

# Draft Report of the *Ad hoc* Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students

## 1. Overview

This report was commissioned by the University of Toronto Students' Union Board of Directors in July 2015. It is intended to provide a detailed, critical review of the thirteen-year-old relationship between the UTSU and the Canadian Federation of Students. It is specifically not intended to take a position on whether the UTSU should leave the CFS, in part because the CFS by-laws require that any attempt to leave be initiated by UTSU members and not by the UTSU itself. However, this is not to say that the content of this report is purely factual—it is not. The facts are not neutral, and it would be irresponsible to, in the interest of impartiality, refrain from commenting on a plainly one-sided state of affairs. We have therefore chosen to, where appropriate, express measured criticism of particular elements of the UTSU-CFS relationship. But, above all else, we have endeavoured to be fair.

The CFS has existed in its current form since 1981, when the Association of Student Councils and the National Union of Students merged. It is the largest student organization in Canada, operating in every province except Québec. At the national level, the CFS is composed of two organizations that operate as one: the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS-National) and the Canadian Federation of Students-Services (CFS-Services). The former is a mass-membership advocacy organization, while the latter exists to provide services. At the provincial level, there is one organization—the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario—that performs both functions. The national organizations and the provincial organization are fully independent of each other, but it is not possible to be a member of one but not the other. A member of the CFS is called a “local”, and there are seventy-six locals across Canada. Each local is assigned a number, and the UTSU is Local 98 (although it is important to note that only St George students are members of Local 98—UTM students are members of Local 109).

The UTSU is one of five CFS locals at the University of Toronto. The others are the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students (Local 97), the Graduate Students' Union (Local 19), the Scarborough Campus Students' Union (Local 99), and the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (Local 109). The UTSU joined the CFS in 2003 after a controversial referendum. While 58% of UTSU members voted in favour of joining, the university administration ultimately concluded that the referendum had not been fair. Nonetheless, the UTSU has been a member of the CFS ever since.

For decades, the CFS has campaigned to advance the interests of students, its primary goal being the total abolition of tuition fees. To this end, it lobbies the federal and provincial governments, as well as university administrations. The CFS regularly appears before parliamentary committee, and CFS leaders often comment on student issues in the national media. More focused campaigns are led by the National Aboriginal Caucus and the National Graduate Caucus, which exist to provide institutional representation for indigenous students and graduate students, respectively. CFS-Ontario also has three permanent advocacy caucuses: the Northern Region Caucus, the Ontario Graduate Caucus, and the Francophone and Bilingual Caucus.

The CFS is a complicated network of not-for-profit corporations. The national organization is led by a twenty-person board of directors called the National Executive, which includes three officers. The same

twenty people serve as the board of both CFS-National and CFS-Services, although the two are distinct corporations. CFS-Ontario has a much larger board of directors called the Executive Committee. It is analogous to the National Executive but includes a representative from each Ontario local. Most major elections occur at semi-annual (twice-yearly) general meetings. National General Meetings are held in the Ottawa region while Ontario General Meetings are held in Toronto.

The remaining sections of this report will in, in sequence, analyze the mechanisms by which the CFS is governed, the advocacy work in which the CFS engages, and the services that the CFS provides.

## 2. Governance

This section will analyze the governing institutions of CFS-National, CFS-Services, and CFS-Ontario. The particular situations of the other provincial organizations—known as “provincial components”—are not directly relevant, but they are nonetheless summarized here:

- The British Columbia component is currently attempting to secede from the CFS. In January 2016, it voted to reconstitute itself as the British Columbia Federation of Students.
- The Alberta component is inactive.
- The Saskatchewan component recently reactivated, having ceased operations a number of years ago. It is not clear what became of the fees that were paid to CFS-Saskatchewan in the intervening five years.
- The Manitoba component is active.
- The Québec component was, in effect, expelled from the CFS in 2009, and the last local in the province seceded in 2015.
- The New Brunswick component is inactive.
- The Prince Edward Island component is inactive.
- The Nova Scotia component is active.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador component is active.

