



STAND UP FOR STUDENTS

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

JANUARY 2019

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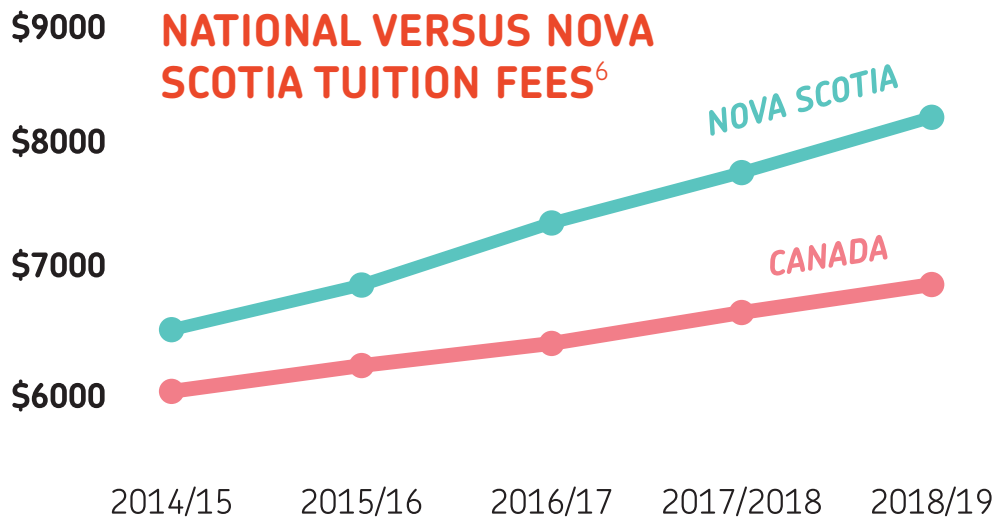


FREE EDUCATION

AS A RESULT of decreased government funding as a proportion of operating funds in the post-secondary education sector, costs have been increasingly downloaded onto students through the implementation of a user-fee model. In Nova Scotia tuition fees are the second highest in Canada, at an average of \$8,153 for the 2018-19 academic year, compared to a national average of \$6,838. Accessing an education—increasingly essential to securing a good job and grows the province's economy—has shifted from a public good to a personal investment that is accompanied by life-impacting debt.

Nearly 1 in 3 Nova Scotians either would not, or knew someone in their family who would not, apply to attend a post-secondary institution because it would mean incurring too much debt.²

Rising tuition fees and the prevalence of loan-based financial assistance have pushed student debt to historic levels. In 2014-15, over 16,000 students in Nova Scotia took out more than \$115 million in loans to finance their education.³ Right now, students in Canada owe a combined \$28 billion to all levels of government.⁴ This figure does not account for students who are forced to borrow from private sources.



A loans-based financial assistance program penalizes students who are unable to cover the high up-front cost of education. Due to the accrual of interest on student loans, those who require financial assistance end up paying more for their education than individuals who can afford the cost of their education up-front. Programs such as the Loan Forgiveness Program and the 0% Interest on NS Student Loans fail to address the needs of students who do not qualify for these programs or cannot take on the risk associated with the amount of debt required to finance an education.

With post-secondary education now required for 70% of all new jobs⁵, it is time for Nova Scotia to invest in making our universities and colleges universally accessible. Making post-secondary education accessible will boost economic output, persuade more young people to study at home and end the debt incurred simply for pursuing an education that has become necessary in today's job market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately decrease tuition by 10%
- To ensure that post-secondary education is accessible to all, pass legislation to mandate the immediate reduction and progressive elimination of tuition and user fees for all university and college students in the province, by engaging with the federal government to create a 50/50 cost-sharing model for post-secondary education

COST: \$206.75 Million

- Eliminate the Tuition and Education Tax Credit
- Redirect \$30 million in new revenue to offset cost of free tuition**
- To ensure universities can keep pace with on going operating expense increases, increase universities annual operating grant

COST: \$13 million

- To ensure accountability and transparency in our publicly funded institutions, amend legislation governing universities to standardise public access to university board of governors meetings in Nova Scotia



