



Federation of
Post-Secondary Educators
of BC

MEMO

From: President, Jasmine Nicholsfigueiredo

To: Presidents' Council

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Introduction

British Columbia has been plunged into a surprising and, according to most British Columbians, unnecessary election. However, it is also an opportunity to foreground our issues and highlight the crisis in post-secondary education that has unfolded across the province in the last several years.

The reality is that we will be facing significant headwinds in making post-secondary an election issue. While FPSE will be attempting to foreground province wide issues, the fact is that the most promising opportunities for impact will likely come at the local level. This moment is our best opportunity for impact to shape our sector for years to come.

To that end, this guide is meant to provide you with some tips and tools about what can be done at the local level. You will find a set of talking points about issues affecting our local institutions along with questions that you can pose to the candidates running in your riding as well as deploy for interviews with local media. In addition, there are a set of pragmatic tools to help assist in planning an all-candidates meeting, garner local media attention, and amplify our voices across the province.

In the coming days FPSE will be sending a set of questions to all of the major parties asking for commitments on our core issues. We will also do a comprehensive analysis of the campaign platforms when they are released.

Talking Points and Core Issues

- Our sector is in crisis, and we have seen 1300 layoffs, over 200 program closures, and 19 of 25 public institutions have been projected to operate at a loss, with an estimated \$300 million annual shortfall.
- University transfer, skills training, and comprehensive college offerings are imperilled by these cuts, and rural institutions are particularly vulnerable. These cuts will mean that more students will have to travel to study. Though Premier Eby speaks consistently of the threats posed by tariffs, that talk is in contrast to the displacement on the ground in rural communities. At a time of economic vulnerability, the province is choking off access to post-secondary education in rural communities.
- The crisis we find ourselves in was entirely predictable. FPSE has been warning for years that depending on international student tuition fees to backfill the funding shortfall was doomed to fail. When the federal government dramatically cut back on international study permits in early 2023, British Columbia institutions were ill-prepared and the province has been silent throughout this crisis as layoffs and program closures multiply across the province.
- The first clue that the government even understood there was a crisis was the announcement of the Avison review in November of 2025. As has been widely reported the review was initially under significant constraints, including a time that called for consolation to wrap up in 6 weeks, and the final report was to be delivered shortly thereafter. In addition, Avison was directed to not include any calls for new funding to his recommendations. The entire process felt tone deaf to our members and was unlikely to address the structural issues driving this crisis. The report was submitted to government in late April, and the government indicated it was going to study the report over the summer and announce changes this Fall. All that work was interrupted by this election call, and it is vital that we have a transparent plan to implement the Avison report that involves our members and our union partners.

- Our Boards of Governors are cloaked in secrecy and operate in a manner that is hostile and antithetical to transparency. We believe that the composition of the Boards needs to change to better reflect the communities our institutions serve. We also need governance reform to address the democratic deficit at the heart of our Boards.
- BC's system of student financial aid has started to lag other provinces in students grants and access for underrepresented groups.

Questions for Candidates

- Will your party commit to increasing funding for post-secondary institutions in light of the precipitous drop in international student enrolment?
- Will your party commit to releasing the Avison report publicly and engaging unions and community groups in dialogue before making any decisions about the recommendations?
- Will your party protect the right of rural students to learn in their home communities?
- Will your party commit to protecting access to post-secondary education in every region of B.C.? And, what specific funding or policy measures will you use to prevent program cuts, campus closures, and reductions in educational opportunities in rural, remote, and regional communities?
- What is your vision of ensuring that AI does not have a destructive effect on our sector? The government refused to bargain AI language in this round of bargaining. Are you supportive of education workers having the right to bargain language on AI into our collective agreements?

Tips and Tools

- Work with community groups on and off campus to co-sponsor an all-candidates debate.
- Book space on campus for a debate.
- Work with the student union in sponsoring and communicating the debate.
- Look for a senior leader and/or a respected community member on or off campus to moderate the debate. The moderator should be viewed publicly as non-partisan.
- Don't necessarily pitch it as a post-secondary debate but do host on campus and ensure that post-secondary issues are foregrounded.
- Invite MLA's from the three major parties (NDP, Conservative, and Green Party) and as a suggestion once you have confirmation of two representatives confirm that the debate will move forward in order to pressure the hold out party.
- If organizing an all-candidates meeting is not realistic, explore the option of hosting a forum on the crisis in post-secondary education. Using this as a jumping off point for media attention on our issues.
- Regardless of what events you decide to host, amplify the message via your social media channels.

Prepare an Op-Ed for Local Media

- Op-Eds are typically 800 words and should be focused on local issues. The Op-Ed should be pitched to local media, including student media.
- Focus on specific asks and issues that the candidates have the power to change.

- Evaluate the party platforms and commitments and records of local candidates. Unless relevant avoid any personal criticism.
- Do not use AI to help write the op-ed as editors are vetting and disqualifying submissions with traces of AI!