

CAMPAIGNS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS REPORT
Executive Committee Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario
Saturday, December 4 to Friday, April 8, 2010

1. CAMPAIGNS

a. Education is a Right

The Federation launched a new website as part of the national Education is a Right campaign, calling for a federal post-secondary education act and increased, dedicated federal funding for colleges and universities. On February 23, a media advisory was issued by the Federation nationally, and an email will be sent to students who had their photos taken to direct them online to the website.

The new campaign website is interactive and can be used by member locals across the country. The website hosts over five thousand photos of students holding written messages to government that were collected since September, and allows for more photos to be uploaded by individual users. Students' messages are the stories of sacrifices that they or their families have made in order to access post-secondary education. The website allows for the photos and messages to be sorted by institution. The website provides a compelling visual representation of the individual students who are negatively affected by current post-secondary education policy.

b. Students for Sustainability

Bottled Water Free Day

For the second year in a row, the Federation has worked with coalition partners including the Sierra Youth Coalition, Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Polaris Institute to organize Bottled Water Free Day at campuses and workplaces across the country. The day raises awareness about the environmental impacts of bottled water and the need to defend public water resources and infrastructure. To date, nearly 100 municipalities, four municipal associations (including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities), eight school boards, 12 university campuses and countless workplaces have restricted the sale or distribution of bottled water.

Provincially, a media release was issued calling on the Government of Ontario to phase out the sale of bottled water in government facilities. In April 2010, Nova Scotia became the first province to ban the sale of bottled water in all provincial facilities that had safe, drinkable water. This move would limit the environmental footprint of public facilities while potentially saving the government millions of dollars that are unnecessarily spent on bottled water at meetings and events.

On March 1, the Federation was invited to present on the Bottled Water Free campaign at the University of Toronto. The presentation was part of a class taught by Dr. Wesley Crichlow, a member of the Federation's Task Force on Campus Racism. The class was examining the environmental and ethical issues that are raised by the commodification of public drinking water by the bottled water industry. Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto reviewed the Federation's Students for Sustainability campaign, and other right-to-water initiatives, such as the Empty Glass for Water campaign. The students in the class were excited about the campaign and discussed ways in which to implement outreach strategies into their grade-school classrooms.

c. We Ride

Last year, students in Toronto won the first-ever post-secondary education student discount for the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the public transportation system for the Greater Toronto Area. Students won a discounted monthly transit pass for \$99, saving students \$22 per month.

Following a change of municipal government in Toronto, several transit service cuts and eligibility changes were proposed early in 2011. For consideration were cuts to 48 bus routes, scrapping the Transit City light rail expansion plan, removing part-time students from eligibility for the post-secondary education discount, and adding private career college students to eligibility. The Federation worked with community organizations including TTC Riders, the Toronto Environmental Alliance and One Toronto to organize student deputations at the community budget consultations and TTC meetings.

Student representatives made deputations at budget consultations on January 19 and 20. Deputations were also made at the February 2 and March 1 meetings of the TTC, during which bus service cuts, scrapping the Transit City plan, and post-secondary education discount eligibility changes were considered. A rally was held outside the February meeting and over 100 deputations were made, the largest number at a TTC meeting ever. Despite the community outcry, all the proposed changes were passed at the Commission. Locals who participated in organizing against these changes included 19, 24, 68, 92, 97, 98, 99 and 105.

At the University of Toronto-Mississauga, Local 109 recently negotiated an agreement with Mississauga Transit to add a summer U-Pass to the existing eight month U-Pass provided during the regular school year. The summer U-Pass would cost students \$85, and the eight-month U-Pass during the fall and spring terms costs \$130. The U-Pass decision was put to the membership in a referendum in late November and over 50 percent of eligible voters cast a ballot. Ninety-four percent of full-time student ballots cast were in favour of the renewal of the eight-month U-Pass and 93 percent in favour for the summer U-Pass. Part-time students were eligible to vote for the summer U-Pass and 89 percent voted in favour of adopting the new U-Pass. This represents a mandate of 93 percent approval for the U-Pass and a victory for student access to affordable transportation.

