

Secret CFS campaign plans leaked

Document discovered through an email error outlines plans to purchase public service announcements on radio, TV, and in newspapers and free commuter dailies

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WINNIPEG (CUP)—Attempts to keep the Simon Fraser Student Society from leaving the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) encountered a major setback after CFS campaign plans for the coming referendum were accidentally circulated to every student union in British Columbia.

The document, aside from detailing how a campaign to keep a student union in the CFS might unfold, also suggests that pro-CFS people could be hired at key student unions across the country.

Three British Columbia student unions are preparing to hold referenda to leave the CFS, Canada's largest federal student lobby group, this spring: the students' unions of Kwantlen University College and Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria graduate students' union (UVGS).

Only plans for preventing the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) were circulated. On 29 January, CFS-BC organizer Summer McFadyen attempted to email the document to CFS national director of organizing Lucy Watson, but mistakenly sent the document to the CFS-BC Executive Committee email list, which includes representatives from every member student union in the province.

The "Referendum Campaign Plan and Tasklist," dated 23 January, includes a list of more than 250 people, their availability, and their relationship with the CFS. Most of them are

not even BC residents, leading some observers to question how they would get to BC to campaign for the CFS.

Titus Gregory, a policy analyst at the Kwantlen Students' Association (KSA), said that the people on the list will most likely be flown to BC to campaign for CFS in the referenda. He added that he did not know whether CFS, students' unions, or individuals themselves would be paying for the travel.

Some people on the list weren't even aware they had been considered to participate in the campaign.

"This is the first I've heard of it. This is the first that any of us here have heard of it," said Rachel Heinrichs, Vice-President of Advocacy at the University of Manitoba Students' Union.

"It's obviously their campaign plan or campaign strategy. I guess it could be a wish list."

Amanda Aziz, national chairperson of the CFS, said that the document was authored by the BC wing of the CFS without the input from the national office. She also said that there are no plans yet to fly anyone to BC to take part in the campaign.

"There has been no discussion about who is going to be attending," she said, adding that from past experience she knows that some people would express an interest in attending, though she wouldn't speculate as to whether their flights would be subsidized by the organization.

According to Aziz, the document is a normal part of campaigning. With three referenda coming up, she said, "I don't blame them for putting together a plan."

But according to Gregory, the document could also give student unions

hoping to leave the CFS some tips, not only on what CFS-BC is planning in the coming months, but also on a potential conflict of interest.

CFS bylaws state that any referendum to leave the organization must be pursued through CFS bylaws and not the student unions. They also stipulate that a four-person Referendum Oversight Committee (two from CFS, two from the local student union) must be struck to plan and regulate the referendum.

Watson is currently one of the CFS representatives to the Referendum Oversight Committee at three of the four universities: KSA, SFSS and UVGS.

"It appears that she is a key architect of the political strategy of the organization to prevent us from leaving the organization," Gregory said.

"It's a bit of a conflict of interest, and the KSA is considering demanding that Lucy Watson step down from the Referendum Oversight Committee."

Watson also served on the Referendum Oversight Committee during the University of Manitoba referendum to join the CFS in 2006.

Under the headline "materials," the document details plans to design and print a dozen different types of pamphlets, as well as several cloth banners, bus-pass covers, 500 International Student Identity cards, buttons and "point/counterpoint speaking notes for YES campaigners."

But Aziz said that the document was more of a brainstorming document that shouldn't have been circulated and wasn't a final plan.

"I'm trying to understand what Summer was thinking when writing it," she said.

British Columbia's multi-billion-dollar transit plan still not enough, say students

DAVID KARP
CUP Western Bureau Chief

VICTORIA (CUP)—17 days after British Columbia announced a \$4.75 billion transit plan, the Canadian Federation of Students presented the BC government with 12 000 signatures demanding a better deal.

On 14 January, the provincial government announced \$4.75 billion over the next 12 years to build a SkyTrain line to the main campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and a RapidBus line to the UBC-Okanagan campus in Kelowna, but according to BC-CFS chairperson Shamus Reid, who submitted the petition on 31 January, "We can't wait until 2030, 2020, or 2012 for these transit promises [...]. Change must come today."

He said the announcement of more transit funding has helped the CFS campaign.

"Most of that funding is going into capital budgets, specifically in the Greater Vancouver area. It's not addressing late-night service needs of communities in New Westminster and Surrey. It's not addressing the needs of students at Thompson Rivers University and Selkirk Community College."

But while fares are rising in Greater Vancouver, they're going down in Greater Victoria. On 30 January, BC Transit announced that it was eliminating two-zone there, translating into a \$0.60 reduction in fares for

many people in the region.

Reid presented the petitions to a security officer at a press conference on the steps of the BC Legislature. Eight students—seven from the University of Victoria Students' Society and one from the Camosun College Student Society—joined Reid in the announcement.

"It's not addressing late-night service needs of communities in New Westminster and Surrey. It's not addressing the needs of students at Thompson Rivers University and Selkirk Community College."

SHAMUS REID
BC-CFS CHAIRPERSON

The petitions call on the federal and provincial government for a "big-picture plan" that would create more frequent trips to universities and colleges, more late-night service, more express routes, and lower fares.

"If the Minister of Finance is floating the idea of increasing gas taxes, we want to see that money go directly toward funding improved service in our public transit system," said

University of Victoria Students' Society chairperson Tracy Ho.

"We want to see long-term sustainable funding in service, not just capital projects."

The students from the University of Victoria drove a car to and from the press conference, but Reid called on Finance Minister Carole Taylor to take the bus.

"In less than a month, Finance Minister Carole Taylor will be walking down these steps to deliver the 2008 BC budget," Reid said. "Our hope is that she'll arrive off one of the buses that are just over there, with a sense of the challenges of those who use public transit every day."

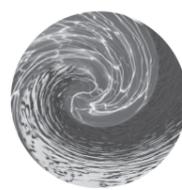
The petition is part of the CFS' We Ride campaign, which has been gathering signatures for the last four months—more than 4000 from Vancouver Island students and more than 8000 from the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, and the interior.

Rob Fleming, the provincial NDP's advanced education critic, was watching the announcement, and agreed that the government's funding announcement isn't adequate.

"It's great to put out a glossy 20-page brochure full of nice pictures, but it's another thing to actually begin to fund and implement some of these plans," he said.

Fleming said the plan favours Greater Vancouver at the expense of Victoria.

"There's no mention about LRT [light rail transit] here—even as far out as 2030—and to me that's unacceptable."



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