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From the Executive

Kelly Pitman, CCFA President



Hello, friends.

Well, it's been an eventful couple of weeks, with a great deal of energy directed at understanding the provincial government's changeable messaging on the ESL funding situation and at joining with ELD instructors, students, and CUPE in advocating for the students who could be affected if the province sees a dramatic reduction in language training for immigrants. FPSE is also involved in the campaign and its PR folks have created some videos with students and teachers, which Erin will be sending out to you. Other faculty unions around the province are pointing to the CCFA as the body that began the furor that ultimately led to the provision of transitional funding. On conferring with colleagues across the system I have learned that other post-secondary providers of ESL education did not receive an amount of money proportionate to ours. Since the total amount of transition funding is still \$7 million short of the total funding needed to run programs as is for one year, this is not surprising. For instance, Vancouver Community College received only 44% of the transition funds and the faculty association there has been told that their domestic student numbers will go from approximately 3000 students in April to only 300 by late July. This could put up to 80 faculty members out of work.

CCFA Executive

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www.camosunfaculty.ca

The larger context of the cuts to ELD, of course, is the provincial budget, which isn't particularly friendly to public institutions, including post-secondary institutions. On the plus side, the opposition seems to be focusing much of its inquiry and critique on the disparity between the province's stated goals or values and the lack of support for the education that will help people get jobs and support families.

On Monday, March 3, FPSE local presidents met with Amrik Virk, Minister of Advance Education and two of his staff members as well as with David Eby, Critic of Advanced Education for the opposition. The topics were ESL funding, International Education, Service Plan mandates, the funding formula for BC post-secondary institutions, and the accounting policy that restricts the use of reserve/surplus funds that have built up over the years. On the ESL question, he told us that he is waiting to see what the federal government will come up with as a plan and then will perform a "gap analysis" to see what is missing. He did not commit to filling any gap his ministry finds. Indeed, he was vague on many counts, which is probably not a shock. He said quite often that we are "all on the same page" on many issues, but also stated repeatedly that the amount available for post-secondary education will remain limited and indeed will continue to be cut through the next budget. We spoke passionately about the threats to the system resulting from years of flat or reduced funding. He responded that we have to be "flexible and nimble" and questioned whether we are delivering our services efficiently. His emphasis was very much on tying all

programming to employment outcomes deemed necessary by key industries. The catchphrase of the day appears to be "learner to earner." For more details about the FPSE Lobby, click here: [FPSE Lobby Briefing Book](#).

Thanks to all who came out to the last two general meetings. Discussions of budget are always stressful, and the executive continues to convey to administration that we are troubled by its lack of transparency in the budget planning process. We've submitted some ideas, as many of you probably have, but when we don't get responses, it's hard to understand the administration's definition of consultation. There's not much time left, either.

For those who couldn't come to the meeting on Friday, February 28, I'd like to clarify two things. The document the CCFA executive sent out regarding ways in which CCFA members might, in a worse-case scenario, save jobs by cutting costs or increasing revenue was meant to be a discussion document only, not a list of recommendations. And again, note that the first eight items on the list are all voluntary actions that do not violate the collective agreement. The more controversial issue of union concessions obviously cannot be discussed until we know what we're facing.

Another point of clarification, when I said at the GM that it is hard to prove a net increase in senior administrative positions, I meant a recent one. If you take a longer view, say a decade, there has been considerable increase in the number of positions, the level of positions, and the amount of budget they take up. We have raised this with admin.

The next two weeks will see administration's final deliberation about the nature of cuts we might see at the college in the next budget year. We will continue to press for immediate and plentiful information about what measures they are debating. Though we try to convey it, I am not sure that administration understands the extent of the stress college employees feel when they are kept in the dark about the potential future of their programs.

And let me finish by saying your thoughtful and respectful dialogue in the face of that stress is impressive.

From the FPSE Human Rights & International Solidarity Committee

Larry Hannant, History

On February 21, I participated in the spring meeting of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee in Vancouver. The next day I attended the FPSE spring conference. The sessions caused me to think further about issues that I think are important for the CCFA and Camosun College.

Among other outcomes from the Human Rights Committee was a decision to organize a second round of the successful speakers' tour that occurred in early November 2013, which focused on water as a human right. Camosun benefitted at that time from hearing Paul Manly, a filmmaker and water rights activist speaking about access to water on Vancouver Island and about national and international problems concerning fresh water.

