



# Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting November 2020

Attended by:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Organization:</b>
Muntaka Ahmed	President	University of Toronto Students' Union
Tyler Riches	VP Public & University Affairs	University of Toronto Students' Union

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## **Executive Summary**

This is a report by the UTSU's delegation to the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting that took place on November 17, 18, and 19, 2020. This report will be submitted to the UTSU Board of Directors, and subsequently published to the UTSU's membership.

This Annual General Meeting was unlike any other that the UTSU has attended in its history as Local 98 of the CFS, with the notable exception of CFS-Ontario's Annual General Meeting in August 2020. With the COVID-19 pandemic making large in-person gatherings unsafe, this meeting was conducted over Zoom, the videoconferencing application. A motion was also adopted at the Opening Plenary of the Annual General Meeting that radically amended the agenda, and changed the structure of the general meeting overall.

For maximum clarity, this report outlines how the Annual General Meeting normally operates, as well as the changes that were made to this year's meeting structure and how it impacted the business of the Federation. It also outlines the motions that Local 98 submitted for consideration, and concludes with the final thoughts and reflections of the UTSU's delegation.



## Terms

<b>“CFS”/“CFS-O”/“CFS-Ontario”</b>	The Canadian Federation of Students, or the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario; also referred to in this report as “the Federation”. Where necessary, the national CFS component is referred to as “CFS-National,” and the national services arm of CFS is referred to as “CFS-Services.”
<b>“Circle”</b>	Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students (Caucus)
<b>“OSD”</b>	Organizational and Services Development Committee
<b>“Local”</b>	A Member of the CFS; the local campus students’ union. For example, the UTSU is Local 98.
<b>“Member”</b>	Refers to the Locals within the CFS. Sometimes (and confusingly) used interchangeably with “Student Member,” which refers to a student holding membership in a CFS Member Local.
<b>“NGM”/“OGM”/“AGM”</b>	May refer to the National General Meeting, the Ontario General Meeting, or the Annual General Meeting of the CFS. Both the NGM and OGM are Annual General Meetings, of the national and provincial components respectively.
<b>“Plenary”</b>	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 General Meeting, wherein the various reports of the committees are considered by the Members. The Closing Plenary is where all final debate takes place.
<b>“Constituency Group”</b>	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.”
<b>“Caucus”</b>	A Caucus, as defined by the CFS-NGM Delegate Guide, is “a grouping of member local associations with common characteristics.”
<b>“Ontario Executive Committee” or “OEC”</b>	A group consisting of the Chairperson, National Executive Representative, Treasurer, and the seven (7) non-voting at-Large representatives, as well as one (1) representative from the thirty-four (34) Ontario Member Locals. The OEC acts as the Board of Directors for the CFS-Ontario under the <i>Ontario</i>



	<i>Corporations Act.</i> The equivalent national body is the National Executive Committee, commonly referred to as the National Executive.
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## **Structure of a CFS National General 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"> <li>1. Students with Disabilities Constituency Group</li> <li>2. Francophone Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>3. International Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>4. Part-time and Mature Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>5. Two-Spirit/Queer Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>6. Racialized Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>7. Two-Spirit/Trans Students' Constituency Group</li> <li>8. Women's Constituency Group</li> </ol>
Caucuses:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students</li> <li>2. Caucus of College and Institute Associations</li> <li>3. Caucus of Large Institute Associations</li> <li>4. Caucus of Small University Associations</li> <li>5. Black Students' Caucus</li> <li>6. National Graduate Caucus</li> </ol>
Provincial Components:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec (defunct), Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan</li> </ul>



## Constituency Groups, Caucuses, Committees and Forums

Like previous meetings of the CFS, at the CFS National Annual General Meeting, UTSU delegates are typically 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.

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.

With the adoption of 2020/11:N04 at the Opening Plenary, Caucuses and Constituency Group meetings were postponed until January 2021, and so no meetings of Caucuses or Constituency Groups were held during this Annual General Meeting. This is explained in greater detail later in the report.

The Standing Committees are as follows:

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



3. Policy Review and Development Committee
  - 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

With the adoption of 2020/11:N04 at the Opening Plenary, Standing Committee meetings were cancelled, and so no meetings of the Standing Committees were held during this Annual General Meeting. The UTSU's delegates did not have an opportunity to attend any Standing Committees. This is explained in greater detail later in the report.



