

2011-2012 ACTION PLAN

Connect the Dots: Advocacy, Access, Activism



FPSE

Federation of
Post-Secondary Educators
of BC

Connect the Dots: Advocacy, Access and Activism in BC's Post-Secondary Education System

Equal and progressive access for every citizen to fully participate in the process of knowledge creation is an essential part of post-secondary education. In our capacity as educators, researchers, counsellors, librarians and staff within BC's post-secondary institutions, FPSE members play an integral role in advancing that principle. We support it by ensuring that our students have access to innovative and appropriate modes of teaching as well as comprehensive approaches to curriculum design. We support it by ensuring our institutions continue to expand the connection between institution and community. We support it by ensuring that we build solidarity among our colleagues and peers within our institutions and across the broad community that we call the labour movement.

All of those efforts, in turn, require that we continue to build the public's confidence and support for our institutions, our students and our members. Through our advocacy in the workplace and in the community, through our efforts to improve and increase access to programs and course options for our students and through our activism in the labour movement we are advancing that work and ensuring that post-secondary educators play an important role in building BC's future.

At this year's Annual General Meeting delegates will have an opportunity to discuss and debate these and other critical issues in post-secondary education. As well, the debate will include analysis of emerging issues in our province and country. The AGM will also help shape the priorities of our Federation for the coming year. And by shaping those priorities delegates have an opportunity to emphasize the strategies that they believe will have the greatest impact on our sector and our members.

During the next twelve months FPSE is proposing an action plan that will concentrate its staff, resources and organizational capacity on three critical themes that have, both individually and collectively, a significant impact on how our institutions operate, how our members are protected in the work they do in those institutions and how our students are provided with the quality of education they need and deserve. Those three themes are:

1. Strengthen our advocacy efforts to protect the rights and benefits of our members as well as the importance and relevance of our institutions.

For as long as post-secondary educators have had the right to bargain collectively with their employers, our members have been strong, articulate voices speaking out for their colleagues and their institutions. That tradition of advocacy has provided enormous benefits to both our members and the public post-secondary education system in which they work. Through the many rounds of negotiations we have been able to secure local agreements that meet the needs of faculty and staff. When our members have the support of their local and FPSE, they are better able to advocate in their communities for better funding and policy choices from government.

To strengthen our advocacy efforts FPSE will:

- Support the work of the Coalition for Public Education and the BC Federation of Labour's Public Sector Committee to ensure that allies and affiliates throughout the labour movement are working with us to improve funding of public post-secondary education in our province.
- Coordinate and intensify the lobby effort that we have developed to pressure government-side MLAs to understand the problems that our sector faces and the benefits that come from better funding of our institutions.
- Increase the access to FPSE's Labour Relations and Public Policy Advocacy Certificate Program by providing more local steward training and working with our locals to better identify needs within their associations for new training and capacity building.
- Task FPSE's Standing Committees to address emerging policy issues and provide the analysis that that will strengthen our advocacy at both the bargaining table and in the broader public.
- Work with our national partners at the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the National Union of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (NUCAUT) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to ensure that our members connect with the resources of these organizations and participate in the work and campaigns that these organizations develop on our behalf.
- Engage our members to become more active politically in their communities by organizing events and forums that highlight the importance of post-secondary education and the need for better

funding and policy choices by governments to improve that critical public service.

- Work with our locals to ensure that institutional governance shifts back towards a model in which faculty and staff at the institution are full and effective partners in all of the institution's governing bodies.
- Ensure that the Labour Relations services provided by FPSE are addressing the critical and emerging issues within our workplaces by properly resourcing the grievance and arbitration process and ensuring that, through the Grievance and Arbitration Review Committee (GARC) and the Contract Administration Review Committee (CARC), we continue to maintain strong and effective oversight on labour relations issues.
- Expand the efforts to organize the unorganized in private sector institutions by supporting the work of the Private Sector Locals and Organizing Committee and ensuring that the targets for organizing receive the critical first contract support from FPSE Labour Relations Staff.
- Increase capacity of locals to work with all forms of media.
- Ensure training of members on what it is to be a union, not just the mechanics but by instilling a sense of unionism.
- Expand our advocacy with all levels of the Ministry of Advanced Education and other relevant ministries on issues identified in the *Blueprint for Change*.

2. Support the work of allies and the broader community who are committed to improving access to post-secondary education in British Columbia.

Access to post-secondary education is a critical issue in British Columbia. After more than a decade of de-regulated tuition fees and chronic under-funding of our public post-secondary institutions, equal and progressive access to post-secondary education has been squeezed. Students have suffered the most with skyrocketing fees and onerous debt levels. Our members have suffered as well because under-funding means fewer resources at the institutional level.

To improve access FPSE will:

- Work with the Canadian Federation of Students not only to document the impacts that de-regulated tuition fees and chronic underfunding

have had on participation rates, but also develop new research that shows the benefits that accrue to governments, citizens, and the broader public when access to post-secondary education is improved.

- Identify and work with community partners to ensure that there is a shared concern about the issues related to access and a common agenda for ensuring those access issues are addressed.
- Expand the research done to date on learning environments to ensure that FPSE develops a comprehensive approach to this issue and links the improvements in learning environments to the priorities we advance at the bargaining table and in our various community campaigns.
- Target our work on access issues to ensure that it reflects the growing diversity of our communities as well as the specific challenges of under-represented groups within those communities.
- Ensure that our lobbying of government stresses the opportunities that improved access can provide in creating the economic and social conditions that British Columbia needs to sustain growth and prosperity for every citizen.

3. Spearhead efforts at both the local and provincial level to build and support the needed activism within our membership that will strengthen the solidarity that is so essential to the future of the labour movement.

Activism is critical to our effectiveness as a labour movement. Our members are our strength and engaging them in the work we do as locals, as a Federation, and as part of provincial and national labour organizations is not only necessary, it is the difference between success and failure in the work we do as unionists. We also know that building activism within our ranks can often be a slow process that requires resources, support, and leadership for that activism to take hold.

To build and support activism within our membership FPSE will:

- Enhance the work of our Standing Committees by ensuring that they have the Staff support necessary to fulfill their assignments and the resources necessary to provide workshops and convene targeted events that will, in turn, augment the work of Presidents' Council.

- Provide training opportunities for members of Presidents' Council and Chairs of Standing Committees to attend conferences and workshops organized by our provincial and national labour organizations.
- Continue to work with our locals to develop materials and research that supports greater participation and engagement of members in their local association or union.
- Work with the BC Federation of Labour's Organizing Institute to ensure that our organizing efforts not only strengthen our capacity to organize the unorganized, but also strengthen the ongoing outreach that every local must do with existing members to secure their support and solidarity.
- Work with locals to expand the range of steward training options available to them by collaborating with other unions whose systems of activist training complement the work that we do with our locals.
- Support the plan passed at the 2010 BC Federation of Labour Constitutional Convention that will see a series of regional conferences held this year in various regions of the province by ensuring the full participation of our locals in those conferences including the option of having our local activists lead the discussion at some of those regional events.