuition fees, they will only receive \$730. However, the commitment to create an up-front grant for some students was referred to by the Liberal Party as a 30 per cent tuition fee reduction numerous times during the election campaign and after, by Liberal candidates and Premier McGuinty. This misnomer confused Ontarians, journalists and students alike who were led to believe that they were being promised an actual tuition fee reduction. Tuition fees will still continue to increase despite the introduction of this grant. Public debt can still rise to \$29,200 per student and there has been no commitment by the Liberals to improve graduate student education, research or funding. There was no promise made by the Liberals to hire more faculty or reduce class sizes.

While the promised investment of \$430 million is a substantial victory for students, their families, and the post-secondary education sector in general, as the details of the grant became clear, students realized that approximately only one third of students would be eligible to receive it. The government has said the grants will be available to more than 300,000 students out of the more than 900,000 students in the province. There are a number of students who are not eligible to receive the promised funding at all. They include:

- Students in second-entry professional programs.
- Students who fall from clear standing will lose the grant.
- International students, who pay much higher fees than domestic students.
- Students who are studying out-of-province.
- Part-time students and students who move from full-time to part-time. Students who do not take a full course load but who are still considered full-time as defined by the government should still receive the grant.
- Students whose parents make over \$160,000 annually, even if their parents do not subsidize their education.
- Students who are independent from their parents as defined by OSAP, including students over the age of 21 and students who have been out of high school for two to four years before the start of their study period.
- Graduate students, even though they have less access to provincial student financial assistance and pay higher fees.

Students expressed several concerns regarding the grant such as the absence of a tuition fee commitment, and that many low-income students will be ineligible. The grant is also not 30 per cent of the up-front cost of post-secondary education. The Liberals excluded tuition fees from professional programs in their

## Page 2 – Campaigns and Government Relations Report

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario

Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

---

average calculation, which are higher than other programs. Average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario are \$6,640 according to Statistics Canada, but the Liberal Party used \$5,400 in their calculation based on the disaggregation of professional fees.

In the absence of a commitment to drop fees or increase funding, this grant will move Ontario closer to an American model of funding post-secondary education. Tuition fees will skyrocket and students will be forced to rely on significant financial assistance to get their foot in the door. By allowing fees to continue increasing and per-student funding to remain the lowest in the country, the Liberal promise will do nothing to stop privatization of colleges and universities.

The grant will also mean that institutions with a greater proportion of high-income students will receive less net government funding than institutions comprised of more low- and middle-income students. This means that prestigious institutions that attract higher-income students and colleges which attract mature students - both ineligible - will be receiving less funding from the government overall. In the absence of a commitment to drop fees and increase per-student funding, this policy will eventually lead to two-tiered education and the privatization of higher education in Ontario.

### **i. Mobilizing**

In response, students resolved to call for the policy to be changed to address the issues identified and are demanding a real tuition fee reduction for all students. A formal petition was created immediately following the election to call for the following commitments:

- *Apply the promised \$430,000,000 in funding for grants to reduce tuition fees for all students and progressively reduce fees by 30 per cent over four years;*
- *Reduce the debt cap and introduce more student grants rather than loans for students; and*
- *Increase per-student funding to the national average.*

Students committed to collecting as many petition signatures as possible in the following months, with the goal of delivering the petitions to the legislature to be formally read in during December. This would be with the hope of changing the policy before January, when the Liberals had promised to implement the grant.

On November 1, students made their voices heard and gave the campaign its first major action by organizing coordinated fax-offs. Fax machines were set up and thousands of students filled out campaign-themed invoices for their 30 per cent tuition fee reduction which went to the offices of Glen Murray, Minister of Training Colleges and Universities as well as the opposition offices. Nearly 10,000 faxes were sent across the province and students were able to get the attention of political parties regarding their issues.

Students also organized flying squads to facilitate the mass collection of petitions. The flying squads were comprised of students from different locals joining forces and descending on a particular campus to undertake intensive outreach for a day. Locals 1, 19, 20, 24, 30, 41, 48, 49, 68, 71, 78, 82, 84, 88, 94, 97, 98, 99, 104, 105, 106, 109, 110 and Trent Grads had flying squad outreach on their campuses.