It is important to note that the CFS is a federation of students’ unions, not a federation of students. As a result, the UTSU is a member of the CFS, but individual students are not. This is true of the national organization and will soon be true of the provincial organization as well. So, rather than representing 500,000 students, CFS-National represents the representatives of 500,000 students. These representatives—the locals—meet semi-annually to transact business and, in particular, to elect the leaders of the CFS. At the national level, the three principal leaders are the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, and the Treasurer. All three are elected at the second National General Meeting, held at the end of the calendar year. At the provincial level, the three principal leaders are the Chairperson, the National Executive Representative, and the Treasurer, who are elected at the first Ontario General Meeting, held at the beginning of the calendar year (the role of the National Executive Representative is to represent Ontario on the National Executive).

At the UTSU, the Executives sit on the Board of Directors, but there is nonetheless a clear distinction between the executive body (the Executive Committee) and the body to which the executive body is responsible (the board). At the CFS, there is no such distinction, because the executive body—the National Executive or the provincial Executive Committee—is also the board. The result is a very powerful executive body. UTSU Executives are held accountable by a board that meets monthly and that can easily meet more frequently if needed. The same cannot be said of CFS executives, who face comparatively little oversight, let alone checks on their power. The annual elections are therefore of great consequence.

CFS general meetings operate according to the principle of “one local; one vote.” Each delegation, regardless of size, is able to cast exactly one vote. This principle is controversial, for a number of reasons. Firstly, proportional representation is an established element of federalism, and does not need to be further defended here. Secondly, a local as large as the UTSU will naturally be very diverse, and it is not possible for a single-vote delegation to properly represent the interests and lived experiences of so many students. Thirdly, the “one local; one vote” rule limits the ability of individual students to express themselves at general meetings, contributing to a culture of deference to leadership. While it is true that the CFS represents students’ unions rather than individual students, it should still be interested in what individuals students have to say. Nonetheless, the appeal of the “one local, one vote” rule is obvious: it empowers small colleges and universities (which account for the majority of locals) and allows the CFS to ignore discontent at large locals. The rule will not change, but we note it as a concern regardless.

The aforementioned culture of deference to leadership is also a concern. Many locals are, to one extent or another, represented at general meetings by long-serving members of staff. What, exactly, these members of staff do varies from local to local, but they are often student politicians who have “transitioned” to full-time employment at a students’ union. In the worst cases, they lead and speak for their respective delegations, such as by sitting on committees in place of elected student leaders. We take this phenomenon to be a problem. There is, in theory, nothing wrong with student politicians being hired by students’ unions, but the power wielded by these former politicians is worrying. It has led to the emergence of what could be described as a class of bureaucrats that is, in effect, senior to the elected student leaders. Indeed, the situation of the elected student leaders has been described as that of “bureaucrats in training”—they work for the staff, and the best of them will eventually become staff. It should be noted that what we are describing is a cultural problem within the CFS, not an institutional problem that can be solved by amending the formal governance mechanisms.

Another cultural problem is the environment at general meetings, which can be extremely hostile. Elections are normally uncontested, and, when they are contested, candidates who do not have “institutional” support—that is, candidates who do not have the support of the CFS leadership—are subjected to a kind of organized bullying, beyond what is to be expected in political environments. Other “dissidents” encounter similar treatment, including those who make good-faith efforts to reform the CFS, such as by requiring it to make minutes, financial statements, and other important documents available online. For example, at the most recent Ontario General Meeting, a local moved a motion that would have required CFS-Ontario to investigate “digital delivery” of documents at general meetings (such that documents would be available electronically, but only to those in attendance). The motion was intended to make meetings more accessible, as well as to save paper (currently, documents are only available in hard copy). The response was that digital delivery would be wrong, because the CFS has an ethical obligation to support printers’ unions. The motion was soundly defeated.