## The Meeting

### Our Motions

Below are the motions that we submitted to the CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting for consideration. The COVID-19 pandemic had greatly affected the operations of the Federation, and the processes laid out under Bylaw I, regarding membership, certification, and decertification, were now inaccessible under physical distancing regulations. Our motions were aimed at providing solutions to these problems, and overall making the certification and decertification process more democratic and easier for everyday students to engage with.

Amended sections, or new items, are highlighted in **Yellow**:

<p>Simple Motion on Online Voting (2020/11:N17) Recommended to Organizational and Services Development Committee</p>
<p>WHEREAS Bylaw I section 4.g.i. states that “voting must be conducted by paper ballot and cannot be conducted in any other manner;” and</p> <p>WHEREAS Bylaw I section 4.g.i. states that “voting must take place at voting stations or, subject to the agreement between the local student association and the Federation, at a general meeting of the local student association or by a mail-out ballot;” and</p> <p>WHEREAS Bylaw II section 6.g.i. states that “voting must be conducted by paper ballot and cannot be conducted in any other manner;” and</p> <p>WHEREAS Bylaw II section 6.g.i. states that “voting must be conducted at voting stations or, subject to the agreement of the Chief Returning Officer, by mail-out ballot;” and</p> <p>WHEREAS elections and referenda administered solely by paper ballots are inaccessible to a variety of student demographics, including but not limited to students who commute to campus, students in co-operative education programs, exchange students, students on exchange, and students enrolled solely in online courses; and</p> <p>WHEREAS online voting increases the accessibility of elections and referenda, allowing voters to cast their ballot anywhere and at any time, provided they have an Internet connection; and</p> <p>WHEREAS online voting is more cost-effective than elections and referenda run exclusively with paper ballots, and reduces or eliminates error in tabulating votes; and</p> <p>WHEREAS online voting reduces the environmental impact by reducing the papers, resources, and materials used to administer an election or referendum; and</p> <p>WHEREAS popular online voting platforms, such as SimplyVoting, use robust encryption and security measures that detect unauthorized access, eliminate ballot tampering, and reduces the chance of voter fraud; and</p>



WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced on-campus operations at post-secondary institutions across Canada; and

WHEREAS many Canadian post-secondary institutions will be operating remote classes in the upcoming academic year, greatly reducing the number of students on-campus; and

WHEREAS some students have moved residences as a result of the pandemic, and some are out-of-country as a result of the pandemic, ergo they do not have access to campus; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the operations of student organizations across Canada, including the Federation; and

WHEREAS it is crucial that the Federation is able to adapt to the difficult circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and support member locals in doing the same; and

WHEREAS online voting would allow for certification and decertification referenda to continue, at a time when it is impossible to administer referenda with paper ballots; and

WHEREAS it is uncertain how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last, and implementing online voting would future-proof the Federation and its member locals; and

WHEREAS exploring the implementation of an online voting platform could allow the Federation to provide this service at a subsidized rate to interested member locals; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation commission a report on the implementation of online voting for elections and referenda of the Federation, to be submitted to the National Executive Committee by April 1, 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report explore online voting platforms and procedures used at student organizations across the country, and the voter turnout rates in those elections and referenda administered using online voting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report determine the feasibility of the Federation using a pre-existing online voting platform for the purposes of certification and decertification referenda as stipulated in Bylaw I, and provide recommendations on any bylaw and policy changes that would be necessary to enable online voting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report determine the feasibility of the Federation building a secure proprietary online voting platform for the purposes of certification and decertification referenda as stipulated in Bylaw I, contracting student and youth programmers where possible, and provide recommendations on any bylaw and policy changes that would be necessary to enable online voting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report determine the feasibility of the Federation providing a subsidized and secure online voting platform for member locals to use to administer their own internal elections and referenda, and provide a costed analysis for providing this service to member locals; and





BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that updates be provided to the National Executive Committee on the status of this report at each meeting of the National Executive Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon the receipt of this report by the National Executive Committee, the Committee shall review the recommendations of this report, and take the necessary action to implement the report's recommendations, including submitting the necessary bylaw and policy changes to the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be presented for information at the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be distributed to all member locals prior to the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be published electronically on the Federation's website in order to provide members of the Federation access to these recommendations.