Students resolved to hold activist teach-ins across the province to ignite organizing on all campuses. These were in recognition of the complexity of the policies proposed by the Liberal government and the need for a swift response. These teach-ins sought to communicate the problems with the proposed policies and the urgency of organizing against their implementation as currently formulated. They provided the context of the current state of post-secondary education and addressed organizing for the February 1 National Day of Action.

In less than six weeks, activist teach-ins were held at Locals 1, 19, 24, 27, 30, 32 (Thunder Bay and Orillia), 39, 41, 47, 48, 49, 68, 78, 82, 84, 88, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110

and Laurentian Students' Union at Georgian. Teach-ins were very well received and served to mobilize local organizers and jump start petition collection. Federation representatives met with hundreds of local campus organizers to talk about the proposed policy and the challenges and opportunities for local organizing. Local and Federation representatives discussed strategies for campus organizing including soliciting endorsements from campus clubs, doing regular class announcements, canvassing graduate student offices, organizing campaign-themed events and more. Some locals participated in holiday-themed actions to raise public awareness about the government's promise of a 30 per cent tuition fee reduction. In Toronto, students created flyers advertising 30 per cent off holiday gift purchases courtesy of Premier McGuinty. Students wore Santa hats and McGuinty masks and distributed leaflets in busy shopping areas to raise public awareness and collect petition signatures from amused weekend holiday shoppers. Locals 19, 24, 68, 98, 99, 105 and 109 participated in the action.

As a result of this intensive outreach, students across the province collected more than 30,000 petition signatures in a matter of weeks. This tremendous effort will strengthen the call for policy change by demonstrating widespread public support.

The delivery of these petitions has been planned for December 5. This date falls on the final week the Legislature is expected to sit before breaking for the holidays and is also the day after the Ontario Executive meeting. Representatives from across the province will be able to participate in a holiday-themed symbolic petition delivery at Queen's Park. Petitions will be packaged in present boxes with bows from different schools, to act as "gifts" to the government from students. A student dressed in a McGuinty mask and Santa hat will distribute government gifts to students. These will be the promised grant, which will be given to one third of the students, and signs saying "ineligible" to two thirds of the students. This will represent what students will be receiving from the government – only one third will receive the promised grant. This symbolic gift exchange will attract media attention and bring further awareness regarding the problems associated with the grant. The petitions will be delivered to opposing Members of Provincial Parliament to be read in to the legislature.

## **ii. Materials**

In order to launch the campaign as quickly as possible, several materials were developed directly following the October 6 provincial election. Drop Fees has been the name of the Federation's core post-secondary education campaigns from 2008-2010. As with all post-secondary education campaigns of the Federation, the messaging and slogans may change from year to year to reflect a particular emphasis or policy that students choose to target. The use of Drop Fees campaign messaging has been continuous on many campuses since its launch, reflecting a strong resonance with students. The slogan Drop Fees is inclusive of both the call to reduce tuition fees and to progressively move towards the removal of all financial barriers to post-secondary education. Given the focus on the government's promise to reduce tuition fees by 30 per cent in the form of a grant, the Drop Fees slogan suited the current political climate and was adopted for materials and outreach regarding the tuition grant, and in the lead-up to the national Day of Action. The Drop fees logo used previously was updated for a new look and to be consistent with the look of the national Education is a Right campaign, so that national and provincial materials can be used together.

The Drop Fees petition is the core mobilizing material to demonstrate public support for students' call for policy change. It is a formal petition as per the guidelines of the Ontario government and can therefore be read in to the legislature. It is formatted on legal size paper, with room for students to add their signatures to the demands and to sign up for more information about the campaign and the February 1 National Day of Action. Local organizers can detach the email and telephone information section of the petition before delivery to the government. This will keep the personal information of

## Page 4 – Campaigns and Government Relations Report

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario

Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

---

signatories private while allowing organizers to build email and phone lists of concerned students who want information about updates to the government policy, local campus events and the National Day of Action.

To facilitate the province-wide teach-ins that students held, a teach-in presentation was developed containing detailed information about the current state of post-secondary education in Ontario including information on tuition fees, funding, quality and student debt. The presentation breaks down the election promises for more satellite campuses and for a 30 per cent tuition fee reduction in the form of a grant. The presentation outlines how the latter policy will lead to privatization and two-tiered education and what the implications are for students. Finally, the campaign to call for change to this policy is outlined, as is the need to build for an even bigger demonstration of public support on the national Day of Action on February 1.