The CFS responds especially aggressively to motions that would make the secession process less burdensome. The UTSU encountered this at the most recent National General Meeting, when it moved a motion intended to address a discrepancy between the admission process and the secession process (the Dawson Student Union had moved a similar motion the previous year). In order to join the CFS, one must petition the CFS for a referendum, and the petition must be signed by at least 10 percent of the would-be local. Leaving the CFS also requires a petition followed by a referendum, but the petition must be signed by 20 percent of the membership, not 10 percent. There is no good defence of this discrepancy, and the UTSU motion would have introduced a consistent threshold of 15 percent. Still, it was attacked by speaker

after speaker. It was argued that lowering the 20% threshold is oppressive, because a lower threshold makes the participation of marginalized students less necessary. This motion, too, was soundly defeated.

This intense hostility to reform is, in part, a reaction to the formation of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and its provincial affiliate, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, in 1995. Founded by five disaffected CFS locals, CASA was intended to be a more moderate alternative to the CFS. The CFS lost multiple large locals to CASA, including the students' unions of McMaster University, Western University, the University of Alberta, and the University of Waterloo. This mass secession was deeply damaging, and supporters of the CFS have characterized it as orchestrated by the Liberal Party. Ever since, the CFS has been wary to the point of paranoia of infiltration by political opponents. As a result, any attempt to reform the organization is met with irrational opposition. Major reform packages were defeated at the 2009 NGM and, most recently, at the 2012 NGM. The latter package included a requirement that the CFS post NGM documents (such as minutes and audited financial statements) online, which it currently refuses to do. The failure of the former package precipitated the secession of the entire province of Québec from the CFS.

In the wake of the 2009 NGM, the leaders of CFS-Québec began advocating secession from the national organization. CFS-National responded by seeking to expel CFS-Québec, to which CFS-Québec responded by reconstituting itself as the Rassemblement des associations étudiantes. Over the course of the next six years, every local in the province was able to leave. Moreover, they seceded as part of a co-ordinated national effort to leave the CFS, an effort that ultimately involved thirteen locals. Only five of the thirteen were successful, largely because of the notoriously burdensome secession process. The CFS has been compared, half-jokingly, to the Eagles song Hotel California—"you can check-out any time you like, but you can never leave." A petition threshold of 20 percent is only one major impediment; there are others. They include:

- No more than two locals may hold a referendum on secession within the same three-month period. This restriction was added in order to prevent a repeat of the post-2009 wave of referenda. Notably, this rule does not apply to referenda on admission—another discrepancy between the admission process and the secession process.
- If a local votes against leaving the CFS, it must wait five years before holding another referendum. This waiting period is unique; referenda on joining the CFS can be held whenever they are desired.
- The CFS by-laws explicitly prohibit the use of online voting, without which quorum—defined as 10 percent of the membership—can be difficult to achieve.
- In the past, each referendum was administered by a Referendum Oversight Committee, composed of two individuals appointed by the CFS and two individuals appointed by the local at which the referendum was being held. Now, referenda are administered by the Chief Returning Officer, who is nominated by National Executive and ratified at a general meeting. There is still a three-member Appeals Committee, composed of one individual appointed by the National Executive and two individuals elected at a general meeting.
- External parties are permitted to campaign, provided that they are representatives of the CFS or of other locals. However, "representatives" refers to elected leaders and employees, not general members. Pro-CFS campaigns therefore have access to a national network of student politicians, while anti-CFS campaigns are necessarily local enterprises. As a result, a referendum on secession does not allow the members of a particular local to decide for themselves whether or not they should leave the CFS. Instead, it pits the anti-CFS campaign against the institutional support of the CFS itself (as opposed to against the local supporters of CFS membership).