STUDENT ASSISTANCE

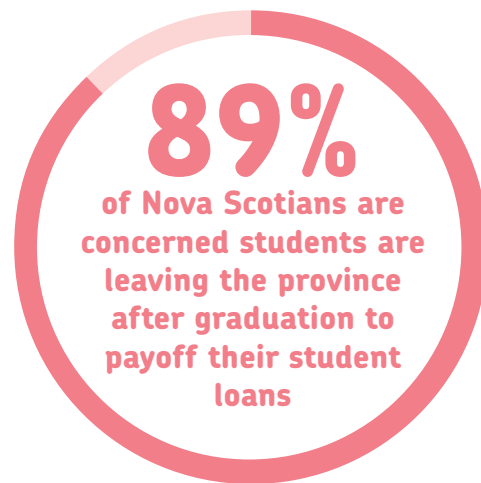
THE BEST WAY to ensure access to post-secondary education in Nova Scotia is through the removal of all upfront barriers to education through the elimination of user fees paired with a robust grant-based system. Along with eliminating up-front barriers through federal-provincial cost sharing, Nova Scotia can help reduce the burden of student debt by implementing a system of upfront needs-based provincial grants to cover the entire amount of the provincial student loan.

Students in Nova Scotia are currently provided some debt relief through the Loan Forgiveness Program. However, the program does not cover students studying outside Nova Scotia, students be-

yond their first five years of study and provides no coverage if the student does not complete their degree. Considering that students from low-income families are the most likely to take longer to complete their degree, or not complete at all, the Loan Forgiveness Program fails to provide support to those students who need it most.⁷ A 2010 report from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission shows that students from the Maritimes region are most likely to extend their study.⁸ Students may need to extend their degree because of family or work obligations, program changes, or even administrative issues within their program. The government of Nova Scotia should eliminate the

Loan Forgiveness Program and use this funding to offset the cost of a 100% up-front, needs-based grants student assistance program in Nova Scotia.

Additionally, Nova Scotia is failing to support people who need the most assistance accessing post-secondary education. Since the implementation of Regulation 67 anyone on social assistance seeking to attend a post-secondary education program longer than two years must apply for the CareerSeek program. Under CareerSeek, an individual must meet several rigid application criteria. The program demands that students prove they are unable to otherwise find work along with demonstrating that they have the means to pay costs related to tuition, textbooks, student fees, child care, and transportation for the



duration of the program through approved loans or other means. Prior to 2000, students were permitted to receive social assistance while enrolled in post-secondary education. When this policy changed in 2000, 1,600 students were receiving social assistance. In contrast, there are just 15 individuals currently involved with the CareerSeek program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conversion of all student loans to non-repayable grants

COST: \$18.6 Million

- Eliminate the Student Loan Forgiveness Program and the Interest Free Student Loan Program

Redirect \$14 million to offset cost of elimination of Nova Scotia Student Loans in favour of non-repayable grants

- Ensure access to post-secondary education for all Nova Scotians, repeal Regulation 67



BUILDING A CONSENT CULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

STUDENTS HAVE BEEN on the forefront of combatting sexualized violence for decades, and attitudes are changing as a result of this tireless effort. Unfortunately, the numbers are not. One in five women studying in North American post-secondary institutions still experience some form of sexualized violence over the course of her studies. We know these numbers are much higher for marginalized students.

Students continue to call for legislation to ensure that all campuses are mandated to have sexual assault policies that are developed through a student-led

process that centres survivors and victims, mandates consent education and ensures survivor support. We are also calling for the development of accountability measures for when universities and colleges fail survivors and victims, which are clear and accessible. Mandating training for students, faculty, staff and administration is a necessary step to creating a culture of consent on campus.

Despite the critical and time sensitive task of creating a consent culture on our campuses, action has taken the form of reports by the government. Unfortunately, campus responses have fallen

short of the bold changes recommended in these reports. Notably, dedicated supports for victims and survivors of sexual violence continue to be minimal on campus.