To provide more detail on the grant, a factsheet on the tuition fee grant promise was also created. It features detailed information about the grant including background, quick facts, eligibility details and satellite campus information. The factsheet outlines how tuition fees will continue to rise, funding will not increase and how the slow trend towards privatization will therefore continue at Ontario colleges and universities. The factsheet also describes how two-tiered institutions may result from the grant's eligibility criteria, since some institutions may end up with less government funding overall as a result of having less eligible students in attendance. Such schools will effectively be more private than others and be able to argue for greater tuition fee increases.

A campaign poster and leaflet were also created to promote visibility and support local outreach. These materials adapt the Drop Fees logo and include reference to the promise to reduce tuition fees by 30 per cent, calling on students to make sure this happens. The leaflet also includes infographics illustrating tuition fees and funding in Ontario. The fees Premier McGuinty paid to go to law school in 1980 are compared to today's fees, reflecting that today's politicians benefitted from low fees and a well-funded system but expect the current generation to pay fees that have risen at 370 per cent the rate of inflation while studying in larger class sizes. Government spending priorities are also addressed by including reference to the \$2.4 billion in corporate tax cuts that were implemented by the current government, which could completely eliminate tuition fees for all undergraduate students. The petition, leaflet and poster were distributed to locals in October.

Recognizing the need for an ongoing Internet presence for campaigns work, a customized Facebook page was created. Given the short timelines, redesigning the dropfees.ca website would have been extremely difficult and it would have been completed long after outreach had begun. Creating a customized Facebook page took much less time and allowed for regular content updates. To ensure an immediate online presence, the dropfees.ca URL was set up to redirect to the custom Facebook page, facebook.com/DropFees. The Facebook page included a custom "Welcome" tab that invites visitors to "Like" the page and included information about the campaign and links to the cfsontario.ca website. Other tabs created include a "Contact Us" tab for users to submit feedback, a Twitter Feed tab that live-streams all tweets by the Federation's @CFSON Twitter account, a "Local Coalition" tab that links to local coalition Facebook groups, and an "Events" tab that hosted the dates of local teach-ins.

### **b. Student Tenant Rights**

A vital part of advocating for students' rights has been to educate students about their rights as tenants. Many students find themselves renting accommodations for the first time and too often are unaware of when their rights as set out in the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) are violated. The Federation has previously produced materials to educate students about their rights, including a tenant rights "tips" poster that includes

information about when landlords can enter tenant residences, and if tenant applicants can legally own pets, among other things.

In addition to tenant rights education, the Federation has been investigating the benefits of including student residences in the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). Currently, on-campus residences are not included in the RTA, except in very limited ways, and this leaves students with almost no protections. In particular, students' unions have heard complaints regarding issues with personal safety, personal space, how complaints are handled, unjust entry to students' rooms, payment, lack of clarity on policy, unjust fines, maintenance, behavioural restrictions, unfair treatment and more. As a result of these rights violations, the Federation has been investigating inclusion of residences in the RTA and the possibility of creating a bill of rights for students living in residences. Research regarding the RTA and residences is currently underway, as is the feasibility of creating a student residence bill of rights or draft legislation, aimed at addressing the issues of particular relevance to students that fall outside the purview of the RTA.

In order to strengthen the call for increased protections, the Federation also created materials to facilitate the collection of student testimonials. Students living in residence who wish to make complaints will provide a basis for future lobbying. They will serve as a reference point for decision-makers that such protections are necessary and document the ongoing violations that students face. An online form was created, hosted at [www.cfsontario.ca](http://www.cfsontario.ca), where students can anonymously submit complaints. A poster and door hanger were created to advertise the complaint form. The materials feature the slogan "occupied by a student without rights" and will be distributed to locals in December.

**c. We Ride**

We Ride is an on-going province-wide campaign that advocates for affordable, high-quality public transportation for students. Many municipalities across the province have created post-secondary education discounts or student passes as a result of pressure from student representatives and activists as part of the campaign.

