

MANITOBAN

CFS 'war plans' discovered through e-mail error

Chelse McKee and Tessa Vanderhart, staff

UPDATED Feb. 6, 2008 5:15 p.m. with comments from CFS national chair Amanda Aziz, courtesy of William Wolfe-Wylie, CUP national bureau chief.

UPDATED Feb. 11, 2008 3:15 p.m., with clarifying changes to the lede and the removal of an untrue statement.

The B.C. chapter organizer of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)-BC hopes to have student executives, including UMSU executives, fly from across the country to promote "no" campaigns in three upcoming referenda in B.C. to leave the organization, according to the organization's referendum campaign plan, mistakenly forwarded to the CFS-BC listserv.

The "Referendum Campaign Plan and Tasklist," dated Jan. 23, 2008, contains the national student organization's plans to campaign against referenda to separate from CFS at Kwantlen Students' Association (March 3-7), Simon Fraser Students' Society (March 18-20), the University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society (March 18-20).

On Jan. 29, CFS-BC organizer Summer McFadyen attempted to e-mail the document to CFS national director of organizing Lucy Watson, but she mistakenly sent the document to the CFS-BC Executive Committee listserv.

The document lists more than 250 people by their affiliation with the CFS, most of whom are not B.C. residents.

Kwantlen Students' Association policy analyst Titus Gregory said that the people on the list will most likely be flown to B.C. to campaign for CFS in the referenda. Gregory said that he did not know whether CFS, students' unions, or individuals would be paying for the travel.

Amanda Aziz, national chairperson of the CFS, said that the document was authored by the B.C. wing of the CFS without the input from national office. She also said that there are yet no plans to fly anyone to B.C. to take part in the campaign.

"There has been no discussion about who is going to be attending," she said, adding that from past experience she knows that some people would express an interest in attending, though she would not speculate as to whether their flights would be subsidized by the organization.

"Outside ON Volunteers" listed in the document who are from Winnipeg include UMSU executives Garry Sran, Amanda Jonson, Rachel Heinrichs and Rachel Gotthilf. Graduate Students' Association office coordinator and former Brandon University Students' Union president Meeghan Gavin is also listed, as are CFS-MB researcher Michael Roy, and former UMSU staff Xiao Xiao.

"This is the first I've heard of it. This is the first that any of us here have heard of it," UMSU vice-president (advocacy) Heinrichs said. "It's obviously their campaign plan or campaign strategy. I guess it could be a wish list."

Further down in the "Outside ON" page, there is a category for "Hiring," in which Cathy Dawd is listed for local 103, UMSU.

"According to the document, the federation is planning on getting her hired at her local students' union. That's the

problem," said Gregory.

Names and student union local numbers were also listed under "hiring" for Douglas Students' Union, the Students' Unions of Vancouver Community College, and the Brandon University Students' Union.

Aziz said that the CFS has no authority over individual students unions or their hiring practices.

"These are Summer's notes for hiring," she said. "I don't know what that was."

The list of potential volunteers also includes former UWSA executives Sarah Amyot, Margaret Carlyle and Matt Gagner, as well as current UWSA president David Jacks and "Vinay I," or Vinay Iyer, UWSA vice-president (advocate).

Experienced CFS representatives, like former national chairs George Soule and Michael Conlon, have an A+ beside their name, while others listed also received letter grades. No Manitobans were rated. In addition, in a category marked notes, it was mentioned whether the specific person could speak or write another language.

The CFS bylaws state that any referendum to leave the organization must be pursued through CFS bylaws and not the student union's, Gregory said. The bylaws also stipulate that a four-person Referendum Oversight Committee (two from CFS, two from the local students' union) be struck to plan and regulate the referendum.

Lucy Watson is currently one of the CFS representatives to the Referendum Oversight Committee at KSU, SFSS and UVGS. Gregory said that "it appears that she is a key architect of the political strategy of the organization to prevent us from leaving the organization."

"It's a bit of a conflict of interest, and the KSA is considering demanding that Lucy Watson step down from the Referendum Oversight Committee," Gregory said.

Watson also served on the Referendum Oversight Committee during the University of Manitoba referendum to join CFS in 2006, and currently sits on SFU's committee.

The document also shows that the UMSU letter of support for CFS will be written by CFS president Amanada Aziz and "Watson." Lucy Watson, CFS national director of organizing, is also slated to write the letter from U of W, with UWSA president Carlyle. Other letters that Aziz will be preparing will be from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and Sierra Youth.

The document details the plans for the "yes to CFS" campaign. These plans include: "Determine rules for campaigning in residence . . . voicemail for residence students . . . determine names and contact info for all supportive students in residence . . . Propose to the radio station that A. Aziz be interviewed on a current affairs show."

The document outlines plans to purchase ads in community newspapers and free commuter dailies Metro and 24 Hours, as well as consider the value of public service announcements on radio and TV.

Under the headline "materials," plans to design and print a dozen different types of pamphlets, as well as several cloth banners, bus-pass covers, 500 International Student Identity (ISIC) cards, and possibly buttons. Another material to be prepared is "point/counter point speaking notes for YES campaigners."

Currently, members of UMSU pay \$5.66 each term (\$3.66 to CFS and \$2 to CFS-MB) for a total of more than \$300,000.

Kwantlen College students pay \$150,000 to CFS per year, and SFU students a collective \$430,000.

According to Aziz, the document as a whole is a normal part of campaigning. With three referenda coming up, she said, "I don't blame them for putting together a plan."