Lack of supports for survivors is a province wide issue. In the last year, sexual assault services across NS have reported increases in access and demand for services, and the provincial funding for these services does not meet their needs. Some services created under the NS Provincial Sexualized Violence Prevention Strategy have lost funding and this has resulted in the loss of services in those communities.

This lack of funding is particularly alarming as universities are now turning to local sexual assault centres in order to fulfill their new mandate of addressing sexualized violence on campus while these services lack sustainable funding to support the high number of students that are attempting to access their services, in addition to commu-

nity members/non-students in need of support. Chronic lack of funding to these centres and the piecemeal approach to tackling sexualized violence means students and their communities are left underserved. Students are calling for dedicated funding for survivor supports on campuses and for the implementation of sustainable funding to support centres and programs across the province.

Students are calling for the establishment of a province wide sexualized violence committee that includes organizations that represent marginalized communities disproportionately affected by sexualized violence, front line community organizations that work on the issue, and the Canadian Federation of Students to ensure consistency and create a coordinated approach to combatting sexualized violence. This will ensure that Nova Scotia has a rigorous and holistic approach to sexualized violence, and help us find a path toward consent culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a dedicated Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund accessible to students, campus groups, universities, and the Nova Scotia Community College. Funding for projects created under this fund will be renewable on an annual basis and the future size of the fund should be determined by community interest and the demand for project renewals

COST: \$2 Million

- Introduce legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions have stand-alone sexual assault policies that are renewed every two years through a student-driven process which requires universities and colleges to report publicly on incidences of sexual violence, include mandatory consent education for everyone on campus and a mandate survivor/victim support services on campus
- Adequately fund core sexual assault services in the province as recommended by the Sexual Assault Services Network of Nova Scotia

COST: \$2.25 Million

- Strike a province wide sexualized violence committee that includes organizations that represent marginalized communities disproportionately affected by sexualized violence, front line community organizations that address sexualized violence and the Canadian Federation of Students



INDIGENOUS ACCESS TO EDUCATION —

THE 94 RECOMMENDATIONS of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission represented a landmark moment for addressing the harm and ongoing colonialism of Indigenous people. In Nova Scotia, we work and study on unceded, unsurrendered Mi'kmaq territory that is covered under the Treaties of Peace and Friendship signed between the British Crown and the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy First Nations in 1760. In addition to upholding treaty agreements, the provincial and federal governments have a moral responsibility to fulfill these recommendations and uphold the rights of Indigenous people.

The failure of the Canadian federal government to fulfill its responsibility to ensure Indigenous

peoples' access to education has left a startling gap in quality of life between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Educational attainment levels among Indigenous people remain significantly lower than the non-Indigenous population.

Post-secondary institutions have a critical role to play to address this reality. Currently, Indigenous learners not only have trouble accessing post-secondary education, due to the high cost of tuition fees but also lack culturally-specific resources and support on campus. In addition, too often syllabi omit history, culture, and languages. Post-secondary institutions must take action, and the provincial government has a role to play to make this a reality.

TRC RECOMMENDATION #16: INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action #16 recognizes post-secondary institutions as critical sites of language revitalization and calls upon post-secondary institutions to “create university and college degrees and diploma programs in Indigenous languages”.

There are over 60 Indigenous languages from coast-to-coast, according to a 2011 census report. However, many are under threat of dis-

appearing unless we take decisive action to conserve and promote their use. Research has shown that Indigenous mother tongue dropped from almost 26% in 1996 to 14.5% in 2011, close to a 50% drop in 15 years. Today, only 8.4% of Indigenous youth know and speak their traditional language. At public post-secondary institutions across the country, access to Indigenous languages and culture are often not