**i. Local 32 Orillia Go Petition**

Local 32 at Orillia campus has recently been working with community partners to develop a campaign to bring GO Transit to Orillia. A division of Metrolinx, GO Transit is a regional public transit service for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, with routes extending to communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. GO Transit had previously extended service to Barrie and provides greater mobility for communities in southern Ontario. Bringing GO Transit to Orillia would have a positive impact on the city's economy and greatly improve access to affordable transportation for students at Lakehead University, Orillia. The Federation worked with Local 32 at Orillia to develop a petition to bring GO Transit to Orillia. The Federation has coordinated with local representatives and will be participating in an official launch of the petition on December 9.

**d. Anti-Homophobia and Anti-Transphobia Toolkit**

Homophobia and transphobia affect many students while studying at a college or university and remain pervasive forms of discrimination on campuses and in communities across Ontario. Whether in overt forms, such as bullying, or covert forms such as heteronormative and gender-normative language, these forms of discrimination affect queer and trans people on a daily basis. Working provincially to create campuses that are free from all forms of discrimination is essential to creating barrier-free education.

**i. Switch it Up**

As part of the Federation's anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia campaigns, the Federation works with the LGBT Youth Line, an organization that runs anti-oppression campaigns and a peer counseling phone line for queer and trans youth. In January 2011, the Federation partnered with Youth Line to develop a

## Page 6 – Campaigns and Government Relations Report

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario

Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

---

one-day workshop for queer and trans post-secondary education students and allies to address homophobia and transphobia and to gather information on homophobic and transphobic experiences. The workshop was part of a broader initiative organized by Youth Line called Switch it Up. The workshop explored storytelling, identity, space, safety and what homophobia and transphobia look, sound and feel like. The Youth Line conducted the final community workshops in September 2011.

The information gathered is being used by Youth Line and the Federation to develop materials to raise awareness about and challenge homophobia and transphobia. The Youth Line will begin collating the workshop participant responses. In February, students will receive the first draft of a video for feedback, with a goal of completing it by March. In April, students will receive draft print materials for feedback. The Youth Line is aiming to have all the materials ready for launch by May 17th, 2012, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

### ii. Tool Kit

The Federation is also undertaking the creation of an organizing kit for distribution to member locals and campus activists. The Federation's Campaigns Coordinator Lauren Snowball, Queer and Trans Commissioner Rodney Diverlus and Constituency Commissioner Alastair Woods are currently developing the organizing kit. The kit will include a glossary of terminology, information on bullying, a myth/fact section, information on organizing a campaign, event ideas, how to organize a speak out, listings of local and provincial resources and research. The kit will be accompanied by the creation of queer and trans ally buttons, posters that can be customized by local, and leaflets with the phrase, "I will challenge homophobia and transphobia because \_\_\_\_\_" with blank space for people to fill in their own stories or ideas. The organizing kit will be completed during the winter of 2012.

### e. We Are All Able

Students with disabilities face additional barriers in accessing post-secondary education. These barriers are both overt and covert and can be physical, structural, or attitudinal. While physical barriers, such as stairs, may prevent students from accessing a classroom or part of their school, it is the absence of universally accessible design that actually prevents access for a range of disabilities. Installing an elevator, for example, universally accommodates people of differing mobilities. Providing supports such as note-taking for students who may have an invisible disability also increases accessibility. Creating accessible campuses must target physical space but also raise awareness on our campuses of disability as a social construct.

In order to address the inaccessibility of many campuses across the province, an Accessibility Audit kit was created. The kit provides checklists of different physical spaces on campus where students can determine if accommodations have been made and if they can be deemed accessible. Once completed, the audit can serve as a lobbying tool to bring to administrations to illustrate the needed changes to ensure all members of the campus community are included. If brought together collectively, audits from across the province could be used to lobby the provincial government for accessibility standards at public institutions like colleges and universities. In addition to the audit kit, posters were created for each site that is assessed to advertise that it is accessible or inaccessible, and why. These posters will raise awareness among students about accessibility and engage members of the campus community to pay attention to the physical space many may take for granted. A button with the "we are all able" slogan was also created for distribution to students.

