



MANITOBA CAMPUS ACTIVIST ASSEMBLY

OCTOBER 17-18, 2008 · UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS - MANITOBA · DROPFEES.MB.CA

Dear student, labour and community activists,

The Canadian Federation of Students is Canada's largest student organisation, representing over 500,000 college and university students who are members of more than 85 campus students' unions. The Federation's Manitoba component, the Canadian Federation of Students–Manitoba, is hosting a unique assembly of student and campus activists from across Manitoba to build a fighting student movement.

The first-ever Manitoba Campus Activist Assembly will take place on October 17 and 18, 2008 at the downtown campus of the University of Winnipeg, in the Bulman Students' Centre. The intention is to bring together rank-and-file student and youth activists, campus labour activists and community activists. This assembly will feature a variety of issues-based sessions and skills training workshops aimed at providing an interactive opportunity to develop strong local and inter-campus organising capacities.

In order to promote broad-based and inclusive participation at this Assembly, there will be **no registration fees!** Food will be provided, financial and fundraising support is available for transportation and childcare, and Assembly organisers are committed to helping coordinate billeting, French language interpretation, and other accommodations for all participants.

This historic gathering of students' union volunteers, campus activists, club and department representatives, and community allies is happening in a critical year. This is the final year of the Manitoba government's commitment to the tuition fee freeze, with full deregulation planned for fall 2009. Backwardly, the Doer government has created the Levin Commission on Tuition and Accessibility of Post-Secondary Education, part of a bid to justify its unpopular decision. In Ontario, lifting the freeze has meant plans for fee hikes of 20 to 36 percent by the McGuinty government. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party government has announced plans to end the tuition fee freeze and allow "incremental" fee hikes. In Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan, students are organising to fight the regressive schemes forwarded by governments of all political stripes. **In order to ramp up public pressure on the Doer government, CFS-Manitoba is launching a province-wide campaign to Drop Fees as part of a comprehensive strategy to promote universal access to higher education.** It is hoped that the Assembly will help activists develop the skills necessary to mobilise effectively for the campaign to Drop Fees, including the November 5 Student Day of Action and escalating actions throughout the year.

Building for change requires collaboration, commitment and creativity. This assembly will be an avenue for activists to share perspectives and experiences, gain confidence, learn new skills, and discuss different strategies and tactics. There will be exciting speakers, interactive discussions and hands-on training.

We are striving to bring together students and other campus activists who are working for a better world by challenging poverty, student debt, privatisation, sweatshop labour, military recruitment, environmental degradation, discrimination, harassment, and all forms of social and economic oppression on campuses. The Assembly will also be a chance to broaden and deepen our collective understanding of the privatisation of education by looking at larger social issues in our lives.

We hope that you will participate in the Assembly and help to build a united student movement. If you require a place to sleep or shared transportation, please ensure that you register no later than Wednesday, October 8, 2008.

I look forward to seeing you next month

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Jacks", written over a white rectangular background.

David Jacks

Chairperson, Canadian Federation of Students–Manitoba

ASSEMBLY DETAILS

- Location:** Bulman Students' Centre, Downtown Campus of the University of Winnipeg (515 Portage Avenue)
- Date:** Friday, October 17 to Saturday, October 18, 2008
- Time:** Check-in for the Assembly will commence on Friday, October 17 at 5:00 p.m. and again in the morning of Saturday, October 18 at 8:00 a.m.
- The Assembly will conclude at 10:00 pm on Friday, October 17 and at 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 18, to be followed by an organised social.

Registration is Free

CFS-Manitoba has made the Assembly **free for participants** to encourage the kind of broad participation, discussion and leadership in grassroots mobilising that can win change. **College and university students (regardless of membership in the Canadian Federation of Students), high school students, as well as labour and community activists, are welcome.**

Submitting Registration Forms

On-line registration is available at dropfees.mb.ca and completed paper registration forms should be faxed or delivered to the Canadian Federation of Students-Manitoba. **The deadline to register is no later than Wednesday, October 8, 2008.**

Address: Manitoba Office, 323 Portage Avenue, Suite 309, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2C1
Fax: 204-783-6001
Questions: assembly@dropfees.mb.ca

If you have questions about registration, you can also call (204) 783-0787.