Simple Motion on Online Petitions (2020/11:N16)  
Recommended to Organizational and Services Development Committee

WHEREAS multiple clauses in Bylaw I section 6.a. indicate that a petition calling for a referendum on decertification from the Canadian Federation of Students must be a physical paper petition; and

WHEREAS these clauses imply that an online petition would not be valid under this Bylaw; and

WHEREAS physical paper petitions are inaccessible to a variety of student demographics, including but not limited to students who commute to campus, students in co-operative education programs, exchange students, students on exchange, and students enrolled solely in online courses;

WHEREAS online petitions increase the accessibility of the democratic process, ensuring that students have the tools to start a petition and allowing students to sign a petition anywhere and at any time, provided they have an Internet connection; and

WHEREAS online petitions are more efficient than paper petitions, as it becomes easier to verify signatures and determine the validity of a petition; and

WHEREAS online petitions reduce the environmental impact by reducing the papers, resources, and materials used to organize and circulate a petition; and

WHEREAS organizations around the world administer online petition portals and recognize online petitions, including the Parliament of Canada through [petitions.ourcommons.ca](https://petitions.ourcommons.ca); and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced on-campus operations at post-secondary institutions across Canada; and



WHEREAS many Canadian post-secondary institutions will be operating remote classes in the upcoming academic year, greatly reducing the number of students on-campus; and

WHEREAS some students have moved residences as a result of the pandemic, and some are out-of-country as a result of the pandemic, ergo they do not have access to campus; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the operations of student organizations across Canada, including the Federation; and

WHEREAS it is crucial that the Federation is able to adapt to the difficult circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and support member locals and students in doing the same; and

WHEREAS online petitions would allow for petitions calling for a referendum on decertification from the Federation to continue, at a time when it is impossible to administer physical paper petitions; and

WHEREAS it is uncertain how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last, and implementing online petitions would future-proof the Federation and its member locals; and

WHEREAS some member locals use petitions for their own internal processes, such as to call for referenda on fee increases or for removal from office procedures; and

WHEREAS exploring the implementation of an online petitions portal could allow the Federation to provide this service at a subsidized rate to interested member locals; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation commission a report on the implementation of online petitions for submission to the Federation, to be submitted to the National Executive Committee by April 1, 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report explore online petition portals, the legality and precedent of online petitions, and procedures used by organizations within the country and around the world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report determine the feasibility of the Federation building a secure proprietary online petitions portal for the purposes of petitions calling for decertification referenda as stipulated in Bylaw I, contracting student and youth programmers where possible, and provide recommendations on any bylaw and policy changes that would be necessary to enable online petitions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report determine the feasibility of the Federation providing access to a secure online petitions portal for member locals to use to administer petitions for their own internal processes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that updates be provided to the National Executive Committee on the status of this report at each meeting of the National Executive Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon the receipt of this report by the National Executive Committee, the Committee shall review the recommendations of this report, and take the



necessary action to implement the report's recommendations, including submitting the necessary bylaw and policy changes to the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be presented for information at the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be distributed to all member locals prior to the next general meeting of the Federation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this report be published electronically on the Federation's website in order to provide members of the Federation access to these recommendations.

**Changes to Certification & Decertification Process (2020/11:N15)  
Recommended to Organizational and Services Development Committee**

WHEREAS the petitioning process to initiate a vote on certification and decertification as stated in Bylaw I, section 3.a.ii., section 3.a.iii, and section 6.a. requires that students collect the signatures of 15% of the population of its member local association; and

WHEREAS member local associations are not permitted to initiate the petition process in any official capacity, requiring student members to organize such a process independently of the member local association; and

WHEREAS many member local associations operate within sprawling and/or decentralized campus systems, making it difficult for their students members to mobilize any meaningful cross campus operation in a timely or feasible manner independent of the Executives and/or Board of Directors of their member local association; and

WHEREAS students wishing to petition the Federation to initiate the process of decertification must commit to countless hours of unpaid labor in order to obtain the proper number of signatures indicated in Bylaw I, section 3.a.ii., section 3.a.iii. and section 6.a., especially if the member local association represents many tens of thousands of students; and

WHEREAS the Board of Directors of a member local association may not easily be able to obtain and/or compose a full list of its constituent members; and