### f. Students for Justice

The legacy of colonialism, residential schools and racism has made access to post-secondary education full of barriers for Indigenous people. Access to education for Indigenous people is a right enshrined through signed treaties and recognized in Canada's Constitution. Despite the responsibility of government to ensure access to education, government inaction and prohibitive bureaucracy has prevented many people from attending a college or university. Recognizing the unique relationship of Indigenous people to the government and the

increased barriers faced by Indigenous students, the Federation developed a comprehensive provincial campaign to expand on the national Students for Justice campaign. The campaign supports national work done through the Federation's National Aboriginal Caucus and sets out a provincial focus and lobbying strategy to be coordinated through the Aboriginal Students Constituency. The goals included in the campaign are:

- *Remove the cap on increases to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and ensure that every eligible First Nations learner is provided adequate funding, including addressing the backlog of applicants previously denied funding.*
- *Extend eligibility to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program to Métis and non-Status First Nations students.*
- *Entrench the right of Aboriginal control over Aboriginal Education.*
- *Lobby for a provincial refund to First Nations Band Councils to reimburse the funds that tuition fee increases have eroded from the Post-Secondary Student Support Program since 2006.*
- *Lobby for the creation of a new provincial grant for Métis students.*
- *Lobby for equitable and fully resourced primary and secondary education in every First Nations community.*
- *Call on all levels of government to invest in measures to stop the disproportionate violence faced by Indigenous women and to address the missing and murdered women cases that remain unsolved.*
- *Raise awareness about and combat the disproportionate criminalization and incarceration of Indigenous people and support restorative justice initiatives.*
- *Lobby for stable and equitable funding for Ontario's First Nations post-secondary education institutions.*
- *Support a moratorium on all resource extraction in areas where a land claim is currently in process and on sites with spiritual significance.*

The Students for Justice campaign will be incorporated into the current Campaigns Guide and be included in future Guides to highlight the need for the provincial government to work with the federal government to ensure access, equity and justice for Indigenous people.

**g. United for Equity**

In addition to several issues-based campaigns challenging discrimination and oppression, the Federation continues to work to promote equity and barrier-free access to post-secondary education for all. Recognizing the need for materials promoting equity on a range of issues, a series of equity buttons were previously created to augment constituency-based work happening at the provincial and local levels. Six buttons were created that include different messages: United for Equity, Challenge Sexism, Challenge Racism, Challenge Ableism, Challenge Homophobia and Challenge Transphobia. Since then, a number of locals requested additional materials to create visibility for equity issues. In order to respond to this demand, six posters were created for each issue and included the button logo and quick facts about some of the socio-economic indicators of inequity for each form of oppression. This included facts about employment, wages, violence, literacy and other factors. The posters are currently being finalized and will be ready for distribution in January 2012.

**2. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

**a. National Lobby Days**

Each year, the Federation's national organization organizes a week of intensive lobbying with parliamentarians. From October 24 -27, students from across Canada went to Ottawa to participate in national lobby days where meetings were held with more than 150 members on Parliament Hill. A document called *Public Education for the Public Good* was updated from last year and made five demands of the federal government. The first was for the government to enact a national vision for post-secondary education that would include increasing funding

## Page 8 – Campaigns and Government Relations Report

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario

Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

---

equity to the provinces to keep tuition fees constant. The second was to shift existing tax credits to upfront grants and eliminating the need to loan money to students through the National Student Loan Service Program. The third demand was for more money to be dedicated to the Tri-granting Councils and the Canada Graduate Scholarship for graduate student support. The call for the removal of the two per cent cap on the PSSSP was the fourth demand, followed by the call for more money to be flowed to Statistics Canada for the collection of post-secondary education statistics as the fifth demand.

During the lobby week, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, National Executive Representative Krisna Saravanamuttu, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and representatives from Locals 1, 24, 27, 32, 41, 47, 68, 78, 82, 92, 98, 107, 109 and 110 met with Members of Parliament and Senators about the recommendations in *Public Education for the Public Good*. The response from all parties was generally positive.

### **b. Ontario Speech from the Throne**

On November 22, Lieutenant Governor David Onley presented the Speech from the Throne, opening the first session of the Legislative Assembly since the 2011 Ontario election. The Speech occurred during the Federation's National General Meeting and Queer and Trans Commissioner Rodney Diverlus represented the Federation at Queen's Park. The Federation was given an invitation to attend from New Democratic Party leader Andrea Horwath and was able to sit in the house and attend the reception following the Speech. The Speech contained no new promises and re-iterated the Premier's desire to implement the tuition fee grant. Unfortunately, the speech referred to the grant as a tuition fee reduction of 30 per cent – both claims of which are untrue. There was significant media coverage on the Throne Speech in Northern Ontario and Northern Region Commissioner Mike Snodden was interviewed extensively.

