

CAMPUS

Tuition rollback (continued...)

Liberal Leader Robert Ghiz wasn't impressed with this plan or with the budget. He accused the Conservatives of using the provincial budget as election propoganda, promising money to students to win votes in the looming provincial election many expect to be announced very soon.

"Like many other Islanders, I dismiss this budget, because the (Conservative) track record demands that it must be dismissed."

As part of the \$16.6 million in new money for education included in Tuesday's budget, the government also plans to increase the Island Student Award for UPEI students to \$2,000, and will implement the Island Skills Award – a \$1,000 award for each Holland College student not currently receiving the federal Skills Development benefits.

But Ghiz said raising the Island Student Award was an election promise in the 2003 provincial campaign the Conservatives didn't keep.

"In fact, last week, the premier, under questioning here in the legislature, didn't even know what the Island Student Award was," Ghiz

told the Legislature Tuesday. But this week, nearly four years after they made their initial promise, this government says again the award will be raised.

"In this case, a promise delayed is a promise broken, and this government should be ashamed of itself," Ghiz said.

Murphy said he included major education funding initiatives in the provincial budget because his government believes education should be accessible and affordable for Islanders.

"This is a substantial investment in post-secondary education. We believe this will encourage Island students to pursue their futures which will help us remain competitive in the region and throughout the country."

As part of the \$16.6 million in education funding, Tuesday's budget also included a base funding increase for UPEI by \$1.4 million, as well as initiatives to increase student financial assistance funding to allow for more students from middle-income families to qualify for provincial student loans.

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Referendum report (continued...)

"This either means that the CFS is not telling the truth or the UPEI student union Executive is not telling the truth" says Ahmed. "If it turns out that the UPEI Student Union Executive is not telling the truth, then this has major implications on the way council has been misled over the past two years and on the way that the National Representation Committee's report was put together."

Ryan Gallant, Student Union President, who was a member of the NRC, was also contacted by the Cadre. Despite telling the committee and council that the SU was in a legal battle with the CFS, he told the Cadre otherwise.

"No, there is currently no legal action being taken by UPEI Student Union regarding membership or any other issues with the Canadian Federation of Students. UPEI SU council resolved to sever all ties with the CFS during the 2003-2004 academic year, and has not been in direct contact with that organization since."

However, student Council mem-

ber Margaret Doyle, in an e-mail to the Cadre, said she has been under the impression for the last three years that the UPEI SU was withholding fees from CFS in order to build a contingency fund pending legal action against the CFS.

"No legal problems?" Said Doyle, "This is news to me, and I have been the MAPUS Senate representative for the past 5 years."

Student union president Ryan Gallant says that the UPEI SU has only been in contact with CFS through their lawyers for the last two years.

"There is currently no legal action being taken by the UPEI SU," said Gallant. "This does not mean that there are not legal issues outstanding between our organization and the CFS."

The UPEI Student Union as well as the Graduate Student Union have been members of the national lobby group Canadian Federation of Students or CFS since its founding in 1981.

Ian Boyko, a representative of CFS

confirmed that the UPEI SU was in fact one of the founding members of CFS. "UPEI student union joined CFS back in the early 80's, when the group was just getting started." Currently, the student union council has decided to not recognize their membership with CFS, ignoring the fact that they do not have the authority to make such a decision as it has to be done through a referendum.

The NRC used the following five criteria to compare the two possible organization:

- The committee researched both CASA's and CFS's regional representation, adding special emphasis on the number of Atlantic schools that were affiliated with the organization
- The committee also looked at the group's representation in Ottawa
- the groups' auxiliary services
- the groups' voting structure
- the cost of membership fees for each group.

The NRC formed the recommendation for a referendum without any contact or information from the CFS. Information gathered regarding the

Canadian Federation of Students was collected via other universities that are also not established members of CFS.

In terms of representation, the proposal states: "it was found that an overwhelming majority of the larger Atlantic schools were members of CASA."

However, CASA has eight members associations who are considered part of the Atlantic region. CFS also has eight member associations in the Atlantic region. The CFS also has membership associations with all five student unions in Newfoundland. Newfoundland is considered a part of the Atlantic region.

Including Newfoundland, the CFS represents 13 student unions in the region, surpassing CASA's eight.

Ahmed will be asking the SU executive to hold an emergency meeting to clarify the method in which the report was written.

"I would recommend that they invite both the CFS and CASA to give public presentations about their organizations," said Ahmed.