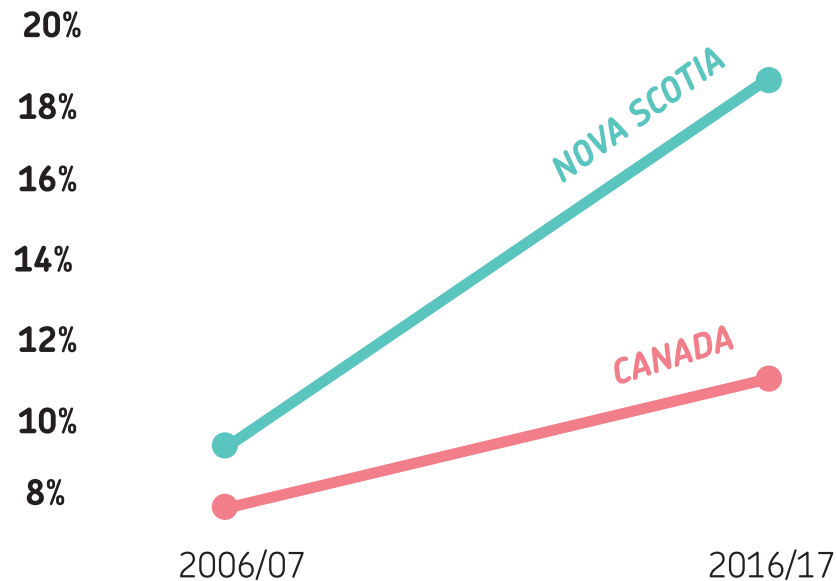
available. As an intrinsic part of culture, language is essential to the process of reconciliation and the ability of Indigenous communities to heal and thrive.

Currently, the Unama’ki college at Cape Breton is the only post-secondary institution in Nova Scotia to offer Mi’kmaq language classes, despite language departments existing in many of the 10 universities and 1 college that are publicly funded in the province.

RECOMMENDATION

- Create a **10 million dollar** fund dedicated to preserving, promoting and honoring Indigenous languages and cultures at the post-secondary level and work with Indigenous students and faculty to implement these programs

PERCENTAGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA VERSUS THE REST OF CANADA



FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS enrolled in post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of universities and colleges. In addition to the contributions to the community of higher education, there is a significant economic benefit to international students studying in Nova Scotia. In 2014, international students spent \$324.7 million in our province, which resulted in 3,328 new jobs and \$142 million in wages.⁹ International students are a critical component of Nova Scotia's economy.

Increased levels of participation have been critical to the higher

education sector in Nova Scotia, as overall enrolment in universities and colleges in Nova Scotia declines. Nova Scotia relies on international students more than other parts of the country, where international student enrolment at Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions increased by 7% in 2014-15.¹⁰

Universities in Nova Scotia cite increased international student enrolment as a priority, but the motivation behind this trend is troubling. After facing years of cuts to public funding for universities and colleges, institutions are turning to deregulated inter-

national student tuition fees as an alternative source of funding. This pattern exploits international students by charging on average 3.7 times the rate of domestic tuition fees for the same education. A common misconception is that international students come from wealthy families but that is simply not always the case. Many students' families take on massive debt to send their children to school in Nova Scotia. In addition to massive differential fees, international students face challenges in accessing basic services such as provincial health care in their first year of study and are forced

to purchase expensive private health care coverage. As universities become increasingly desperate for international student tuition fees to keep the system afloat, international recruiters are resorting to unprincipled tactics to attract international students to Nova Scotia. Increased public funding is a far more suitable alternative to long-term institutional sustainability than the exploitation of international students, many of whom are interested in permanently relocating to Nova Scotia where they will continue to invest in the economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eliminate differential fees for International students
 - Provide Medical Services Insurance immediately upon arrival in Nova Scotia because access to healthcare is a human right
- COST: \$800,000**
- Strike a task force to investigate claims of predatory recruitment to ensure international students are not recruited under false pretences, and to protect Nova Scotia's reputation as a destination for international learners
 - Work with the federal government to clarify and simplify pathways to permanent residency in Nova Scotia with the aim of ensuring international students can contribute to the province of Nova Scotia after their education is complete



PROTECTING YOUNG WORKERS

STUDENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA not only face some of the highest tuition fees in Canada, they also face high rates of youth unemployment and the lowest minimum wage in the country.

On average there were 1,400 fewer youth employed in 2017 than 2016.

Although the Government of Nova Scotia has invested in job creation programs, it is clear that these programs are underutilised and insufficient to address the growing crisis of youth employment in the province.