Finally, seceding from the CFS almost invariably entails litigation. In the last decade, the CFS has litigated to prevent the secession of locals at Cape Breton University, Concordia University, Dawson College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, McGill University, Simon Fraser University, the University of Guelph, the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and the University of Victoria, and here at the University of Toronto (the Graduate Students' Union held a referendum in 2014; it is still in court with the CFS). In 2015, the Cape Breton University Students' Union contemplated bankruptcy after losing a seven-year legal battle with the CFS. The secession process is of direct relevance to the governance of the CFS. It is unduly burdensome, and secession is all but impossible, even when there is a clear desire to leave. In recent years, the CFS has retained members primarily by exhausting the legal and financial resources of said members. Such a strategy might be effective, but it is not compatible with the principles of democratic governance.

We have, in this section, drawn attention to problematic elements of the CFS system. They are summarized here:

- There is only limited oversight of the National Executive and the provincial Executive Committee.
- The "one local; one vote" rule disenfranchises large locals like the UTSU.
- The CFS is run by unelected staff, with elected students serving as "staff in training."
- The CFS is institutionally paranoid and hostile to any kind of change, resulting in the bullying of perceived "dissidents" at general meetings.
- A culture of secrecy keeps basic documents, such as general meeting minutes and audited financial statements, from being made publicly available.
- The secession process is unnecessarily burdensome, and it is indefensibly easier to join the CFS than it is to leave it.

However, the CFS system also guarantees the representation of marginalized individuals, through the constituency groups (like the Women's Constituency Group and the Queer Students Constituency Group) that meet at general meetings and elect members of committees. For this, the CFS should be praised, although the institutional representation of marginalized individuals is no longer unique.

In other respects, the CFS is an unremarkable organization with unremarkable governing documents. We will not discuss them here.

### **3. Services**

The CFS has three sources of revenue: membership fees, general meetings, and the provision of services. The former two are straightforward: There are national and provincial membership fees--both indexed to CPI--as well as a per-delegate fee attached to attending general meetings. In 2015-2016, the UTSU paid the CFS \$769,218.00 in membership fees and \$6,723.75 in delegate fees. The provision of services is more complicated, in part because of how the CFS budget is structured. There are four main services, and they are as follows:

- The National Student Health Network, which functions as a student health insurance broker
- The sale of branded, customizable student handbooks
- The sale of branded, customizable frosh materials, such as water bottles and tote bags
- The provision of International Student Identity Cards

Last year, the UTSU spent:

- \$91,018.53 on the NSHN
- \$61,274.25 on handbooks
- \$38,865.68 on Orientation materials

In other words, the UTSU paid the CFS a further \$197,882.23 in addition to membership fees (including the amount spend on delegate fees). However, the “Revenue” section of the most recent CFS budget--presented at the November 2015 NGM--does not list any major sources of revenue other than membership fees (the minor sources of revenue are interest, royalties, and “other”, which accounts for only \$2,500). Importantly, all three of the above-listed services are provided by CFS-Services, so they should appear in the combined CFS-National/CFS-Services budget, but they do not--at least not clearly. In fact, there are additional sources of revenue concealed in the “Expense” section of the budget. For example, under the heading “Handbook Printing”, there is a line item called “Recovery” with a value of \$532,000. It does not appear in parentheses, and so is therefore being listed not as an expense but as revenue. There is also a line item called “Recovery” under the heading “Orientation Materials.” It has a value of \$500,000. Finally, at the end of the list of expenses associated with the NSHN (“Health and Dental Insurance”), there is a source of revenue called “Consortium Membership Fees.” It, too has a value, of \$500,000. There are other hidden sources of revenue, but they are not directly relevant to this section.

In order to evaluate the services that the CFS provides, it is necessary to understand how said services are funded, which the CFS budget does not make clear. One could very easily be misled into believing that services like the NSHN are paid for by membership fees, which they are not. Indeed, it is not widely known that the UTSU paid the CFS almost \$200,000 in addition to the approximately \$770,000 collected from UTSU members. It is not the case that handbooks (for example) are a benefit of CFS membership, although it should be noted that membership fees are intended to subsidize the cost of everything that the CFS offers. In any case, we will now evaluate each of the services listed above.