Following the 2010 municipal election in Ottawa, members from locals 1, 41, 78 and 94 worked to ensure that the U-Pass program was renewed for the 2011-12 academic year. Member local representatives held several meetings with city councillors and OC Transpo representatives and lobbied for the continuation of the pilot U-Pass program at the current rate. An email program was hosted by local 1 in order to allow members to email City councillors directly and highlight the widespread support for the program. On February 24, representatives from locals 1, 41, 78 and 94, as well as Eastern Fieldworker Federico Carvajal, made deputations to the Ottawa Transit Commission highlighting the benefits of the program for students and for the city as a whole. The Transit Commission recommended renewal of the U-Pass program for the 2011-12 academic year at the current rate of \$145 per semester. On March 9, the City of Ottawa gave the final approval for the program as part of the 2011 budget. Member locals 1, 41, 78 and 94 will continue to work with OC Transpo and the Ottawa Transit Commission to successfully implement the U-Pass program during the upcoming academic year and continue the co-branding of the U-Pass with the ISIC.

d. Students for Better Child Care

i. Postcard

As part of the Federation's Students for Better Child Care campaign, a postcard was developed in collaboration with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. The postcard focuses on the need for greater investment in childcare, the fact that part-time students and part-time workers are not eligible for child care subsidies and the cutbacks and closure of many on-campus child care centres. Closures lead to fewer opportunities for co-op placements for early childhood education (ECE) programs and less available child care options for students, faculty and staff at colleges and universities. The postcard calls on the Minister of Education, Leona Dombrowsky, to:

- Invest in affordable, accessible, full-time and barrier-free public child care services on college and university campuses;
- Base child care subsidy eligibility on income, regardless of study or work status; and
- Require that colleges and universities with ECE programs run campus-based child care centres.

The postcards have space where supporters can draw their own image, or children at child care centres can draw multiple postcards for others to sign. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care used the base design for their main postcard to keep a consistent look. The Students for Better Child Care postcards were distributed to member locals during the January Ontario General Meeting and mailed to those locals that were not in attendance. The postcard is also available on the cfsontario.ca website.

i. Rally

On March 8, International Women's Day, a rally for national child care was held on the Ryerson University campus. The rally was organized by ECE students from Ryerson with support from the Federation, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and Locals 24, 92 and 105. The rally brought around two hundred people, who marched to Yonge and Dundas Square, a busy intersection, where participants did the hokey pokey during pedestrian crossings. Students and representatives from Locals 19, 24, 92 and 105 were in attendance. Financial Coordinator Jennifer Stacey, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Campaigns Coordinator Lauren Snowball attended on behalf of the Federation.

e. Anti-Homophobia and Anti-Transphobia

Switch it Up Workshop

As part of the Federation's anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia campaign, the Federation works with the LGBT Youth Line, an organization that runs a peer counseling phone line for queer and trans youth and that runs anti-oppression campaigns. The Federation partnered with the Youth Line to develop a daylong workshop for queer and trans post-secondary education students and allies to address homophobia and transphobia and to gather information. The workshop was part of a broader initiative organized by Youth Line, Switch it Up, in which they do similar workshops in multiple communities. Information about this can be found on their website www.youthline.ca/switchitup. The workshop

explored storytelling and identity, space and safety and what homophobia and transphobia look, sound and feel like.

The workshop was held on Monday January 31, directly following the Canadian University Queer Services Conference and brought together about 15 queer and trans students from across the province. The Federation's Women Commissioner, Danielle Sandhu and Queer and Trans Commissioner, Brea Hutchinson, were also in attendance. The information gathered at the workshop will be used to develop materials to raise awareness about and challenge homophobia and transphobia, as well as to provide the basis for recommendations for creating safe campuses for queer and trans students.

f. United for Equity

As part of the Federation's ongoing work to challenge all forms of discrimination, a series of equity buttons were created to augment constituency-based work happening at the provincial and local levels. Six buttons were created: United for Equity, Challenge Sexism, Challenge Racism, Challenge Ableism, Challenge Homophobia and Challenge Transphobia. The buttons were mailed out to member locals in late January. Information about equity campaigns will be included in the Federation's Ontario content in local handbooks obtained through the Federation's Handbook service, to be received in advance of fall orientation 2011.

g. Election Strategy 2011

In February, Campus Intercept was awarded the contract to administer the student-focused campaign of Elections Ontario. Campus Intercept is the youth-focused marketing agency that the Federation has worked closely with in the past for other Elections Ontario campaigns. Federation representatives have continued to meet with representatives at Campus Intercept to dovetail potential messaging of each organization's campaign. On December 14, Federation representatives met with representatives of Campus Intercept to discuss initial campaigns strategies and the ideas that were raised at the December Ontario Executive Committee Meeting. Representatives met again on January 31, and had a more concrete discussion about how to move the campaign forward, and what messaging should be used to ensure that the two campaigns are complimentary. Federation representatives remain in contact with representatives at Campus Intercept as both campaigns continue to develop.