### **c. Glen Murray, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities**

On November 15, Federation representatives met with newly-appointed Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Glen Murray. The meeting was Murray's first with any post-secondary education stakeholder. Chairperson Sandy Hudson, National Executive Representative Krisna Saravanamuttu, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam raised students' concerns about the new tuition grant, the proposal for three new undergraduate teaching-only campuses and other promises made during the election. Murray agreed to establish monthly meetings with the Federation and asked for advice on a variety of aspects of the post-secondary education sector. During the meeting, Murray explained that implementation of the grant for January will be rocky and it is likely the case that students who do not receive OSAP will not get their grant until April. There will be more time before the launch of the grant in full, in Fall 2012, for students to advise on how the grant should be implemented to ensure the widest possible reach for students.

### **d. Yasir Naqvi, Liberal Party President and MPP for Ottawa-Centre**

Yasir Naqvi is the President of the Ontario Liberal Party and the MPP for Ottawa-Centre. In the last session of parliament, Naqvi served a motion in collaboration with NDP MPP Rosario Marchese to protect students' unions' right to organize. The bill died as a result of the prorogation of the Legislative Assembly for the Ontario election. Before the 2011 Ontario election, Naqvi committed to re-serve the motion if he were re-elected. On November 28, Federation representatives met with Naqvi to discuss the re-introduction of the CUSA Act and other issues that students were concerned with. Naqvi expressed his commitment to re-introducing the legislation as soon as it makes sense and Federation representatives agreed that more discussions were required to determine when this would be. Naqvi said he was open to re-introducing the legislation again with a member of the NDP. He also suggested that support be solicited from the Progressive Conservatives to have the Bill co-served with them as well. Chairperson Sandy Hudson talked about the issues that students have with the Liberal promises for the tuition fee grant and agreed to send more information to Naqvi's office for review. He thanked Federation representatives for the welcome he received at the Ontario General Meeting in August and

offered to present on the CUSA Act again if necessary. Federation representatives indicated that there was interest in re-introducing the Private Member's Bill during the second session of the Legislature. Naqvi has been in touch with Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Glen Murray to assess his level of support for the Bill. Murray had expressed support to Federation representatives in the meeting held on November 15.

**e. Ontario New Democratic Party Caucus**

On November 16, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam met with Director of Operations Dan O'Brien and Researcher Michael Polanyi from the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP). The meeting was called to introduce the NDP to students' issues post-election and to discuss ways in which the Federation can work with the party to hold the government to account. NDP staff committed to assisting with the petition delivery to the Legislative Assembly on December 5.

**f. Lisa MacLeod, PC Education Critic and Deputy Caucus Leader**

On November 28, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam met with Lisa MacLeod, Progressive Conservative (PC) Critic for Education and Deputy Leader of the PC caucus. The meeting was requested by MacLeod who had been tasked with gathering a wide range of experiences from various stakeholders about education. The meeting was very positive and Federation representatives talked about their concerns with the current Liberal approach to post-secondary education. Federation representatives talked about ways in which the PC caucus could help support students, including asking for their support for the Drop Fees petition demands and action on starting to defund the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. MacLeod was also interested in the CUSA Act, legislation that would support students' unions' right to organize and suggested ways in which to engage PC members. Since MacLeod is focused on primary and secondary education, she was also alarmed to hear how some people within the sector are advocating to implement learning how to apply for student loans in elementary school. She agreed that normalizing student debt in this way is problematic and that the real solution lies in improving affordability.

**g. Rob Leone, PC Critic for Training, Colleges and Universities**

The Progressive Conservative (PC) Party has appointed a new person to the critic role for Training, Colleges and Universities. Rob Leone is a professor at the Brantford campus of Wilfrid Laurier University and is an MPP from Cambridge. The Federation has established a time to meet with Leone on December 5 after the delivery of petitions.