The second round of the speakers' tour will take place in March, and Camosun might be one of the venues in which a different speaker will talk about the issue of water and how it affects Native people in BC. Stay tuned for updates on that front.

At the FPSE Spring Conference, I was most impressed by two presentations focused on strategies for the upcoming round of contract negotiations that college instructors and many other public sector workers will take up in 2014-5. The speakers were Michael Gardiner, the director of communications for the BC Federation of Labour, and Jim Sinclair, the BC Federation of Labour president. Gardiner's presentation focused on his intensive polling of people in BC, asking them about issues that are key to us as educators and as public sector workers. His presentation provided factual evidence that many people in BC share the values that we as educators uphold – especially social justice, compassion and fairness. Although the BC Liberals – with their emphasis on cutting the provincial budget at any cost, their sympathy with the private sector and their evident disregard for the value of post-secondary education and educators – won the 2013 election, Gardiner's polling suggests that only a minority of people in BC share the BC Liberal Party's values.

Jim Sinclair's speech dealt with similar themes, and he particularly emphasized the issue of training skilled workers, which the provincial government claims to want to do but which it has consistently failed to fund. Instead

of properly funding the province's excellent post-secondary education institutions to train workers, the provincial and federal governments and private sector employers prefer to cut public-sector institutions' budgets and import temporary foreign workers, who are highly exploited because of their vulnerable status.

The BC Fed speakers suggested to me that in the upcoming bargaining round, post-secondary educators should raise their sights strategically. Given the utter determination of the provincial government to impose strict limitations on our bargaining with the colleges, we might be tempted to doubt that we can win anything of substance in the upcoming contract talks. That might lead us to lower our sights. In fact our approach should be the opposite. Rather than setting our sights low and getting locked into local talks that seem to offer little gain, we should think more broadly. I suggest that we use the contract negotiations as an opportunity to conduct a wide-ranging public relations campaign that emphasizes the values we share with the majority of British Columbians. This campaign can build from the public relations outreach that the CCFA has already effectively begun over the issue of the funding cuts to our ESL program. (And on the ESL front, we can't allow ourselves to be bought off by the provincial government's temporary injection of funds that appears to have brought relief to the college for one year.) In short, we need to see the next year as offering opportunities for us to take our case and the arguments for public education to the people of BC.

From the FPSE Education Policy Committee

*Blair Fisher, Criminal Justice
Chair, FPSE Ed. Policy Committee*

The Education Policy Committee meets twice per year to discuss issues and concerns related to educational issues that are common amongst the member locals. In the past we have looked at a wide number of issues and framed them for use at the various local levels. This year we have raised a number of concerns, some of which apply to Camosun directly while others are of concern to other locals. Here is an overview of the primary issues that have been raised that affect our Camosun community.

An issue that seems to be more problematic at other member locals but we should be no less vigilant at Camosun is the use of Pathways agreements and specifically how these are being used in regards to ESL Programs. These pathway agreements are made by administration and are often made with Private institutions to have ESL students gain direct entry into whichever agreed upon level at the college. The primary concern for this from an educational perspective is that in some institutions, ESL programs are being cut and Pathway agreements are being expanded therefore transferring job opportunities into the private sector and

in some cases to non-unionized positions. This strategy seems to be used as a way to deal with cuts to ESL funding by the government and it is important that we keep aware of this potential during the 'transition' to less funded ESL programs.

A second issue that has been discussed and is directly applicable here at Camosun, is the introduction of Infosilem. Infosilem has faced many challenges in institutions where it has been in place and we will need to keep abreast of court rulings in regards to this as employers are being told by the courts that they need to make reasonable accommodations to employee schedules in a variety of areas including childcare and workday parameters.

If you have any questions or concerns in either of these areas, or in any other area of educational policies, please let me know so that they can be discussed and we can continue to create a healthy, happy working and educational environment here at Camosun.

From the CCFA Archives

A glimpse into the Association's past - the more things change the more they stay the same:

Minutes of the General Meeting held on Tuesday 30th June 1973 at Interurban.

The meeting was held up for 15 minutes because of too few members. This was no handicap, however, as it allowed those present to eat the sandwiches provided without interruption. The sandwiches were excellent.

