



Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Semi-Annual General Meeting

June 2019

Prepared by:

Name:	Position:	Organization:
Joshua Bowman	President	University of Toronto Students' Union
Lucas Granger	VP External Affairs	University of Toronto Students' Union
Ikran Jama	President	Arts and Science Students' Union
Lina Maragha	UC Director	University of Toronto Students' Union

Table of Contents:

Table of Contents:	1
Terms:	2
Structure of the CFS Meeting:	2
Committees and Forums	3
The Meeting	5
Our Motions	5
Outcomes	8
Conclusions on the National General Meeting	8
Resources:	10



Terms:

“CFS”/“CFS-O”	The Canadian Federation of Students, or the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario; also referred to in this report as “the Federation”.
“Circle”	Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students (Caucus)
“OSD”	Organizational and Services Development Committee
“Local”	A Member of the CFS; the local campus students’ union. For example, the UTSU is Local 98
“Member”	Refers to the Locals within the CFS. Sometimes (and confusingly) used interchangeably with “Student Member”.
“NGM”/“AGM”	May refer to the National General Meeting, the Annual General Meeting, or the Semi-Annual General Meeting of the CFS.
“Plenary”	CFS Meetings are based around the Opening and Closing Plenaries. The Opening Plenary is when all motions are considered and approved to send to the various committees. The Closing Plenary is the final decision making body of the CFS’ General Meeting, wherein the various reports of the committees are considered by the Members. The Closing Plenary is where all final debate takes place.
“Constituency Group”	A Constituency Group, as defined by the CFS-NGM Delegate Guide, is “composed of individual delegates who share a common characteristic as recognized by the Federation.”
“Caucus”	A Caucus, as defined by the CFS-NGM Delegate Guide, is “a grouping of member local associations with common characteristics.”
“Provincial Component”	A Provincial Component, as defined by the CFS-NGM Delegate Guide, is “a grouping of all member local associations in a given province.”

Structure of the CFS Meeting:

There is a complex organization behind the structure of CFS meetings which will be explained within this section of the report. We will lay out the various organizational structures and how they work.



Purpose of the Meeting: to allow member locals to engage with the structure, campaigns and long-term plans of the CFS. During the time between the Opening and Closing Plenaries of the meeting, delegates are allowed to attend various groups and sessions. Delegates are only permitted to attend the groups representing a community they identify with. These groups are divided into three components: Constituency Groups, Caucuses, and Provincial Components.

The Constituency Groups, Caucuses, and Provincial Components are as follows:

Constituency Groups:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students with Disabilities Constituency Group 2. Francophone Students' Constituency Group 3. International Students' Constituency Group 4. Part-time and Mature Students' Constituency Group 5. Queer Students' Constituency Group 6. Racialized Students' Constituency Group 7. Trans Students' Constituency Group 8. Women's Constituency Group
Caucuses:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students 2. Caucus of College and Institute Associations 3. Caucus of Large Institute Associations 4. Caucus of Small University Associations 5. National Graduate Caucus
Provincial Components (with # of Members):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alberta (2), British Columbia (2), Manitoba (5), New Brunswick (1), Newfoundland and Labrador (5), Nova Scotia (6*), Ontario (36), Quebec (Defunct), Prince Edward Island (3*), and Saskatchewan (3) <p>Total: 63, with at least 2* prospective members</p>

Constituency Groups and Caucuses

At the CFS National General Meeting, UTSU delegates were able to join Caucuses and Constituency groups based on their individual demographic information. This allowed them to participate in discussions about advocating for the particular groups they belong to and vote on which members of their Constituency Groups and Caucuses would sit on committees.

- Joshua Bowman (Part-time and Mature Students' Constituency Group, Caucus of Large Institute Associations, Ontario Provincial Component).



- Lucas Granger (Queer Students' Constituency Group, Caucus of Large Institute Associations, Ontario Provincial Component).
- Ikran Jama (Racialized Students' Constituency Group, Women's Constituency Group, Caucus of Large Institute Associations, Ontario Provincial Component).
- Lina Maragha (Racialized Students' Constituency Group, Women's Constituency Group, Caucus of Large Institute Associations, Ontario Provincial Component).