Food and Materials

Meals and materials will be provided throughout the Assembly to all participants, including those participants who are from Winnipeg. Any special dietary requirements or accessibility needs must be identified prior to the registration deadline and noted on the registration form. We can not guarantee that accommodations will be met after the deadline.

Accommodation for Accessibility Needs

CFS-Manitoba is committed to inclusive event organising and will attempt to meet the accessibility needs of all participants. The following accommodations have already been arranged:

- All keynote and plenary sessions will include French-language consecutive interpretation;
- Vegan, vegetarian, Halal and Kosher, allergy-sensitive food options available;
- All venues are wheelchair accessible;
- Childcare subsidies; and
- Note-takers present at all sessions.

Other accessibility accommodations can be made available, upon request, provided that registration is received prior to the deadline, including:

- Peer-to-peer French-language (consecutive) interpretation for small group sessions;
- Large font or electronic documents; and
- Attendant care.

Assembly organisers will do their best to coordinate accommodations for other identified needs, but there is no guarantee that accommodations can be made for any need not identified prior to the deadline. This Assembly is a child-friendly event with an on-site children's activity room (parental supervision required, although childminders will be on-site). If you have questions about accessibility accommodation, please contact: assembly@dropfees.mb.ca.

Overnight Accommodation for Out-of-Town Participants

Participants who require overnight accommodation on Friday and Saturday can request billeting with friendly volunteers. Those being billeted are asked to please bring a sleeping bag and/or blankets and a pillow. If participants choose to stay elsewhere by arranging alternative sleeping arrangements, we will request that contact information be provided for emergency purposes.

If you have questions about accommodation, please contact: assembly@dropfees.mb.ca.

Travel to the Assembly

Conference organisers are committed to providing travel subsidies and assisting with fundraising to ensure that travel costs are covered for Assembly participants coming from across Manitoba. In order to minimise travel costs, students' unions from regions outside the Winnipeg will be assisted in organising buses and vans. Local campuses, schools, labour unions, community groups, and other agencies can also be approached to help subsidise the cost of transportation from your area.

- All participants travelling from within Winnipeg are responsible for their own transportation. Bus tickets and rides may be available—contact Assembly organisers. Directions to the University of Winnipeg and annotated campus maps will be provided electronically upon registration.
- All participants travelling from outside Winnipeg may make travel arrangements at their own expense or may contact Assembly organisers to discuss group travel arrangements from different areas or regions.
- For more information on travel, contact: assembly@dropfees.mb.ca.

Assembly Objectives & Anti-Oppression Principles

The Manitoba Campus Activist Assembly will bring together student, labour and community activists to build unity and develop strategies that use public college and university campuses as venues to work for progressive social change. In particular, we are seeking to:

- Build a strong and united student movement and work in solidarity with other social movements;
- Oppose financial barriers to post-secondary education and other social programmes;
- Oppose the privatisation and corporatisation of campuses and public services; and
- Challenge racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, colonialism and all other forms of prejudice and discrimination on campus and in society.

Fulfilling these objectives requires open discussion but cannot be accomplished in an environment that is poisonous or unsafe. Discrimination or harassment occurs when a comment or action is made that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome or offensive.

Discriminatory speech or conduct is any behaviour that demeans, marginalises, rejects, threatens or harms others. It can be based on ability, experience, age, class, education, sex or sexual identity, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, colour, immigration status, indigenous heritage, language, nationality, religion, physical appearance or place of origin.