The Federation's 2011 Ontario Election Strategy includes developing materials to undertake outreach to students and community members at the end of the winter term as well as during the summer. These materials will include a registration sign-up sheet that students can fill out to be reminded in the fall term to register to vote, a bookmark, a series of posters, and a series of short animated videos presenting provocative information regarding post-secondary education and the election. This round of materials will engage students and community members with short sound bites and the slogan, "October 6: Take it Over." Later materials will elaborate on the issues at stake and adopt more direct messaging as the election approaches.

2. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

a. Ontario Budget

i. Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and Finance

Each year, the Federation prepares a brief for the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and Finance. The committee holds public hearings, and Federation representatives

present to the members of the Committee, which includes Members of Provincial Parliament from all parties. The Federation released its pre-budget submission, *Funding Not Fees*, on February 1 and Chairperson Sandy Hudson and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto presented the submission to the Committee. The submission incorporated the most pressing student demands while recognizing that these submissions could form the basis of a provincial party's election platform. Recognizing the discourse around constrained spending, the Federation's document recommended that money be dedicated toward students' priorities from many ministries, not just Training, Colleges and Universities. The recommendations were as follows:

Tuition Fees

- Immediately implement a province-wide tuition fee freeze. Cost: \$34 million
- Create an envelope of funding for graduate students that would reduce tuition fees during the independent research and thesis writing stages of their degrees. Cost: \$60.5 million to institute a 25 per cent reduction in 'continuing fees'

Student Financial Aid

- Reallocate provincial tax credits and expand existing back-end grants to form a comprehensive system of upfront, needs-based grants. Cost: \$0
- Extend OSAP loan eligibility to part-time students. Cost: \$800,000
- Reduce OSAP loan interest rates to below prime. Cost: \$1.3 million
- Restructure the Student Access Guarantee from an institutionally-funded program into a government-funded, needs-based program. Cost: \$136 million
- Introduce 1,000 new Ontario Graduate Scholarships. Cost: \$10 million

Funding

- Increase per-student funding by two per cent. Cost: \$117 million
- Improve the student-faculty ratio by hiring more tenure-track faculty. Cost: \$120 million for 1,500 new net faculty members

Ministry of Research and Innovation

- Develop a strategy for graduate students to receive full-time-equivalent funding from the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Cost: \$40 million for a 5 per cent increase in full-time-equivalent funding

- Increase funding for MRI programs that support university faculty and students, and research undertaken at post-secondary institutions. Cost: \$12 million: \$10 million to double funding for the Early Researcher Awards program, \$2 million to triple funding for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship program

Ministry of infrastructure

- Inject funding to address the backlog in deferred maintenance at colleges and universities. Cost: \$300 million for 15 per cent of the existing backlog
- Develop a strategy and provide funding to make public transit more accessible for post-secondary education students. Cost: \$0

Ministry of Energy

- Provide funding for energy retrofitting of deferred maintenance at colleges and universities. Cost: \$100 million for 5 per cent of existing deferred maintenance backlog
- Create a research fund for green and sustainable projects at colleges and universities. Cost: \$10 million

Ministry of Health and Long-term Care

- Provide coverage for international students through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). Cost: \$54 million

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

- Provide a refund to First Nations Band Councils to reimburse the funds that tuition fee increases since 2005 have eroded from the Post-Secondary Student Support Program. Cost: \$4 million
- Create a new grant for Métis students. Cost: \$500,000

Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry

- Provide funding to expand on-campus housing at Ontario's northern colleges and universities. Cost: \$10 million

Members of the Committee responded with several questions about student financial assistance and reforms that have previously been recommended by the Federation. Many members commented on how well-researched the document was. *Funding Not Fees* was distributed to staff within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and to coalition partners within the post-secondary education sector.

ii. Pre-budget Announcement

The Federation was made aware that a pre-budget announcement

would be made at Ryerson University on March 28. Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and representatives from Locals 24 and 105 were present for the announcement, made at Ryerson's information kiosk for new students. Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities John Milloy addressed the press conference and announced that they intend to increase post-secondary capacity by 60,000 student seats between next fall and 2015. To do this, they committed \$309 million to the system. Federation representatives told Global TV, Radio-Canada/CBC, the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Citizen and the Globe and Mail that they remained hopeful that the announcement was a sign that post-secondary education would feature prominently in the budget, released a day later.