Most students’ unions provide health insurance, and the role of the students’ union is to negotiate with a single insurer--Green Shield--on behalf of as many locals as possible. It can therefore be said to function as an insurance broker, although it is not registered as such with the Ontario Financial Services Authority. While it is standard practice to solicit bids from multiple insurers, the NSHN only does business with Green Shield. As a result, Green Shield is never required to compete for the continued business of the locals represented by the NSHN. The CFS claims that Green Shield is the only not-for-profit insurer in Canada--and thus the only ethical option--but this is false. This year, the UTSU withdrew from the NSHN and, after a competitive bidding process, switched from Green Shield to Desjardins, which is, despite claims to the contrary, not a for-profit insurer. In addition to negotiating with Green Shield, the NSHN provides pamphlets describing Green Shield coverage to every participating local.

The handbooks printed by the CFS are ethically sourced, meaning that they are printed on recycled paper, using ink that does not harm the environment. However, the CFS reserves a section of each handbook for itself, which limits the ability of the customer (the students’ union) to include locally-relevant content. For example, the 2015-2016 UTSU handbook was sixty-four pages long, and thirty-two of those pages were allocated to content provided by the CFS. The frosh materials available through the CFS are also ethically-sourced. There are no obvious problems with them, although there are less expensive alternatives that are also ethically sourced. Most of the Orientation 2016 materials will be purchased from suppliers other than the CFS.

International Student Identity Cards are overseen by the ISIC Association, a private, not-for-profit corporation founded in 1953 and based in the Netherlands. They are intended to constitute proof that one is a student. The ISIC Association owns the ISIC brand, but does not issue the cards itself. In Canada, the right to issue ISICs is held by the Merit Travel Group, a private, for-profit travel agency that is, as the result of a decade-long legal battle, partly owned by CFS-Services. In 2014-2015, the CFS received in revenue \$120,000 from the sale of ISICs. Most CFS locals make ISICs available to their members, and the cards can also be purchased for \$20--by any student--at Merit Travel locations (there is one in Toronto). But what is the point of an ISIC? In theory, the cards grant access to student discounts, but most student discounts are available to anyone with a valid student ID; there are few, if any, discounts available only to students who have ISICs. An ISIC is essentially a student ID issued by a third party, and, while the ISIC brand is certainly well-known, one would think that an official student ID is almost always preferable to a third-party alternative. In short, the value of ISICs is overstated, principally by the CFS (which is, again, a partial owner of the for-profit travel agency that issues ISICs). The provision of ISICs is the only major CFS service that is paid for entirely by membership fees.

If all of the services described above were paid for by membership fees, the primary criticism of CFS-Services--that it is too business-like--would not hold much weight. But, because so much of what CFS-Services provides is not paid for by membership fees, the CFS really is not unlike a business in search of clients (although its services are only available to CFS members). And, to be clear, there is nothing wrong with the CFS operating in this way, as long as its bids remain competitive. The CFS should not be disregarded just because of what it is. In summary, the CFS should be treated as one provider among many. Sometimes it will be the best option, and sometimes it will not be. Nothing obligates the UTSU to pay the CFS for services when there are better alternatives available.

#### **4. Advocacy**

The inaugural National General Meeting, held at Carleton University in October 1981, reveals much about the CFS. The new federation, like the National Union of Students before it, called for the abolition of tuition fees. It endorsed a plan of action. However, it also passed a number of more specific motions. Some, like the motion encouraging action on the unique issues facing indigenous students, were laudable and ahead of their time. Others, like the motion calling on the Canadian government to withdraw from NATO, were less obviously relevant to student issues. The point, though, is that the CFS has always eschewed a narrow focus on tuition fees in favour of a broader focus on social justice. This orientation is evident from the nature and the diversity of the federation's campaigns.