WHEREAS an independent group of students who wish to petition the Federation with no connection to their University's administration may have an even more difficult time trying to obtain and/or compose such a list; and

WHEREAS the ambiguity as to the number of students affiliated with a member local association at any given time makes it difficult to ascertain what number would constitute 15% of its members; and

WHEREAS amending Bylaw I, section 3.a.ii., section 3.a.iii and section 6.a. to include the option of gaining a minimum number of petition signatures rather than a percentage would make it more accessible for students of a member local association wishing to initiate the process of decertification to gain the appropriate number of signatures; and



WHEREAS schools thinking about initiating the certification process to join the Federation, who may have concerns about the previously described difficulties and inaccessibility of the decertification process, may be more inclined to join the Federation if the process was made more accessible; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that Bylaw I section 3.a.ii. be amended as follows:

*ii. The students collectively belonging to a local student association will have sole authority to initiate, by petition signed by fifteen percent (15%) of such students or three-thousand (3000) of such students, whichever is less, and delivered to the National Executive, a vote to certify as described in Bylaw I, Section 4.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Bylaw I section 3.a.iii. be amended as follows:

*iii. The students collectively belonging to a local student association will have sole authority to initiate a vote on decertification, as described in Bylaw I, Section 6, by submitting to the National Executive of the Federation a petition, signed by fifteen percent (15%) of such students or three-thousand (3000) of such students, whichever is less, calling for the vote.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Bylaw I section 6.a. be amended as follows:

*a. Petition*

*As per Bylaw I, Section 3.a.iii, a petition calling for a vote on decertification shall be signed by fifteen percent (15%) of such students or three-thousand (3000) of such students, whichever is less, collectively belonging to the member local student association and delivered to the National Executive of the Federation.*

*The petition shall be worded as follows: "We, the undersigned, petition the National Executive of the Canadian Federation of Students to conduct a referendum on the issue of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students."*

*The original, unaltered petition must be delivered in its entirety to the National Chairperson, National Deputy Chairperson or National Treasurer, by registered mail. Petitions received that are not original copies, have been altered in any manner, or have been received by any means other than registered mail are not valid.*

*The petition may not contain any words or images, with the exception of those required by Bylaw I, Section 6.a and those required to indicate which fields a signatory must complete.*

*In order to be considered valid by the National Executive, a name on a petition must be reasonably legible, include the proper full name, be accompanied by a valid and corresponding student identification number, and a unique signature.*

*A student may request that their name be removed from a petition. If the National Executive receives such a request in writing, before the conclusion of the*



*verification process of the petition, the name must be struck from the petition.  
The name shall not be included in the total number of names on the petition.*

Changes to Certification & Decertification Process (2020/11:N14)  
Recommended to Organizational and Services Development Committee

WHEREAS Bylaw I, section 3.a.ii. and section 3.a.iii. both state that “the students collectively belonging to a local student association will have sole authority to initiate, by petition” a vote on certification and decertification from the Federation, respectively; and

WHEREAS the process of initiating a vote on certification can also be achieved via a vote of the local member association’s board of directors as outlined in Bylaw I, section 2.b.i. and section 2.b.v., instead of a petition; and

WHEREAS Bylaw I, section 3.a.iv states that “the students collectively belonging to a local student association [...] will not have voting rights at Federation or Canadian Federation of Students-Services general meetings,” but are instead represented by the representatives of their local member associations at said meetings; and

WHEREAS local member associations that act as the sole representatives of their students at meetings of the Federation cannot trigger a referendum of decertification by way of a vote of their board of directors in the same way they can trigger a referendum on certification via an application for prospective membership; and

WHEREAS a referendum on decertification should be discussed with the constituents of a local member of association prior to the initiation of the decertification process; and

WHEREAS General Meetings are the best way for local member associations to interact with their student members in determining whether their student members want to decertify; and

WHEREAS providing an option for a local member association’s Board of Directors vote as an alternative to a petition option to decertify would save both the Federation and local member associations money in administration and staffing costs to certify petition signatures; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that Bylaw I, section 3.a.ii. and Bylaw I, section 3.a.iii. be amended as follows, and a new Bylaw I, section 3.a.iv. be included as follows, and all subsequent clauses be renumbered as needed:

*ii. The students collectively belonging to a local student association will have authority to initiate, by petition signed by not less than fifteen percent (15%) of such students and delivered to the National Executive, a vote to certify as described in Bylaw I, Section 4.*