**h. Martin Hicks, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**

On November 18, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam met with Martin Hicks, Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Federation representatives expressed the concerns of students regarding Liberal plans to introduce new satellite campuses and the new tuition grant that the Ministry was directed to implement for 2012. Federation representatives explained how many students would not be eligible for the grant, the fact that the implementation of the grant will require high administrative costs and how there are long-term implications of the grant on the post-secondary education system in the province.

Hicks was receptive to the concerns brought up by Federation representatives and noted them. He also gave an update on the Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) and said that all of the institutions recently submitted MYAAs for the 2010-11 year. He said that institutions are required to post the MYAAs on their websites, but that we should contact him if institutions are not complying with this disclosure policy.

## Page 10 – Campaigns and Government Relations Report

Executive Committee Meeting, Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario

Friday, October 14, 2011 to Friday, December 2, 2011

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### **i. Credit Transfer Steering Committee**

On November 7, Researcher Mike Yam participated in a meeting for a working group that was struck within the Credit Transfer Steering Committee that specifically focused on university to college credit transfer. During the meeting, Ministry staff briefed the group on the progress of the framework for university-college credit transfer including the general principles and criteria, inclusions/exclusions and further research. Ministry staff outlined the inclusion of advanced standing programs (transfer into regular undergraduate/basic certificate, diploma or degree program) and fast-track/accelerated programs. However, collaborative programs were excluded from the framework. Yam identified that collaborative programs – which are defined as being developed and delivered jointly by university and college partners – should be treated in a similar way as single college and university programs. Ministry staff said that this may be feasible and the inclusion of collaborative programs would be investigated.

### **j. Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Mental Health Initiatives**

On November 29, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam met with staff at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, including Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch, Martin Hicks. Hicks and his colleagues outlined how the provincial government is engaging in mental health initiatives that include multiple ministries. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is involved since some of the funding for these initiatives will go to post-secondary institutions. The largest chunk of funding will go to institutions in the form of special purpose grants, which will likely go toward special projects, staff and front-line initiatives on campuses. A smaller amount of funding would go toward existing services such as help hotlines, as well as specific initiatives like conferences and policy development.

Federation representatives explained students' priorities with regard to mental health and emphasized that enhanced support for students is beneficial, but that students need to be included in the decision-making processes for the implementation of such programs. Federation representatives also explained that institutions need to address the systemic issues that affect students' mental health, including the high cost of education, the stress of balancing school and other commitments, life circumstances and how campus environments can be alienating or daunting for many students.

### **k. Student Pathways in Higher Education Conference**

On January 26-27, 2012, the College University Consortium Council (CUCC) is hosting a conference on student pathways in Ontario. On November 30, Researcher Mike Yam participated in a conference call with Maureen Callahan, Executive Director of CUCC, to discuss the inclusion of a student panel during the conference. Yam gave Callahan feedback regarding the scope and nature of the panel. Callahan invited the Federation to hold a seat on the panel, where students will provide perspectives on issues around credit transfer and what improvements can be made within the system.

### **l. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario**

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) is an arms-length body that promotes research into various aspects of Ontario's higher education system. HEQCO undertakes research and publishes its findings in reports and books, while providing policy recommendations to the provincial government. The Federation holds a seat on HEQCO's research consultation group, which meets regularly throughout the year, but it has not met in this reporting period.

#### **i. Conference on Financial Literacy**

HEQCO contacted Chairperson Sandy Hudson to present at a conference that they held on November 3 and 4 regarding financial literacy. HEQCO surmises that low-income and underrepresented groups lack

the financial literacy necessary to adequately finance a post-secondary education. HEQCO asked the Federation to take part, given the research we undertook to produce *The Racialized Impact of Tuition Fees* report.

Although the Federation rejects HEQCO's claim that financial literacy is a barrier preventing marginalized groups' access to post-secondary education, Chairperson Sandy Hudson presented on a panel at the conference and discussed why that claim is false and further marginalizing. The Federation is continuing to undertake research to debunk this claim.

The Federation's presentation was well received by conference attendees and Hudson was referenced in almost every panel discussion and presentation at the conference. The Federation's presentation opened the door for more emboldened critiques of the idea of financial literacy and one keynote speaker even rejected the idea outright. The conference was attended by member local representatives from Locals 41, 98 and 109.