The CFS presents itself as both a lobby group and an activist organization. As a lobby group, it is unlike the earlier Canadian Union of Students (1963-1969). The CUS was the explicitly Marxist forerunner of the NUS, and was fundamentally opposed to lobbying, let alone working with, governments and university administrations. As an activist organization, the CFS is unlike CASA and OUSA, which lobby and make policy recommendations but do not, for the most part, engage in protest. CFS lobbying and CASA/OUSA lobbying are essentially the same, although each organization benefits from close, albeit unofficial, ties to a major political party (the CFS is tied to the New Democratic Party; CASA and OUSA are tied to the Liberal Party).

While most governments and university administrations are at least willing to discuss making tuition fees more affordable, the CFS seeks on the abolition of tuition fees altogether. The concern has always been that making this demand is, at present, a non-starter, and prevents student representatives from getting a

foot in the door. The CFS should acknowledge that the abolition of tuition fees is a means to an end, the end being unimpeded access to post-secondary education. Is CFS lobbying effective? There is no easy answer to that question. Whenever a (positive) policy change is announced, rival student groups race to claim credit. Recently, the Ontario government announced that, via the Ontario Student Grant, students from families with household incomes of less than \$50,000 will pay no tuition fees from 2017 onward. The CFS and OUSA both sought to claim credit. While the CFS has been calling for free tuition for decades (unlike OUSA), the Ontario Student Grant has more in common with OUSA policy than it does with CFS policy. Simply put, assigning credit is complicated.

Activism is naturally more visible than lobbying is, because activism consists for, the most part, of public acts. CFS activism consists primarily of organizing and attending rallies, printing and distributing pamphlets, and writing letters. The most prominent CFS campaign of the last decade--Drop Fees--culminated in a comparatively large rally, bringing approximately 1,000 people to Queen's Park on November 5, 2009. The campaign was discontinued the next year. Fees did not drop, and CFS locals across the province were left saturated with henceforth useless Drop Fees stickers, placards, T-shirts, and the like. Drop Fees was succeeded by the Education is a Right campaign, which led to a National Day of Action on February 1, 2012. The campaign now appears to be dormant.

Other major CFS campaigns include the No Means No campaign, the campaign against bottled water, the campaign for intellectual property rights at universities, and the campaigns to address the unique needs of indigenous students and international students. We will discuss each campaign separately:

- No Means No has been running for almost twenty years. Its goal is to promote awareness of sexual violence on campus and of the nature of consent. However, the campaign is based on a once-progressive but now outdated conception of consent--the idea that not saying "no" is the same as giving consent. While the CFS has since incorporated principles of active consent--also known, misleadingly, as "yes means yes"--into No Means No, it resists changing the name and basic orientation of the campaign. Some locals, like the University of Manitoba Students' Union, have replaced No Means No with locals campaigns based on active consent. Nonetheless, lobbying by the CFS contributed to the Ontario government's campus Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan, which was announced in March 2015.
- The campaign against bottled water, known as Bottled-Water Free, is motivated by two concerns. Firstly, bottled water harms the environment. Secondly, we should work against the commodification of water--water is a human right, not something to be bought and sold. The Bottled-Water Free campaign is active, although not at the University of Toronto, where bottled water has been banned since 2011 (thanks, in part, to lobbying by the UTSU). We have mentioned Bottled-Water Free because it appears to be the extent of direct CFS activism on the environment. For the most part, the CFS is involved in environmental activism only directly, by supporting the work of other activists. We will return to this point later.
- The campaign for intellectual property rights is primarily a campaign against Access Copyright, a for-profit corporation that sells access to copyrighted materials, including to universities. The CFS has criticized the use of Access Copyright by universities, arguing that students should have free access to academic resources (the principle of open access). In recent years, many universities have chosen not to renew their contracts with Access Copyright.
- The tuition fees paid by international students are substantially higher than those paid by domestic students. The CFS campaigns against these differential fees, insisting that international students should pay no more than domestic students do, but it has had little success. Many

provinces have moved in the opposite direction, deregulating international tuition fees and giving universities free reign (domestic tuition fees remain regulated).

- Indigenous students have unique needs, and the CFS works to address these needs through the National Aboriginal Caucus and, at the provincial level, the Aboriginal Students' Constituency. While both do good work, they are often constrained by the bureaucratic structures of the CFS system. For example, the NAC is required to follow *Robert's Rules of Order*, which is poorly suited to activist spaces.