On March 29, the Ontario Government tabled the 2011 Ontario Budget. The Budget was released to the Legislative Assembly at 4:00 and contained no new spending commitments for post-secondary education. There was a mention of their support for the credit transfer initiative, the online learning initiative and the space allocation that had been announced the day before, but no further commitments were made that benefit students. The Federation released a statement that was critical of the Budget for not addressing the high cost of tuition fees or student debt whatsoever. The Federation's ally organizations were similarly concerned, and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations reaffirmed their call for a tuition fee freeze. Unfortunately other voices in the sector were extremely positive about receiving so little, including the Council of Ontario Universities and Colleges Ontario. The Federation received wide-spread media coverage on the day of the budget and journalists responded positively to students' message.

b. Credit transfer

i. Announcement

On January 24, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities John Milloy announced his government's intention to create a credit transfer recognition and facilitation system by phasing in improvements over several years. The announcement, made at George Brown College, included the dedication of \$73 million over the next five years. Students welcomed the announcement but made it clear that they had called for \$75 million for next year alone. The reduced funding will mean that the system will have a reduced capacity to help students move from institution to institution or program to program while maintaining as many credits as have already been earned as possible. Chairperson Sandy Hudson, National Executive Representative Hamid Osman, Researcher Mike Yam, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and representatives from Locals 24, 68, 92 and 105 were in attendance.

ii. Announcement Website Steering Committee

The Federation has been invited by Minister Milloy to advise on the creation of a new website for the province-wide, credit transfer system, called the credit transfer web advisory group. The purpose of the group is to advise MTCU on how the system should be established online, which includes the creation of a user-friendly website for students. The Federation is a member of the group, along with other stakeholders in the sector. The group is to meet on a regular basis throughout the development of the

website. On March 9, Researcher Mike Yam attended the first web advisory group meeting, where the terms of reference and goals of the group were discussed. Members of the group reviewed the potential scope of the credit transfer website and agreed on a timeline for the first phase of the website development. The first phase is to be completed by the end of August, which includes the basic elements of a credit transfer portal.

On Wednesday, March 30, another meeting of the Steering Committee was held. Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto attended the meeting on behalf of the Federation. The meeting identified what will be possible to have been built by August and what aspects of the website should be waited on. It was agreed that the focus of the website initially will be to provide information for current college and university students, and to exclude programs that may be jointly administered by a college and a university, but that are not actually credit transfer programs. The Federation's representative identified that students will expect there to be information for students transferring from any type of institution to another, and that the government should include information on the website even if it is not positive. While there was a commitment to raise this possibility with the staff who are building the back end of the website, there are no guarantees that the website will provide information about university to university credit transfer.

ii. Provincial Steering Committee

The Provincial Steering Committee established to inform the creation of a new credit transfer system has not met during this reporting period. The Federation has two representatives on this committee: Researcher Mike Yam and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto. The next meeting of the Provincial Steering Committee is scheduled to be on June 8.

c. Public Opinion Polling

At the August Annual General Meeting it was resolved that the Federation would undertake public opinion polling to gauge public opinion on issues that are important to students. The Federation approached the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) to undertake this polling in time to influence the 2011 Ontario Budget at the end of March, and to see which issues resonated with Ontarians and which did not. The poll was conducted during the first two weeks of January over the telephone, and sampled enough Ontarians to allow for regional results.

The Federation and OCUFA held four regional press conferences. The first press conference was held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on January 27, where regional results for eastern Ontario were released. The session was hosted by pollster Andre Turcotte, Ontario Graduate Caucus Chairperson Kimalee Phillip and OCUFA President Mark Langer, with Eastern Ontario Fieldworker Federico Carvajal in attendance. The second press conference was held at McMaster University in Hamilton on February 9 to release the regional results for the 905 area. Pollster Andre Turcotte, Chairperson Sandy Hudson and OCUFA President hosted the session, with Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto in attendance. The third press conference was held at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo on March 2 to release the regional results for south-western Ontario. Pollster Andre

Turcotte, Chairperson Sandy Hudson and OCUFA President hosted the session, with Researcher Mike Yam in attendance. The fourth press conference was held at Laurentian University in Sudbury on March 14 to release the regional results for Northern Ontario. Pollster Andre Turcotte, Local 30 President Samantha Pitzel and Local 88 Vice-President Chloé Hallée-Théoret presented the findings, with Northern Ontario Fieldworker Christine Bourque in attendance.