*iii. The students collectively belonging to a local student association will have authority to initiate a vote on decertification, as described in Bylaw I, Section 6, by submitting to the National Executive of the Federation a petition, signed by not less than fifteen percent (15%) of such students, calling for the vote.*



*iv. The students collectively belonging to a local student association will also have the authority to initiate a vote on decertification as described in this Bylaw, by a motion adopted by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of those present at a general meeting of the local student association, and the subsequent adoption of the motion by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of the Board of Directors of the member local association, as described in Bylaw I, Section 6.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Bylaw I, Section 6 be amended as follows:

#### *6. Vote to Decertify*

*The students collectively belonging to a member local student association may vote on the question of continuing the membership of the local student association, initiated by petition or by a conditioned vote of a member local association, subject to the following rules and procedures:*

##### *a. Petition*

*As per Bylaw I, Section 3.a.iii, a petition calling for a vote on decertification shall be signed by no less than fifteen percent (15%) of the students collectively belonging to the member local student association and delivered to the National Executive of the Federation.*

*The petition shall be worded as follows: "We, the undersigned, petition the National Executive of the Canadian Federation of Students to conduct a referendum on the issue of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students."*

*The original, unaltered petition must be delivered in its entirety to the National Chairperson, National Deputy Chairperson or National Treasurer, by registered mail. Petitions received that are not original copies, have been altered in any manner, or have been received by any means other than registered mail are not valid.*

*The petition may not contain any words or images, with the exception of those required by Bylaw I, Section 6.a and those required to indicate which fields a signatory must complete.*

*In order to be considered valid by the National Executive, a name on a petition must be reasonably legible, include the proper full name, be accompanied by a valid and corresponding student identification number, and a unique signature.*

*A student may request that their name be removed from a petition. If the National Executive receives such a request in writing, before the conclusion of the verification process of the petition, the name must be struck from the petition. The name shall not be included in the total number of names on the petition.*

##### ***b. Conditioned Vote of the Local Member Association***

***i. As per Bylaw I, Section 3.a.iv, a motion calling for a vote on decertification shall be approved by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of the local member association's***



*general meeting and subsequently, by a ¾ majority at the local member association's Board of Directors.*

*ii. The motion to vote on decertification at a local member association must include the wording as follows: "Be it resolved that the \_\_\_\_\_ request the National Executive of the Canadian Federation of Students to conduct a referendum on the issue of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students."*

*iii. A letter signed by legal counsel that witnessed both votes at the general meeting and board of directors must be delivered by registered mail to the National Chairperson, National Deputy Chairperson, or National Treasurer.*

*iv. The original, unaltered letter must be delivered in its entirety. Letters that are not original copies, have been altered in any manner, or have been received by any means other than registered mail are not valid.*

*vi. In order to be valid, the letter must contain an original signature from legal counsel and a representative of the local member association.*

**c. Schedule**

*i. The National Executive will have the sole authority to determine whether the petition described in Bylaw I, Section 6.a is in order, including tabulating the total number of students who have signed the petition, and for greater certainty, any other tabulations or determinations shall be void and nonbinding. Within ninety (90) days of receipt of the petition, the National Executive will review the petition to determine if it is in order and, if it is, in consultation with the member local student association, will schedule a vote.*

*ii. The National Executive will have the sole authority to determine whether the letter described in Bylaw I, Section 6.b is in order. Within ninety (90) days of receipt of the letter, the National Executive will review the letter to determine if it is in order and, if it is, in consultation with the member local student association, will schedule a vote.*

*iii. The National Executive will endeavour to schedule the referendum between sixty (60) days and ninety (90) days following its determination that the petition is in order.*

*The scheduling of the referendum shall be subject to the following conditions:*

- there shall be no fewer than two (2) and no greater than five (5) days of voting; and*
- there shall be no less than seven (7) days and no greater than twenty-one (21) days for campaigning, during which classes are in session, immediately preceding and during voting.*

*iv. No vote on decertification may be held between:*



- April 15 and September 15; and
- December 15 and January 15.

v. There shall be no more than two (2) votes to decertify in any one (1) period of ninety (90) consecutive days.

vi. No vote on decertification shall take place without compliance with Bylaw I, Sections **6.c.i, 6.c.ii, 6.c.iii, 6.c.iv, and 6.c.v.**