Committees and Forums

At the CFS National General Meeting, our delegates attended various committees and forums. As per the Federation's rules, individual locals are not automatically on the committees and forums, but instead are elected as a delegation from a Constituency Group, Caucus, or Provincial Component. These delegations form groups of three, which are elected at the meetings of the above groups. Only these representatives may attend the meetings of the committees, and must vote as a collective rather than as individuals. Attendance at these committees is crucial, as all motions to be considered at the Closing Plenary must first be debated at the committee the motion is assigned to. These committees are where the major debates surrounding motions occur.

The Standing Committees are as follows:

Standing Committees and Forums
<p>Definitions from the Delegate Guide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviews and recommends budget adjustments for the upcoming fiscal year to the closing plenary ● Reviews the audited financial statements of the previous fiscal year 2. Organizational and Services Development Committee (OSD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviews internal structures of the Federation to ensure that they facilitate the work of the Federation ● Examines all proposals to amend bylaws, operational policy, and standing resolutions of the Federation ● Reviews and makes recommendations to improve the Federation's services and may propose the development of new services ● Discusses strategies for strengthening and expanding membership within the Federation 3. Policy Review and Development Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refines and expands the Federation's vision of an accessible,



- high-quality, post-secondary education system
 - Examines all proposals to amend the issues policy of the Federation
4. Campaigns and Government Relations Forum
- Assesses the recent and ongoing national campaigns of the Federation
 - Reviews the campaigns and government relations guide and recommends to Closing Plenary possible changes to the guide for the remainder of the year
 - Makes general recommendations concerning the implementation of the campaigns and government relations guide

Forums are open to all delegates and do not require election from a Constituency Group, Caucus, or Provincial Component. They generally do not discuss changes to the Federation in the same manner as the committees. The governance pathway of the Federation meetings is hard to navigate and sometimes hard to participate in given the bureaucratic structure of the CFS. This bureaucratic structure manifests itself in how one is required to participate in the CFS meeting. Navigating through the Caucuses/Provincial Delegations/Constituency Groups is hard enough, especially since one must be elected by these groups to attend the committee meetings. On top of this, delegates are reminded frequently that they are not representing their own Local at the committees, but instead the Caucus/Provincial Delegation/Constituency Group that they were elected by.

As a delegation, Joshua Bowman and Ikran Jama attended the session of the Budget Committee, Lina Maragha attended Organizational and Services Development Committee session, and Lucas Granger attended Policy Review and Development Committee session.

The Meeting

Our Motions

The UTSU submitted 3 motions to be considered at the meeting, one of which was withdrawn during Opening Plenary. The reasoning behind withdrawing the motion is largely due to the motion itself being a reflection of information prior to attending the CFS NGM, and it being largely the same substance as the fee remittance motion.

Fee Remittance (2019/06:N09)



Whereas the Student Choice Initiative now allows Ontario postsecondary students flexibility over what is defined as non-essential ancillary fees; and

Whereas Federation fees are not included under the Ancillary Fee Classification Framework;
and

Whereas individual students will now have the ability to opt-out of the Federation fees,

Be it resolved that Bylaw I.2.a.vi be amended to read:

A member shall be required to collect and remit to the Federation a membership fee of \$3.00 per semester, per individual student member of the member local student association who has opted to pay the Federation's fee(s). For greater clarity, a member is only required to remit what has been collected by its individual student members for the purposes of the Federation's membership fee. This shall supersede any pre-existing contractual agreements between the member and the Federation; and

Be it further resolved that Standing Resolution.32.e be amended to read:

Ontario Component: The membership fee for a full voting member belonging to the Ontario Component shall be \$3.33 per semester, per individual member of the voting member association who has opted to pay the Federation's fee(s). For greater clarity, a member is only required to remit what has been collected by its individual student members for the purposes of the Federation's membership fee. This shall supersede any pre-existing contractual agreements between the member and the Federation.