At times of high youth unemploy-

ment, students are especially vulnerable to exploitation in the workforce. High competition for work means that students are forced to work multiple, precarious, part-time jobs and increasingly, unpaid internships; working for free in hopes of developing experience that will lead to paid work. The government must show leadership and ensure that students are fairly compensated for the work they do. The government should send a strong message that replacing entry-level positions with unpaid work is unacceptable and immediately end the practice of hiring unpaid interns in the provincial government.

Nova Scotia is the province with the lowest minimum wage. Minimum wage increases have failed to keep pace with inflation, while tuition fees have far outpaced inflation. In the past, working a minimum wage job to pay for tuition was a viable strategy, but that is no longer the case. Additionally, Nova Scotia is one of only three provinces with an inexperienced minimum wage. Students are disproportionately impacted by the inexperienced minimum wage, since they are often working several temporary, part-time jobs to finance the high cost of tuition

while they are in school. These students working minimum wage jobs can be paid \$0.50 below the minimum wage, legally making them some of the lowest paid workers in the country. Over the course of a four-month summer job, a student may make the inexperienced employee minimum wage for most of their employment term. Employees should be compensated based on work performed, not past experience, and compensated at a level that better reflects the cost of living in Nova Scotia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduce a \$15 minimum wage and an elimination of the inexperienced minimum wage. Ensure students are fairly compensated and able to support themselves as they work in Nova Scotia and contribute to the economy
- Regulate experiential learning positions, guaranteeing working conditions and minimum compensation. Ensure an end to exploitation of students who are undertaking experiential learning opportunities
- End the practice of hiring unpaid internships within the Government of Nova Scotia



STAND UP FOR STUDENT RIGHTS

STUDENTS' UNIONS are crucial democratic organizations in our society and around the world that are independent and separately incorporated from universities and government. Students have acted on their freedom of association to band together and create collective representation that advocates for students' best interests and provides cost-saving services.

Student's unions serve their members in a number of significant ways, including coordinating health and dental insurance plans, negotiating discount transit passes for students, providing academic support and advocacy

services, collecting fees for independent campus press, operating food banks, coordinating orientation and operating funding for student clubs. Students also vote through referendums to collect levies to fund campus groups, including those that support LGBTQ+ student centers, women's centers, sexual violence support centers, student refugee programs and more.

Despite providing essential services and representation and being cornerstones of campus life, the 10 students' unions in Nova Scotia have no legislative protection for their right to exist, with the exception of the Dalhousie

Students' Union, which is incorporated under legislation passed in 1966.

In representing their members, students' unions are often critical of government policy and serve to hold administrators accountable - which places them in a vulnerable position. In Quebec, students' unions are protected under the "Act respecting the accreditation and financing of students' asso-

ciations", or A-3.01, and students in British Columbia are protected under the College and Institutes Act (Section 21), both of which outline the right of students' unions to exist and detail the process for collection and remittance of fees. Students are calling on the government to pass similar legislation here in Nova Scotia to protect the critical role of students' unions in this province.

RECOMMENDATION

- Pass legislation that recognizes the autonomy of student associations at post-secondary institutions, requires accountability of student associations to their members and ensures the collection and remittance by post-secondary educational institutions of fees levied by student associations

SUMMARY

ELIMINATE TUITION FEES

- Legislation to mandate the elimination of tuition and user fees for all university & college students in the province, by engaging with the federal government to create a 50/50 cost-sharing model for post-secondary education

COST: \$206.75 Million

- Eliminate the Tuition and Education Tax Credit
- Redirect \$30 million in new revenue to offset cost of free tuition
- Increase universities annual operating grant

COST: \$13 million

- Standardise public access to university board of governors meetings in Nova Scotia

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

- Convert student loans to non-repayable grants
- COST: \$18.6 Million**
- Eliminate the Student Loan Forgiveness Program and the Interest Free Student Loan Program
 - Redirect \$14 million to offset cost of elimination of Nova Scotia Student Loans.
 - Repeal of Regulation 67

FAIRNESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Cover international students under Medical Services Insurance immediately upon their arrival in Nova Scotia

COST: \$800,000

- Strike a task force to investigate claims of predatory recruitment
- Work with the federal government to clarify and simplify pathways to permanent residency in Nova Scotia.

