

U of S promises students \$25 for services lost during CUPE strike

Students say money doesn't make up for five weeks without academic services

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The Sheaf
(University of Saskatchewan)

SASKATOON (CUP)—Following a five-week support staff strike at the University of Saskatchewan, students have been told to expect a \$25 refund for services lost during the strike. While some students are applauding the motion, others are less impressed by the gesture.

Josie Steeves, Vice-President (Academic Affairs) at the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, said the credit could be put towards goods or services at the University Bookstore, Louis' Pub, the computer store, or other campus services.

"They've still got some work to do, but I think it's extremely promising that students will see some form of reimbursement," Steeves said, adding that the money is a "goodwill gesture."

Students who were more deeply affected by the five-week strike, such as those in veterinary medicine and dentistry, are likely to receive compensation on a case-by-case basis, she said.

But not everyone is pleased with the offer. Levi Nicholat, a student at the U of S, sees the \$25 refund as a "slap in the face."

"[The strike] lasted for about two months, so two-thirds of our semester, and they're giving us \$25? That's a little ridiculous."

Cameron Goodfellow, a graduate student working on his MA in history, said that the money doesn't make up for losses to grad students.

"It's a nice gesture, but I don't think it's sufficient. Grad students couldn't get books out of the library; that's a month off our research."

The University's Administration told the SU that they saved very little money during the strike. James Pepler, President of the Students' Union, said he expects the University to release their cost analysis so the union can verify the numbers.

Chad Kirlow, another student, also believes the school should do more for students. He says his hockey team missed six or seven games during the strike.

"You pay \$300 per semester to play hockey," he says. "They're not giving

us anything back."

Michelle Brock, who is in her final year of women's and gender studies, says she's insulted by the offer, adding that students had to cope for several weeks with bathrooms strewn with feces and tampons, classrooms overflowing with coffee cups, and library services that were largely inaccessible.

She believes the University mismanaged the strike and that it owes more to its students.

"If you want to make a gesture, make it sincere," Brock said. "That doesn't seem very sincere."

Students at the University of Regina will be seeing a slightly different kind of compensation package. That university has offered \$2.50 per student, which would be given to the University of Regina Students' Union to be dealt out at its discretion.

"We had a general meeting during the strike in order to ask students what they wanted to do, and they decided to have a referendum to decide how to spend all the money that they university gave," said Mike Burton, President of the University of Regina SU.

Millennium Scholarship Foundation lobbies feds for \$4 billion renewal

NICK TAYLOR-VAISEY
CUP Ottawa Bureau Chief

OTTAWA (CUP)—As the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) nears the end of its mandate, high-priced lobbyists are pushing and pulling to have the foundation's mandate renewed or terminated.

The Foundation recently hired two lobbyists with deep political roots to coordinate its government relations in Ottawa: Ron McLaughlin, a chief of staff to former Ontario premier Mike Harris, and Judith Moses, a long-time public servant who left the Privy Council Office in 2002.

Last May, the CMSF hired the tandem, both partners in government-relations firm McLaughlin-Moses Strategic Advisory Services, for a period of one year and at a cost of \$120 000.

The primary goal of the lobbying effort is the renewal of the CMSF mandate. According to documents obtained through an Access to Information request, the CMSF is calling for a "second ten-year mandate to improve access to postsecondary education" and "an up-front endowment of \$4 billion to be used to provide research-based student financial assistance programs to be delivered in conjunction with the provinces and territories."

According to the documents, McLaughlin and Moses arranged meetings with high-ranking officials, including Human Resources Minister Monte Solberg and the chief of staff to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

They also set up meetings with several senior officials in the Privy Council Office and participated in a number of meetings during the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' November lobby week.

But NDP MP Denise Savoie (Victoria) said that it's an unfortunate reality for students that it takes a lot of money to gain influence on Parliament Hill.

"It appears that if you can pay, you get into ministers' offices. And if you can't, you get a run-around, [and] you maybe see people who are not in the decision-making loop," she said. "But all of a sudden, [money] appears to have opened doors."

However, according to Andrew Parkin, associate executive director of the CMSF, hiring lobbyists is actually a cost-cutting strategy.

"The foundation doesn't have a big staff. For a lot of services like legal services, some research services, and some strategic-advice services, we contract those out because it's cheaper to do so," he said.

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DENISE SAVOIE
NDP MP (VICTORIA)

"While strategic-advice services are not necessarily cheap, it is better to hire people when you need them—and don't hire them when you don't need them—than it is to set up another office for the foundation permanently."

Duff Conacher, coordinator of Democracy Watch, an Ottawa-based advocacy group, said that the CMSF is doing nothing out of the ordinary by hiring well-connected lobbyists.

"There is a relatively small group of people who are active within parties generally and are, as a result, often the gatekeepers of access to cabinet ministers."