**d. Chief Returning Officer**

*For each referendum on continued membership, the National Executive shall recommend an individual to serve as the Chief Returning Officer. The Chief Returning Officer's appointment is subject to ratification by a general meeting of the Federation.*

*The Chief Returning Officer shall oversee the referendum and be responsible for:*

- i. establishing the notice requirement for the referendum in accordance with Bylaw I, Section **6.e** and ensuring that notice is posted;*
- ii. establishing the campaign period in accordance with Bylaw I, Section **6.f**;*
- iii. approving all campaign materials in accordance with Bylaw I, Section **6.g** and removing campaign materials that have not been approved;*
- iv. deciding the number and location of polling stations;*
- v. setting the hours of voting in accordance with Bylaw I, Section **6.h**;*
- vi. overseeing all aspects of the voting;*
- vii. counting the ballots following the vote; and*
- viii. establishing all other rules and regulations for the vote.*

**e. Notice of Vote**

*Notice of the vote, that includes the referendum question and voting dates, shall be provided to the students collectively belonging to the member local student association no less than two (2) weeks prior to the first day of voting.*

**f. Campaigning**

*i. The member local student association, the students collectively belonging to the member local student association and the Federation not shall engage in any campaigning outside of the campaign period.*





*ii. Only students collectively belonging to and representatives of the member local student association, representatives of the Federation and students collectively belonging to and representatives of Federation member local student associations shall be permitted to participate in the campaign.*

*iii. The campaign period is defined as the days the National Executive schedules for campaigning under Bylaw I, Section 6.c.iii, and each and every day on which voting is to occur.*

**g. Campaign Materials**

*i. Campaign materials shall include all materials developed specifically for the campaign.*

*ii. Materials produced by the Federation that promote campaigns and services of the Federation shall not be considered as campaign materials unless they include specific content about the vote.*

*iii. The Federation website shall not be considered a campaign material unless it includes specific content about the vote.*

*iv. The Federation's annual report, financial statements, research and submissions to government shall not be considered campaign material.*

*v. Campaign materials shall not be misleading, defamatory or false. The Chief Returning Officer shall be the sole arbiter of whether materials are misleading, defamatory or false.*

**h. Voting and Tabulation**

*i. Voting must be conducted by paper ballot and cannot be conducted in any other manner. Voting must be conducted at voting stations or, subject to the agreement of the Chief Returning Officer, by mail-out ballot.*

*It shall be the responsibility of the member local student association to obtain and provide to the Chief Returning Officer, no later than seven (7) days in advance of the vote, a list of all of the students eligible to vote. If the member local student association is unable to obtain or provide such a list, voting shall be conducted through a double envelope system, whereby the ballot is placed in an unmarked envelope, which is placed in a second envelope, on which the voter writes their full name and student identification number. After voting ends, the envelopes will be compared to a list of the students who are eligible to vote in the referendum. Duplicate ballots and ballots cast by ineligible voters shall be discarded. Once the validity of the votes has been verified, the outer envelopes will then be separated from the unmarked inner envelopes and tabulated.*

*ii. There shall be no less than sixteen (16) hours of polling over no less than two (2) and no more than five (5) days, except in the case of voting being conducted at a general meeting. In the event that*



*voting is conducted at a general meeting, representatives of the Federation and Federation member local student associations shall be extended full speaking rights in the meeting.*

*iii. Unless mutually agreed otherwise by the member local student association and the Federation, the referendum question shall be: "Are you in favour of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students?"*

*iv. The member local student association and the Federation shall each be permitted to appoint one (1) poll clerk for each polling station.*

*v. The member local student association and the Federation shall each be permitted to appoint one (1) poll scrutineer to oversee the counting of ballots.*

**i. Quorum**

*Quorum for any vote on decertification shall be that of the member local student association or ten percent (10%) of the students collectively belonging to the local student association, whichever is higher.*

**j. Appeals**

*For each referendum on continued membership, an Appeals Committee shall be appointed to adjudicate any appeals of the referendum results or rulings by the Chief Returning Officer. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of:*

*i. one (1) National Executive member or a designate appointed by the Federation's National Executive; and*

*ii. two (2) individual members elected at a Federation general meeting who are not members of the Federation's National Executive.*

