

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Students call out government process undemocratic and demand tuition fees be legislated.**

K'JIPUKTUK/HALIFAX - The Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, Labi Kousoulis, is currently negotiating tuition fee regulation and university funding for the next five years in backdoor meetings with University presidents and students are calling out the process as undemocratic.

“No one knows what the future of postsecondary education in this province will look like because the government and university presidents are negotiating behind closed doors,” said Aidan McNally, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Student-Nova Scotia, “Students and Nova Scotians deserve better. We are calling for this government to take the lead from provinces like Manitoba and Alberta, where legislated tuition fees ensure a transparent process.”

Legislating tuition fees would put an end to the current system – where a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed between the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) and the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education which dictates tuition fee caps and university funding levels without public input. The current MOU between the two parties will expire March 31, 2019. The new agreement will determine the state of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia until 2023, longer than any previous MOU. Although students were consulted initially, they have been removed from the negotiating process.

Mandating that tuition fees and funding be legislated like any other government spending proposal would allow for public participation and ensure elected representatives be held accountable for their votes.

Since 2015, this government’s “tuition fee reset” has resulted in average tuition fee increases of over 20 percent. Students are gravely concerned that they could see even larger tuition fee increases in the future.

“The last MOU process was a direct attack on accessible education – where Nova Scotians were subject to the highest tuition fee increases of anywhere in the country,” said McNally “If universities and this government were actually attempting to move towards a post-secondary education system that works for everyone, they would not be so intent on excluding students from the process. We demand that discussions around tuition fees and university funding happen out of the shadows; it’s time for legislation.”

Average undergraduate arts tuition fees in Nova Scotia for 2018-19 are \$7,991, far above the national average of \$6,838. Students continue to call for public investment in post-secondary education systems and the reduction and elimination of tuition fees for all.

*The Canadian Federation of Students is the oldest and largest national student organization in Canada, representing over 500,000 college, undergraduate and graduate students across the country.*

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