The CFS is large and complex, operating according to a very specific and often cumbersome set of rules. While such an organization might be well-positioned to lobby governments and university administrations, it is not obviously well-positioned to engage in the kind of open, democratically-governed activism that the student movement needs. The CFS is not, and does not have the institutional capacity to be, the progressive protest movement that it imagines itself to be. We noted above that the CFS engages in environmental activism primarily by supporting the work of grassroots organizations like the 350 network, which includes Divest U of T. This is a good approach. The CFS can run yet more centralized (and pamphlet-heavy) campaigns, or it can give material support to existing activist groups, as it does Black Lives Matter and Idle No More. The latter is in line the principle of subsidiarity, which dictates that power be decentralized and devolved to whomever is best able to exercise it. In the context of activism, "best able" almost invariably means "most local." Bureaucratic organizations like the CFS (and the UTSU) must know when to cede control. If they do not, they run the risk of hindering rather than helping. Through its commissions, the UTSU makes funding and other resources available for use by student activists. As of 2016-2017, each commission will be required to reserve part of its budget for projects proposed by students (as opposed to by UTSU executives). The CFS has nothing analogous, and the only obvious way to direct CFS resources is by bringing a motion to a general meeting.

In conclusion, the CFS is better at lobbying than it is at activist work, although, much of the time, CFS lobbying is better described as "lobbying supported by the CFS." For example, Bottle-Water Free is a CFS campaign, but the University of Toronto banned bottled water in response to lobbying by student groups based at the university. As a local organization, the UTSU is better able than the CFS to lobby the University of Toronto, just as the Alma Mater Society is better able than the CFS to lobby the University of British Columbia. The CFS, then, be in a good position to lobby governments, which might be beyond the reach of any one students' union. However, the CFS is a national organization, and there is no national education policy. Constitutionally, education is a provincial matter, so education policy differs greatly from province to province. The CFS, like the NDP, calls for a national education policy and then sets out what that policy should look like. As a result, the CFS and its provincial components are effectively bound to lobby for the same thing everywhere, and are less able to account for differing provincial realities. Tailoring policy proposals to, for example, Ontario is not a concession; it is an acknowledgement that Ontario students are under the jurisdiction of the Ontario government. In the context of education policy in Canada, such an approach makes sense. Uniform, national lobbying does not.

## 5. Summary

Our conclusions are as follows:

- Regarding the governance of the CFS, we believe that the federation is institutionally hostile to reform. There is insufficient oversight of the national and provincial executives, and no oversight of all of the excessively-powerful staff. The CFS is unnecessarily secretive, refusing to post minutes, financial statements, and other basic documents online. The "one local, one vote" rule

favours small institutions at the expense of large ones, which then struggle to effectively represent their members. Finally, the many discrepancies between the certification and decertification processes are indefensible--seceding from the CFS is not impossible, but it is unduly difficult.

- There are a number of problems with the services provided by the CFS. Firstly, the CFS budget does not make clear that many of said services are not paid for by membership fees. Secondly, CFS locals should be aware that CFS-Services is one option among many, because no single provider of services should have a monopoly on students' unions. No single insurer should have a monopoly, either, but the CFS only does business with Green Shield. This, too, is a problem.
- The CFS is too large and bureaucratic to be an effective activist organization. Instead of running campaigns, it should give resources to smaller, more democratic activist organizations, such as Black Lives Matter and Toronto 350. The CFS is somewhat effective as a lobby group, especially when it supports the lobbying efforts of its members. However, CFS lobbying is hindered by the uniformity of the federation's policy recommendations. Action on education policy should be organized provincially, not nationally.

Again, the purpose of this report is not to call for secession or to endorse continued membership. It is, rather, to explain to the Board of Directors what the CFS is and what it brings to the UTSU. We encourage each reader to draw their own conclusions.