Media were present at each press conference and each of the regional releases garnered local print and radio coverage. The full, province-wide report was released to the Canadian Press on March 20 and attracted wide, mainstream media coverage.

d. Estimates Committee

Every two years, each Minister is required to appear before the Estimates Committee of the Legislative Assembly. During October 2010, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities appeared before the committee. In previous years, the questions posed at the Estimates Committee have helped to form critical pieces of research that are produced during a year. The Federation supplied dozens of questions to both the New Democratic Party and to the Progressive Conservatives that were posed to Minister Milloy. By early December, the time period had passed for when responses to questions posed at the Estimates Committee should be responded to. The Federation was contacted by staff from the NDP to say that Milloy had missed the deadline but they were unsure what this meant. During early January and throughout February, the Federation has been in touch with staff at the offices of the post-secondary education critics to see what options exist to compel Milloy to respond to the questions posed to him.

e. NDP Meeting January 25

In November 2010, the Federation submitted to the New Democratic Party a set of recommendations that could be implemented into their election platform. On January 25, staff from the NDP requested another meeting with the Federation to further flesh out recommendations, estimated program costs and to hear about the feedback that Federation representatives had heard about the policy decisions of the current Liberal government. Chairperson Sandy Hudson and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator met with staff from the NDP caucus and election platform development committee and explained the recommendations that were made in the November 2010 document, with a focus on the need to freeze and reduce tuition fees, lower student debt and create a post-secondary education election platform that drastically departs from the status quo.

f. Right to Organize Legislation

At the January Semi-Annual General Meeting, members expressed their commitment to the Federation's long-standing fight for students' unions right to organize legislation. Since the meeting, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto has been working with staff of Member of Provincial Parliament Rosario Marchese's office to have the Federation's draft 2007 legislation examined by lawyers and written such that it can be passed into a piece of legislation. At the beginning of April, staff from Member of Provincial Parliament Yasir Naqvi's office contacted the Federation to say that they too had drafted right to organize legislation. They had been working with representatives from Local 1 to develop their own Private Member's Bill and had planned to serve it before the end of April. The Federation met with Naqvi's staff on Wednesday, April 6 to discuss the draft piece of legislation and the possibility of the Liberals and the

NDP working together to bring forward a Private Member's Bill. The draft legislation would protect students' unions right to their membership fees, entrench certain basic transparency requirements and recognize their autonomy from the administration. Both the Liberal and NDP drafts borrowed heavily from Federation documents and draft pieces of legislation.

g. Meeting with AJ Tibando

On March 9, Federation representatives met with AJ Tibando in advance of the 2011 Ontario Budget. The meeting focused on the Federation's Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. The meeting provided a useful opportunity to find out where in the negotiations the government is with institutions for the new set of Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) and to talk about the recommendations that the Federation has made to improve MYAAs since they were first created in 2006. Tibando also asked questions on which assumptions the Federation's cost estimates were based and asked representatives to identify ways in which policy could be improved that may have not been included. Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam talked about the need to create a new funding framework that allows for differential fees to be charged based on program or year of study. There was also a great deal of discussion about how the government would start formulating its post-secondary platform for the Ontario 2011 Election.

h. Meeting with Maxim Jean-Louis, Special Advisor to the Minister on the Ontario Online Institute

In the March 2010 Ontario Budget, the provincial government announced the creation of an Ontario Online Institute. Following the Federation's December 2010 submission to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities – in coalition with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and Canadian Union of Public Employees-Ontario (CUPE-Ontario) – the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities John Milloy appointed a special advisor on the Ontario Online Institute. On February 28, Chairperson Sandy Hudson, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto, and Researcher Mike Yam met with the special advisor, Maxim Jean-Louis, to discuss the potential Online Institute from the perspective of students.