*Members of the Appeals Committee shall not campaign during a vote to decertify.*

**k. Advance Remittance of Outstanding Membership Fees**

*In addition to required compliance with Bylaw I, Sections 6.a. to 6.j. and 6.l. to 6.m., in order for a vote on decertification to proceed, a member local student association must remit all outstanding Federation membership fees not less than six (6) weeks prior to the first day of voting.*

**l. Minimum Period Between Votes on Decertification**

*In addition to required compliance with Bylaw I, Sections 6.a. to 6.k. and 6.m., in order for a vote on decertification to take place, no vote on decertification may have been held within the previous sixty (60) months for members comprised of university students and thirty-six (36) months*



*for members comprised of college students, unless waived, by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the National Executive.*

**m. Minimum Period Between Vote to Certify and Vote to Decertify**

*In addition to required compliance with Bylaw I, Sections 6.a. to 6.l., in order for a vote on decertification to proceed, a vote to certify may not have been held within the previous sixty (60) months for members comprised of university students and thirty-six (36) months for members comprised of college students, unless waived, by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the National Executive.*

**Changes to Certification & Decertification Process (2020/11:N13)  
Recommended to Organizational and Services Development Committee**

WHEREAS Bylaw I section 6.a., paragraph 5, states that “in order to be considered valid by the National Executive, a name on a petition must be reasonably legible, include the proper full name, be accompanied by a valid and corresponding student identification number, and a unique signature;” and

WHEREAS the requirement for members of the Federation to use their proper full name could result in transgender students being required to sign with their deadname; and

WHEREAS students who are members of the Federation and have chosen to reside in Canada may exclusively or frequently use a preferred or alternative name rather than their given full name; and

WHEREAS the student identification number is the most critical piece of information on a petition; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that Bylaw I section 6.a. be amended to delete the word “proper,” as follows:

*a. Petition*

*As per Bylaw I, Section 3.a.iii, a petition calling for a vote on decertification shall be signed by no less than fifteen percent (15%) of the students collectively belonging to the member local student association and delivered to the National Executive of the Federation.*

*The petition shall be worded as follows: “We, the undersigned, petition the National Executive of the Canadian Federation of Students to conduct a referendum on the issue of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students.”*

*The original, unaltered petition must be delivered in its entirety to the National Chairperson, National Deputy Chairperson or National Treasurer, by registered mail. Petitions received that are not original copies, have been altered in any manner, or have been received by any means other than registered mail are not valid.*



*The petition may not contain any words or images, with the exception of those required by Bylaw I, Section 6.a and those required to indicate which fields a signatory must complete.*

*In order to be considered valid by the National Executive, a name on a petition must be reasonably legible, include the full name, be accompanied by a valid and corresponding student identification number, and a unique signature.*

*A student may request that their name be removed from a petition. If the National Executive receives such a request in writing, before the conclusion of the verification process of the petition, the name must be struck from the petition. The name shall not be included in the total number of names on the petition.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that “full name,” for the purposes of Bylaw I, be interpreted as the petition signer’s preferred full name.

## **Motion 2020/11:N04**

The first motion to be considered with due notice was 2020/11:N04, moved by the National Executive Committee. It proposed a revised AGM agenda that included consideration of the proposed 2020-2021 budget and the audited financial statements, the election of the 2020-2021 at-large executives and the 2021-2022 at-large executives, and any emergency motions submitted for consideration. This effectively removed most member-submitted motions from the AGM agenda, and cancelled committees, caucuses, and constituency groups. This motion was considered immediately following the approval of the plenary agenda.

The motivation that was given was similar to the motivations we heard at the CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting in August 2020. They focused on accessibility issues with online meetings, and the long hours that would be required in front of a screen if a full general meeting were held. All motions that were not determined by the Chair to be emergency motions would be forwarded to the National Executive Committee for consideration. If the National Executive was unable to deliberate on a motion -- for example, if a bylaw change were proposed -- the motion would be considered at next year’s Annual General Meeting. Additionally, while committees would remain cancelled, constituency groups and caucuses would meet throughout January 2021 to deliberate on the motions being forwarded to the National Executive Committee, in order to provide advice and recommendations to the Committee. A small number of emergency motions would remain on the AGM agenda. None of the UTSU’s motions were deemed emergency, and we didn’t have a strong case to challenge this.