Liberal MP (Dartmouth—Cole

Harbour) and human-resources critic Mike Savage defended the merits of the CMSF, suggesting that they would only start lobbying "because they've been rebuffed in other ways" and that dealing with the federal Conservatives is a "very difficult environment."

Savage said that the CMSF should be renewed and that the government should go further to solving the financial-aid dilemma facing postsecondary students in Canada.

Nevertheless, Savoie stressed that lobby groups shouldn't be able to pay for influence.

"It's a question of who has access to government and decision-makers. If, by paying, that gives you greater access, then that's something that needs to be changed," she said. "Millennium isn't doing anything that's unusual, because lobbyists run amok in Ottawa. People just shrug their shoulders. [But] this is money that should go to student grants, not to lobbyists."

Indeed, the Canadian Federation of Students, Canada's largest student lobby group, has been calling for the termination of the CMSF for years.

Calling it a mere smokescreen for government public relations and citing how provincial governments redirected funds meant for students into other departments, the CFS has called for a federal system of needs-based grants and bursaries to replace the Foundation.

The CMSF was created by the Liberal government of Jean Chretien in 1998. It was granted a \$2.5 billion endowment, and it doled out \$350 million in bursaries this year. The foundation's mandate runs out following the next fiscal year, and Parkin was cautiously optimistic about its renewal.

"We feel this foundation has been given a polite and fair hearing and that the issue of student financial aid is on that the government is engaging with," he said. "That gives me reason to be optimistic that the issue is going to be dealt with."



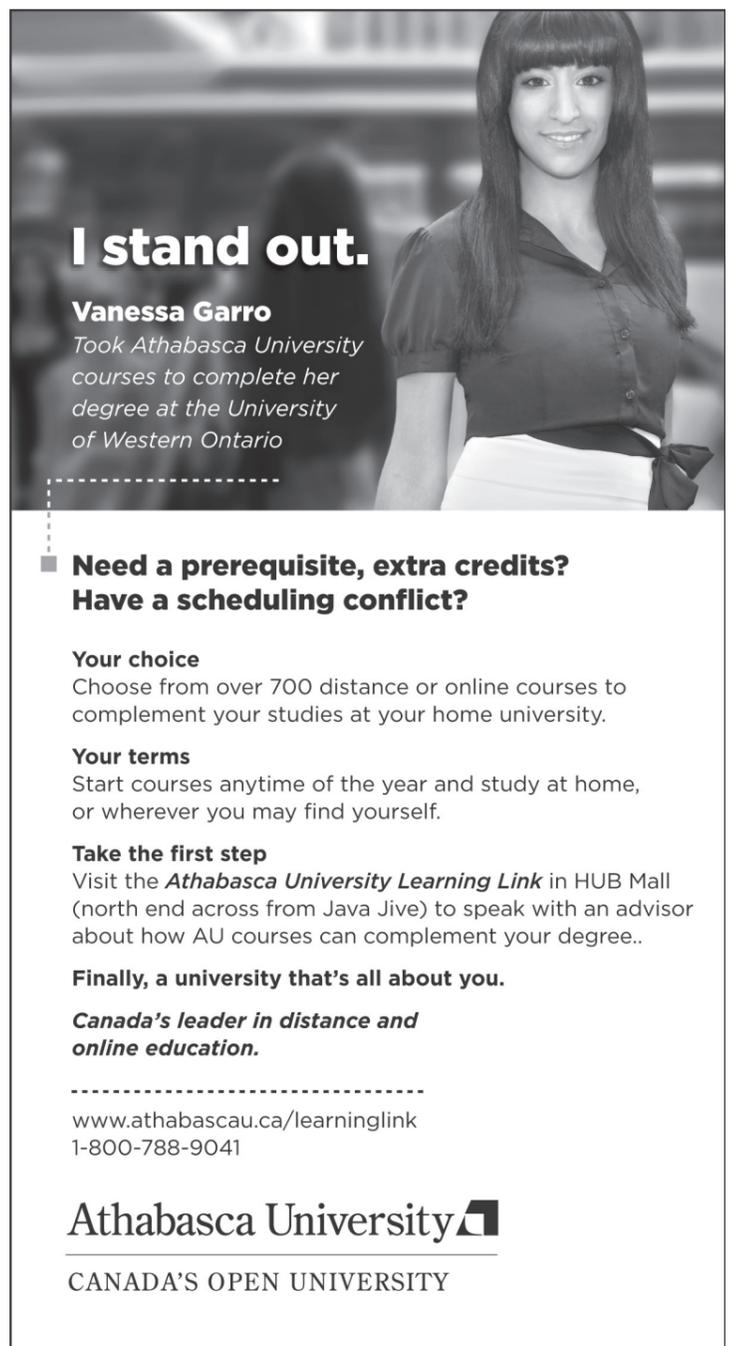
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