

...letters to the editor

CFS referendum

To the students of the University of Prince Edward Island:

On behalf of the 110,000 members of the Canadian Federation of Students Ontario Component, I am writing to express our solidarity and to encourage you to vote to reaffirm your membership in Canada's national student organization.

This is a difficult time for students in Canada. During the last decade, the quality and accessibility of our universities and colleges has eroded as a result of unprecedented cutbacks by both federal and provincial governments. Students are finding it increasingly difficult to pursue postsecondary education, for a variety of reasons. Finances, in particular, are becoming an almost insurmountable barrier. Rising tuition and other education-related costs, crippling student debt loads, and diminishing opportunities for employment are creating a climate which forces students to make academic choices based on their financial situation. Shrinking budgets at institutions are leading to larger classes, course or program cancellations, and dwindling library resource. Students at fairly isolated campuses, like UPEI or some of our universities in Northern Ontario, suffer in particular under these conditions.

All of this demonstrates the profound need for a strong, united student movement in Canada. Now, more than ever, students must unite their voices and fight collectively to protect our higher education system. The Canadian Federation of Students is the only student organization that has

been actively lobbying against the cuts, the only student organization that has been fighting to reduce student debt loads, and the only student organization that has been clearly articulation alternatives for funding our postsecondary system and ensuring that it remains public, accessible, and of high quality.

Membership in the Canadian Federation of Students ensures that you have a broad base of support for your provincial struggle as well as having a voice in our priorities and strategies at the national level. This has been a tremendous asset for Ontario students this year, as we have been engaged in an incredibly difficult, exhausting, and ongoing campaign for a tuition freeze in our province. The support and assistance that we have received from members across the country, as well as from the National office, has been incredible--it has kept our energies high and has allowed us to sustain an unprecedented level of activity in our campaign. And despite the level of opposition that we encounter from our provincial government, students in Ontario have never been so active and so committed to the work of the Federation and to their role in the student movement.

We look forward to continuing to work with students at the University of Prince Edward Island. Together we will be successful.

Yours in a united student movement,
Vicky Smallman,
Ontario Chair
Canadian Federation of Students

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter in support of the Canadian Federation of Students. As you approach a referendum on CFS membership, please keep in mind that you are not alone in questioning the Federation... the strongest members of CFS are the ones who ask the most difficult and critical questions.

Two years in a row, Ryerson has held CFS membership referendums; two years in a row, the students of Ryerson have heard the critical questions asked of CFS; two years in a row, the students of Ryerson have voted remain members.

As a particular representative of Ryerson students, I have this year kept a critical eye on CFS; the Federation has never disappointed me. I have implicit confidence in the representation we receive through CFS, and implicit confidence in the democratic process through which the organization is run. CFS is completely membership driven, as members develop, vote on and run what the organization does. The particular unfaltering leadership of National Chair Brad Lavigne is something I hope you will witness during the referendum campaign, so you will see with what strength, skill and professionalism CFS is moving ahead.

As a student association president, I can tell you how difficult it is to balance the internal and external responsibilities of my job. Knowing that CFS is there as an affective watchdog for us gives me so much peace of mind. We receive of intricate information from CFS, which we do not have the resources to collect ourselves; this information is invaluable, and makes me more affective in the job I do for my students. I cannot stress to you enough the value of the network of communica-


tions that CFS provides... without them, the external work we do would be maybe 10% of what it is. CFS provides incredible value-for-money.

I won't talk in this letter about the affective lobbying and actions of CFS, as I'm sure letters from others will. I will say that I feel privileged to have been a part of the work CFS has done this year, and proud to stand in solidarity with them.

As you approach referendum, remember that your vote will affect you. CFS may not be the only choice, but they are the best choice... and they prove this every time they are challenged.

Victoria Bowman
President
Ryerson Students' Administrative Council

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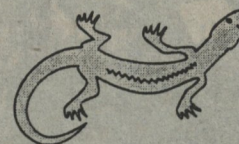
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Important dates
Spring: Register by May 2
Summer: Register by June 20

Call us for details.
We'll send our calendar!

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