Sometimes, discrimination takes the form of harassment. Harassment is the expression of real or perceived power over another person to abuse, devalue or humiliate. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, statement or request for sexual contact, and other unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Harassment is not a joke. It is cruel and destructive behaviour that can have devastating effects. It creates feelings of unease, humiliation and discomfort. Solidarity is based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve mutual respect. Harassment, by fellow activists in particular, is contrary to our basic principles of solidarity and equality.

Commitment to equity

As organisers and participants of the Manitoba Campus Activist Assembly, we are committed to working towards social justice and equity within an anti-oppression framework. Discrimination and harassment divide us. They reduce our capacity to work together on shared concerns such as accessible post-secondary education and justice on campus and in our social movements.

As a condition of participation in this Assembly, we expect that all attendees commit to these objectives and work to uphold these anti-oppression principles.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT



Overview of Sessions

Friday

Panel: "The Manitoba Student Movement: Current Challenges and Building Momentum": An overview of the challenges that face the student movement in Manitoba, including but not limited to tuition and ancillary fees, funding challenges, corporatisation of research, privatisation of campuses, racism, and systemic quashing and co-option of campus dissent.

Panel: "The Resistance of 1968": Former leaders and student activists will speak about the importance of student power and the rise of popular resistance. This will be an opportunity to recognise and remember that 2008 is the 40th Anniversary of the "Year of the Student" – a time when students and workers around the world conducted popular teach-ins, undertook creative resistance, and engaged in massive demonstrations to protest the Vietnam War, demanded the rights for women and racialised people, and fought for a better world.

Saturday

Participants must register for the Saturday workshop sessions, as there are a limited number of spaces available. Workshop topics are subject to change without notice. Please select only one session per block:

Block #1 Issues Workshops

- 1A. History of the Pan-Canadian Student Movement
- 1B. Counter-Recruitment and Anti-War Organising on Campus
- 1C. Youth Fight Back: High School Student Organising for Social Justice
- 1D. Public Institutions, Private Interests: The Corporatisation of Universities and Colleges
- 1E. Academia Without Borders: Undocumented and International Students

Block #2 Skills Workshops

- 2A. Knowing Your Audience: How to Craft Your Message to Win Public Support
- 2B. Know Your Rights: An Activist Primer on Police and Lawyers
- 2C. Indigenous and International Organising Models: Escalating Actions
- 2D. Don't Agonise, Organise! Effective Campaign Strategies & Tactics
- 2E. Mastering the Short Pitch for Tabling, Flyering and Class Announcements

Block #3 Issues Workshops

- 3A. First Peoples, Last Rights: Why Students Should Support Indigenous Struggles in Manitoba
- 3B. Who's Turning The Screws? Understanding Who's Who in Post-Secondary Education
- 3C. Out on Campus: Queer and Trans Issues & Activism
- 3D. Coordinated Bargaining, Collective Action: Student-Labour Solidarity
- 3E. Education is a Right: Free Tuition in Canada and Abroad

Block #4 Skills Workshops

- 4A. Shifting Priorities: Alternative Budget Construction
- 4B. We Shall Not Be Moved: Non-Violent Direct Action Training, Copwatch, and Knowing Your Rights
- 4C. Design for Dummies: Making Flyers and Posters that Don't Suck
- 4D. E-Resistance: New Media Creation and Online Activism
- 4E. Power to the People: Models of Grassroots Decision-Making

Open Workshops: A one-hour block of dedicated time for participants to self-organise either skills or issues-based workshops on topics or areas not covered in the planned workshop schedule. If you are interested in hosting an Open Workshop, you are encouraged to prepare a 10 - 30 minute presentation ahead of the Assembly. Contact the Manitoba Office for assistance in photocopying and other resources for your presentation.

Regional breakout groups: Participants from common geographic areas will meet and discuss strategies and actions for the November 5 Day of Action and the ongoing campaign to Drop Fees.

Keynote speaker: The role of student and youth movements in global struggles against corporatism, imperialism and neo-liberalism.