BUILDING A CONSENT CULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

- Create a dedicated Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund

COST: \$2 Million

- Bring forward legislation to mandate all post-secondary institutions have stand-alone sexual assault policies
- Fund core sexual assault services in the province

COST: \$2.25 Million

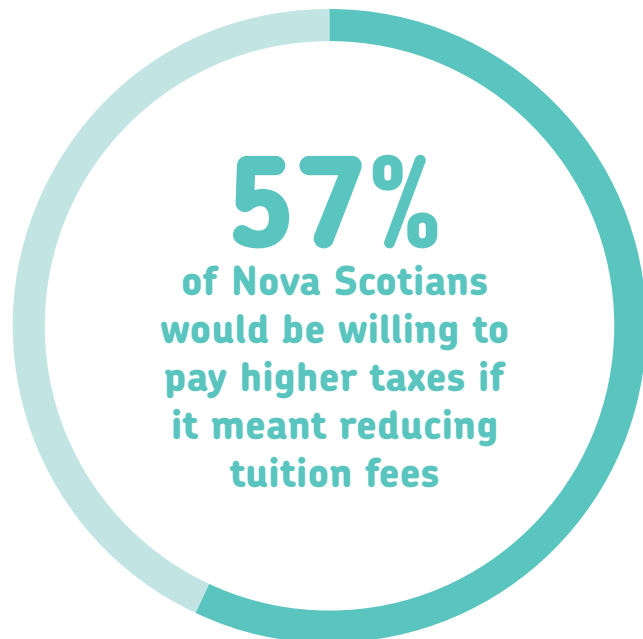
- Strike a province wide sexualized violence committee with representation from marginalized communities, front line community organizations and the Canadian Federation of Students

INDIGENOUS ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Create a **10 million dollar** fund to preserve, promote and honor Indigenous languages and cultures at the post-secondary level

PROTECTING YOUNG WORKERS

- Introduce a \$15 minimum wage, and an elimination of the inexperienced minimum wage
- Regulate experiential learning positions
- End the practice of hiring unpaid internships within the Government of Nova Scotia



STAND UP FOR STUDENT RIGHTS

- Pass legislation that recognizes the autonomy of student associations at post-secondary institutions

TOTAL COST:
**\$209.4
MILLION**

REVENUE OFFSETS

- Eliminate tax rebate for energy consumption: \$105 million
- Introduce a Carbon Tax: \$154 million
- Shift federal tax deductions and non-refundable credits to provincial refundable tax credits: \$239 million
- 1% increase on top two tax brackets: \$54 million
- Fully tax capital gains: \$78 million

TOTAL
VALUE OF
OFFSETS:
**\$630
MILLION¹¹**

END NOTES

1. Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0045-01 "Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study." (January 15, 2019)
2. Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Education Coalition, "Public Education for the Public Good: Public Opinion on Post-Secondary Education in Nova Scotia." 2017.
3. Statistics Canada, "Statistical review: Canada Student Loans Program 2014-2015." (January 15, 2019)
4. Harden, Joel, "The Political Economy of Student Debt in Canada," 2017
5. Canadian Occupation Projection System (COPS), "Imbalances Between Labour Demand and Supply (2017-2026)." October 2017
6. Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0003-01 "Canadian undergraduate tuition fees by field of study." (January 15, 2019)
7. Canadian Federation of Students "Student Debt in Canada: Education Shouldn't be a Debt Sentence." 2013
8. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission "Student Progression Within University of First Entry: Persistence and Graduation." 2010
9. Global Affairs Canada, "Economic Impact of International Students in Canada." 2016
10. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, "Annual Digest: University Enrolment 2014-2015." 2016
11. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2018: A Budget for the People." 2018



Established in 1981, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is the largest national student organisation in Canada. The Federation unites more than 500,000 college, undergraduate, graduate, part-time and international students across Canada.