However, another motion that was deemed to be non-emergency was 2020/11:N19, moved by Local 103, the University of Manitoba Students' Union (UMSU). Unlike our motion N17, which called for a report on online voting to be commissioned detailing a pathway to adopting online voting, UMSU's motion sought to directly amend CFS Bylaw I to allow for online voting, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. UMSU, the UTSU, and the Cape Breton University Students' Union (CBUSU) all motivated to challenge the chair's ruling that N19 was not an emergency motion, arguing that students deserve a chance to vote in referendums despite the pandemic, and that the plenary needs to consider this motion at this meeting. Much to our frustration, the challenge failed, and N19 joined all five of the UTSU's motions in being referred to the National Executive for debate.

## **Outcomes and Conclusions**

Since most of the motions, including our own motions, were referred to the National Executive Committee, there's little that we are left to reflect on. Unlike the provincial component, the UTSU does not have direct representation on the National Executive, and therefore cannot vote or motivate for any of our motions. Given this, we find it highly unlikely that any of our motions will be adopted or recommended for adoption by the National Executive.

While constituency and caucus groups will be meeting in January 2021 to deliberate on non-emergency motions from the National General Meeting, the UTSU delegates will not be attending, as we don't believe that our attendance in these spaces will change the outcomes of our motions at the National Executive. However, UTSU motions from the 2019 and 2020 National General Meetings will be considered at the 2021 National General Meeting, and we will work with the next UTSU executive to ensure that they are fully prepared to motivate for all of these motions.

Past UTSU reports have cited a toxic and unwelcoming environment at CFS general meetings, however our delegation generally did not experience this. Similar to the CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting in August 2020, this may be attributed to the online nature of the general meeting, and the overall lack of opportunities for our delegates to engage in the meeting with the passage of 2020/11:N04. However, once again, we found that the CFS continues to use a convoluted version of Robert's Rules in conjunction with its Standing Resolutions, which make it difficult to effectively engage with the meeting.

One motion that was considered as an emergency motion was a motion by the National Executive to accept the Ryerson Graduate Students' Union (RGSU) as a new member local of the Federation. Recently, a referendum was held at Ryerson University, and graduate students voted to leave the Ryerson Students' Union



(RSU)—currently Local 24 of the CFS—and form their own graduate students' union. The National Executive indicated that they were in receipt of a letter from the RGSU Executive asking for full membership in the CFS. The UTSU argued against this motion, simply because it is illegitimate. In order to become a member of the CFS, a referendum must be held so that students can vote on the issue of membership in the CFS. The National Executive argued that the RSU voted to become a member of the CFS in 1982, and reaffirmed membership in 2004. However, the graduate students at Ryerson today are not the graduate students at Ryerson in 2004. More importantly, the RGSU is a new corporation, distinct from the RSU, that is not contractually bound to CFS membership, ergo a referendum is needed. The will of the RGSU executive is not necessarily the will of its membership. Unfortunately, this motion was adopted, despite outright violating CFS bylaws, and the RGSU is now Local 115 of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Lastly, the new At-Large National Executives were elected for the 2021-2022 year, as well as a by-election for the 2020-2021 National Chairperson. Kien Saningong Azinwi was elected to serve the remainder of the 2020-2021 term as National Chairperson, and Nicole Brayianis, the current Deputy Chairperson, was elected as National Chairperson for 2021-2022.



## **Resources & Further Reading**

- [CFS Bylaws - 2019.11](#)
- [CFS Issues Policy - 2019.11](#)
- [CFS Issues Policy \(Post-Secondary Education\) - 2019.11](#)
- [CFS Operations Policy - 2019.11](#)
- [CFS Standing Resolutions - 2019.11](#)
- [Draft Report of the 2015 Ad-hoc CFS Committee](#)
- [2018 report on the CFS NGM](#)
- [2019 \(June\) CFS Report on the S-AGM](#)
- [Report on the CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting - August 2019](#)
- [Report on the CFS Annual General Meeting - November 2019](#)
- [Report on the CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting - August 2020](#)
- ["UTSU's proposed decertification motions at CFS-O General Meeting forwarded to executive committee," \*The Varsity\*, September 7, 2020.](#)
- ["The Breakdown: Why hasn't the UTSU been able to leave the CFS?" \*The Varsity\*, January 17, 2021](#)