Student Journalism (2019/06:N10)

Whereas limiting the capacity of student-led campus publications to access information, excluding personal information, serves as a direct violation of the spirit of a free and independent press; and,

Whereas student-led campus publications are an essential service used to maintain the integrity of post-secondary institutions, holding both administration and student organizations accountable for their actions; and,

Whereas student-led campus publications streamline communication to the larger student body about decisions made by administration and student organizations which directly pertain to their respective membership; and,

Whereas student-led campus publications highlight the services offered by the



Federation and its member locals; and,

Whereas there have been cases where student-led campus publications have been disallowed from covering and reporting on meetings of the Federation and its member locals; and,

Whereas student-led campus publications in Ontario are facing the impact of the Student Choice Initiative, which is likely to limit the capacity and effect of those publications;

Be it resolved that the Federation and its member locals commit to respect and encourage journalistic integrity; and also,

Be it resolved that the Federation and its member locals mandate that all ex-camera meetings and all meetings without personal information be freely covered by student-led campus publications; and also,

Be it further resolved that the Federation and its member locals condemn student organizations and post-secondary institutions that fail to ensure full accessibility of their meetings to recognized student-led campus publications.

Both of these motions were assigned to OSD Committee. Both were amended by that committee and read as follows:

Fee Remittance: OSD-05 - Amended by Local 109/Local 11

Be it resolved that motion (2019:06/N09) be amended to read:

Be it resolved that Bylaw I.2.a.vi be amended to read:

A member shall be required to collect and remit to the Federation a membership fee of \$3.00, as adjusted pursuant to Bylaw I, Section 2.a.ix, per semester, per individual student member of the member local student association. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the member's post-secondary institution is required by law to permit students to opt-out of paying fees that would otherwise be collected and remitted to the Federation as part of the member's membership fee, the member shall only be required to collect and remit to the Federation a membership fee equal to \$3.00, as adjusted pursuant to Bylaw I, Section 2.a.ix, per semester, per individual student at the institution that the member (or the institution) has collected for the Federation. The members shall be encouraged to use their best efforts to ensure that the students at their respective institutions are provided with an option to pay the fees described above.

Student Journalism: OSD-06 - Amended by Local 103/Local 37

Be it resolved that motion (2019/06:N10) be amended to read:



Be it resolved that the Federation encourage and its member locals to respect and support journalistic integrity;

Be it further resolved that the Federation mandate that all ex-camera meetings and all meetings without personal information be freely covered by student-led campus publications; with the exception of consistency, caucus, and sub-committee meeting spaces; and encourage member locals to follow the same practices;

Be it further resolved that the National Executive draft an operational policy on student led publications at National General Meetings and amend Standing Resolution 35 as needed, to be brought back at the next National General Meeting.

Fee Remittance (2019/06:N09) was amended, however the substance of the motion remained. Instead of having to pay for 44,000+ members, regardless of whether they are opted in to the CFS, member locals are now only required to pay for those who have opted-in to the fee. Had this not passed, many member locals likely would have went bankrupt within the next few years due to having to pay fees out of their operating budgets or contingency funds.

Student Journalism (2019/06:N10) was amended heavily, and largely rendered the motion ineffective in supporting our goal of including more student journalists at committees of the Federation. The idea behind the motion was to allow for greater transparency from the Federation by ensuring that journalists and the students they report to could better understand the debate and amendments around motions. This motion also called for the CFS and its member locals to be more accountable to their students by ensuring the protection and involvement of student-led campus publications in their meetings.

Outcomes

- Passing our Fee Remittance motion (2019/06:N09), preventing the UTSU from being legally obligated to pay the difference for our members who choose to opt-out of the CFS fees.
- Passing the Student Journalism motion (2019/06:N10). However, this was watered down to exclude journalists from meetings of the subcommittees, which was the intent of the initial motion.
- CFS-National is moving to a 1 NGM structure as of next year, largely due to the projected revenue decreases from the Student Choice Initiative.



- A new prospective member (Dalhousie Student Union) was accepted for prospective membership.
- An emergency motion to form a Black Students' Caucus was passed.
- An emergency motion proposed by the Circle to engage in action against the cuts to mandatory Indigenous education curricula in high schools was passed.
- An emergency motion to study the final report on the Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit People (MMIWG2S), and develop CFS programming/campaigns in conjunction with Circle in response to the report's findings.

