

# **2014-2015 ACTION PLAN**

## **The Right To Learn:**

**Mobilizing Members and  
Communities  
to Support BC's  
Post-Secondary Institutions**



Federation of  
Post-Secondary Educators  
of BC



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The most recent provincial budget shows that post-secondary education in our province continues to struggle. Whether it is the steady downward shift in real per student operating grants which will have dropped by more than 20% over the period 2001 to 2016, or the increasing reliance on tuition fee revenue from both international and domestic students, post-secondary education in our province has undergone major changes over the last decade. Despite those changes, we know that the public looks to our institutions as catalysts for opportunities that can transform our province in ways that will have lasting and positive impacts. The challenge we face as educators and as union activists is to ensure that the public understands the disconnect that exists between the government's current support for post-secondary education and the broader aspiration of BC citizens for accessible and affordable post-secondary education.

Through our colleges, institutes and universities, BC could have the capacity to provide opportunities for students to learn while also providing communities with a hub for innovation and civic engagement. Unfortunately, achieving the true potential of BC's post-secondary education system has not been supported by policies and funding choices at either the provincial or federal level.

As BC's largest union in the public post-secondary education sector, the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) represents the majority of faculty and staff employed at these public institutions. For more than thirty years, FPSE has been an active voice on post-secondary education policy issues. Our goal has been to support and advance policies that ensure access to high quality post-secondary learning opportunities for every citizen in BC. We recognize that to achieve this goal FPSE needs to press governments—mostly the provincial government, but also the federal government—to implement policy and funding choices that strengthen both the opportunities for access as well as the quality and diversity of program offerings at our public institutions.

Our organization believes changes needed in our sector will come from a concerted effort to mobilize our members, our students and our communities on the importance of post-secondary education and the role it can play in the future of our province. Part of that mobilization effort must focus on the 2014 round of collective bargaining where we need to advance our demands for fair compensation and better employment security for non-regular faculty members. FPSE must be similarly dedicated to mobilizing public support for much needed improvements in the funding of our institutions and the programs that they deliver. As well, FPSE cannot lose sight of the importance of organizing the unorganized and ensuring that the benefits of unionization are broadly shared in our communities. In addition, FPSE needs to strengthen its capacity and alliances with others in the labour movement as well as allies in our communities who share and support our values and are prepared to work with us on progressive solutions.

Over the next twelve months, FPSE is proposing an Action Plan that will mobilize its members, staff, resources, organizational capacity, and alliances with the broader labour movement and progressive community partners to advance our interests in four major areas. Those areas include:

**1. Strengthening the rights and benefits of all members by:**

- Preparing for 2014 contract bargaining by building on the work done in the 2012 round in which coordination of bargaining at the local and provincial level ensured that provincial public sector unions were able to break the original zero mandate of the BC government.
- Ensuring that our bargaining priorities address issues that are critical to all of our members to ensure equity and good working conditions.
- Spearheading efforts to improve the employment security of all members by mobilizing against plans to cut programs and course offerings across the public post-secondary education system.
- Joining with the broader labour movement's campaign to overhaul BC's labour laws and employment standards, a campaign that will make it easier for workers to form or join a union.
- Supporting the efforts of non-regular faculty who need stronger contract language in their local agreements to address the issue of job security and equitable treatment.
- Continuing to support the efforts of every local to organize the unorganized at their institutions.

- Making strategic and effective use of FPSE's capacity to service and fund the grievances and arbitrations advanced through the Grievance and Arbitration Review Committee.

**2. Increasing our capacity to improve the post-secondary education system. Those efforts would include:**

- Developing and implementing targeted campaigns, similar to the one launched in 2014 in defense of ESL programs, in which FPSE uses a variety of media platforms to engage students, the general public and our members in efforts to pressure governments (both federal and provincial) to improve funding for programs delivered by our institutions.
- Working with our allies in the Canadian Federation of Students to improve affordability and access by pressing governments and our institutions to strengthen student grant programs, increase student financial aid and lower overall cost of tuition.
- Calling on the Ministry of Advanced Education to undertake a thorough review of the provincial funding formula for post-secondary institutions to ensure fair and sustainable funding provisions are in place.
- Advocating for an overhaul of the province's trades training and apprenticeship system to ensure greater input from educators and workers as well as greater utilization of our public institutions for delivering that training.
- Emphasizing the value and importance of the policies and funding that support the delivery of developmental education within our post-secondary institutions.
- Spearheading efforts to re-regulate private post-secondary institutions and include educators in the oversight of those institutions.
- Working to revitalize university transfer programs including Liberal Arts programs to ensure that these programs play an integral role in the learning opportunities available to every student in post-secondary education.
- Continuing to press governments for better scholarly activity funding support as well as more equitable access to that support for all post-secondary institutions.

**3. Supporting the efforts of private post-secondary faculty to unionize and fully access their right to bargain collectively by:**

- Funding the organizing efforts of locals who have identified opportunities for unionization.
- Providing labour relations staff support at the Labour Relations Board and at the bargaining table.
- Including advocacy on public policy issues that affect private colleges and institutes as part of the support that FPSE will provide to existing and newly organized private college faculty members.

#### **4. Democratizing post-secondary governance structures by:**

- Increasing the capacity of activists within our ranks to participate on Councils, Senates and Boards of their local institutions and do so in ways that are supportive of the faculty who have elected them to those positions.
- Creating greater awareness among faculty members of the importance of governance by providing workshops and educational material on this issue to every local.
- Reinstating the right of faculty to choose their own representatives to Boards of Governors.