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Nova Scotia's University and College Unions Call for Protection of Higher Education During Pandemic

HALIFAX - An alliance of students, staff and faculty at Nova Scotia's universities and community colleges is asking university administrations, and the provincial and federal governments, to reduce student tuition and increase student bursaries, prevent layoffs and accept the necessity of deficits this year as they work to return to normalcy from the current pandemic. The alliance represents 15 unions that serve over 18,000 staff, students and faculty at colleges and/or universities from Sydney to Yarmouth.

"Even though COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on our province, it is necessary to prepare for the time when we can safely return to work at our campuses," says ANSUT president Scott Stewart. "Given the current situation and the importance of our universities and colleges to our economy and society, we need help now." A letter outlining the request was sent to university and college presidents, and government officials today.

Nova Scotia's post-secondary sector is crucial to supporting public health and the economy in the near and long term, and to helping students prepare for a rapidly changing future. "It is important to maintain academic environments to help society come out of this pandemic effectively," says Karen Harper, president of CUPE3912, whose 2,000 members work at 3 universities. "This includes providing safe and healthy working conditions for all university employees and supporting instructors in their efforts to continue to provide quality education for their students."

David Westwood, President-Elect of the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) agrees. "Nova Scotia's higher-education workers are vital to the short- and long-term health and well-being of the province and indeed the region," says Westwood. "Our students, teachers, and researchers are at the front line of key issues related to the COVID-19 crisis, and their skills and knowledge will expand in importance as we recover from the consequences to our communities, institutions, and economy."

Student support for the initiative is strong. "This pandemic has exposed the on-going crises in post-secondary education in this province, we have the highest tuition fees in the country and a lack of public investment," says Marie Dolcetti-Koros, Treasurer with the Canadian Federation of Students - Nova Scotia. "We stand in solidarity with faculty and workers in calling for a move to a system of post-secondary education that is accessible and of high quality, that can withstand this current pandemic and benefit all Nova Scotians."

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Background:

Formed after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the All-Unions Alliance includes higher-education unions in Nova Scotia. The Alliance represents college and university employees across the province, both staff, students and academics, who are all essential to the work of higher education in the province. Represented unions include:

- Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA)
- Association des professeurs, professeures et bibliothécaires de l'Université Sainte-Anne (APPBUSA)
- Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT)
- Atlantic School of Theology Faculty Association (ASTFA)
- Cape Breton University Faculty Association (CBUFA)
- Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia (CFS-NS)
- CUPE3912
- Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA)
- Faculty Union of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (FUNSCAD)
- Mount Saint Vincent University Faculty Association (MSVUFA)
- Nova Scotia Community College Academic Union (NCSSAU)
- Nova Scotia Government Employees Union (NSGEU)
- Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
- St Francis Xavier Association of University Teachers (StFXAUT)
- Saint Mary's University Faculty Union (SMUFU)
- UNIFOR