Conclusions on the National General Meeting

While the June 2019 CFS NGM was markedly less hostile than previous conferences, it was still wrought with staunch opposition to any attempts to reform the structure of the organization, even as the Student Choice Initiative looms closer. Despite facing this significant resistance to change, the UTSU was able to bring its motions to the floor and have them discussed by committees, which has not always been the case in the past. There was a noticeable effort on the part of certain facets of the CFS, including the CFS-Ontario Chairperson, to attempt to mitigate the perpetuation of a toxic environment and make the UTSU delegates feel welcome, even when it was perceived that the CFS leadership had other intentions. These factors contributed to two of the UTSU's motions passing, albeit heavily amended to limit their depth and scope.

The UTSU Delegation noted a number of systemic aspects of the CFS that worked to restrict attempts to reform the organization, which were compounded by direct actions taken by CFS leadership. One of the systemic obstacles is the fact that the CFS allots one vote to each Local regardless of its size, which allows Locals representing less than a thousand constituents to have the same vote as the UTSU. The UTSU Delegation observed that CFS leadership often used coalitions of smaller schools to actively filibuster and sabotage any attempt to introduce motions and subject motions that do make it to the floor to unsubstantiated pushback. One notable instance occurred when the CFS National Executive introduced a presentation on fee remittance -- directly relevant to one of the UTSU motions -- at an OSD session with the intention of introducing a surprise amendment. This had been provided to a number of Locals before the conference, but had not been shared with the UTSU. It was discovered that the CFS-Ontario Chairperson had not been informed either, which seems to indicate that presentation was only shared with Locals that sided with the CFS National Executive. UTSU Delegates were informed that their motion would fail in the scenario that the amendment was not passed. This indicated to UTSU Delegates that the CFS does not wish to work with



all schools in Canada, but will commit primarily to furthering its own interests and collaborate solely when intrinsically convenient.

Another systemic issue that the UTSU Delegation noticed stems from the CFS' current structure of electing delegates from Locals to committees. Although the concept of ensuring that all groups, identities, and communities of people are represented in all greater decision making is a noble one, UTSU Delegates felt that this method of organization restricted the functionality of the Federation rather than enhanced it. For example, once elected to specific committees by Constituency Groups, Caucuses, or Provincial Components, delegates were then expected to speak at these committees on behalf of these groups instead of as a delegate from their Local. This committee structure did not execute the concept it was meant to fulfill, since UTSU Delegates observed that each delegate clearly brought the views of their Local into discussions rather than speaking on behalf of their Constituency Groups, Caucuses, or Provincial Components as intended. Furthermore, UTSU Delegates believe that it is not possible for a single individual to represent an entire community or demographic of people. UTSU Delegates found it difficult to represent the students from their Local while simultaneously attempting to justly represent the Constituency Groups they were trusted to report back to, especially when it came to contested motions. Despite the understanding of each individual representing a Constituency Group rather than their Local on committees, delegates are then expected to move and second motions on behalf of their Local rather than their Constituency Groups, which adds confusion to representation and allocation.

The committee structure continues to create barriers when it comes to reform. Although we wish to see greater accountability within these committees, as all motions are debated and discussed within them, the CFS refuses to comply so long as each individual still represents a Constituency Group, which may bring forward sensitive personal insights that individuals may not feel comfortable being recorded. UTSU Delegates believe that this organization simply inhibits not only proper liability, but the ability for delegates to accurately represent their constituents. Adding to this frustration is the uncertainty of UTSU delegates being elected to any of these committees, and so, losing out on the ability to participate within these crucial discussions on motions. UTSU Delegates hope that the CFS can one day work to accept the possibility of reform, but until they address the significant issues with their structure and inability to seek change, the UTSU will continue to find ways to ensure that these issues do not remain ignored.

In addition to systemic issues, there were a number of situational factors that contributed to an environment of toxicity. Certain Locals from other provinces seemed convinced that the UTSU's motions were intended to make opt-outs possible across the country, which did much to create an atmosphere of distrust



towards the UTSU. Another notable situational issue was that Robert's Rules were abused multiple times during the conference to stifle debate on motions and any attempt to reform the organization. This became especially apparent during the Closing Plenary.

Resources:

- [CFS: Governing Documents](#)
- [2015 UTSU Draft Report on the CFS](#)
- [2018 UTSU Report on the November CFS NGM](#)