During the meeting, Federation representatives cautioned that an Ontario Online Institute should not be a substitute for real investments to the post-secondary education system in order to increase access for students. Federation representatives emphasized that an Online Institute does not necessarily address the upfront, financial barriers to post-secondary education, but that any investments in online learning should build on existing infrastructure in Ontario. The special advisor met with a range of stakeholders between February and March, and will put together recommendations for Minister Milloy on the establishment of the Online Institute.

i. Ontario Liberal Party Policy Convention

From February 4 to 6, the Ontario Liberal Party held a short policy convention in Ottawa. Because it is supposed to be the last major conference before the 2011 Ontario election, Federation representatives attended the conference as observers. The conference was poorly organized and all of the sessions were determined to be closed to observers at the last minute, including

breakfast and lunch. Chairperson Sandy Hudson and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto attended all parts of the weekend that were open, including a hospitality suite hosted by the Ontario Teachers' Federation. There, Federation representatives met with staff of various government ministries and Members of Provincial Parliament.

On Saturday night of the convention, the Premier's dinner was also open for attendance for observers. The speech given by Dalton McGuinty painted a rosy picture of how well the Liberal party's policies have delivered Ontario through a recession. McGuinty received great applause for the fact that no days were lost to teachers' strikes under his government's mandate, and compared this record to Mike Harris. He unfortunately missed how many days of school have been lost in Ontario colleges and universities under his government's mandate, but there was no question and answer period to raise such an issue.

j. Progressive Conservative Policy Convention

The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario scheduled its convention from April 27 to 29 in Niagara Falls. The Federation's Chairperson Sandy Hudson and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto registered to attend the conference. However, as of April 6, no information has been communicated to the Federation about the conference. During the release of the 2011 Ontario Budget, a staff person in Tim Hudak's office told Federation representatives that there may be a plan to reschedule the timing of the convention to enable Progressive Conservatives to campaign for the Conservative Party during the spring federal election, and to watch the Royal Wedding. He said that hearing nothing should be considered a sign that the conference will be rescheduled.

k. Academica Group Toronto Summit 2011

Academica Group is a private company that engages in research related to the post-secondary education sector. On Thursday, April 14, they are hosting a one-day conference in Mississauga called the Toronto Summit 2011. The purpose of the summit is to examine marketing and leadership strategies within colleges and universities. The Federation has been in touch with Academica Group and Chairperson Sandy Hudson and Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto have been invited to attend the conference.

l. HEQCO

i. HEQCO Face-to-Face with Tim O'Neill Event

On December 6, Communications and Government Relations Coordinator Nora Loreto and Researcher Mike Yam attended the HEQCO-organized event entitled, "Face-to-Face with Tim O'Neill: the real story behind his Report on Nova Scotia's University System," featuring Tim O'Neill. O'Neill is the former Executive Vice President and Chief Economist of the Bank of Montreal who was contracted by Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter, to conduct a review of the university system in Nova Scotia. O'Neill's report made several regressive policy suggestions, including the complete deregulation of tuition fees and advocated for large increases in student debt. The report also called on further ties between post-secondary institutions and commercial interests. During the event, O'Neill spoke about his recommendation to deregulate tuition fees, how raising tuition fees won't impact accessibility, how increasing loan limits will make education more affordable and his desire to push the idea of

"commercializable knowledge." During the discussion period, Federation representatives pushed back against the idea that increasing tuition fees and student debt can make education more accessible for students, while debunking many of O'Neill's ideological arguments for deregulation in the post-secondary education system.

ii. HEQCO Research on Tuition Fees

On March 14, HEQCO released a report that argued that of the possibilities of how to fund universities and colleges in the future, there exists only one option as far as tuition fees are concerned: increase fees. The research was released just before the 2011 Ontario Budget and right after the Federation and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations' polling data demonstrated the wide public support that exists for lower tuition fees.

m. Higher Education Strategic Associates

The Higher Education Strategic Associates (HESA) is a private think-tank that was created by Alex Usher after his departure from the Education Policy Institute, an American for-profit research group that focuses on education policy. Usher invited Federation representatives to a round-table discussion on a paper that his group is writing, about the possibilities available to Canada through adopting reforms that are similar to those of the Bologna Process. The work undertaken by HESA so far was a preliminary environmental scan and a national survey of university students. Workshop participants were skeptical that a study focusing on the Ontario college and university systems should be so reliant on the attitudes of university students in and outside of Ontario, and questioned some of the methods of data collection presented. Communications and Government Relations Coordinator attended the session held on March 21, and expressed concern that questions such as "does a degree need to take four years?" and about why have private polytechnic institutions have had less success in the Canadian market than in other parts of the world. Representatives were present at the roundtable from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Colleges Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and the Provincial Quality Assessment Board.