OSV Annual Meeting 2023 Conference Report

***Introduction***

The Ontario Student Voices Conference, hosted by Ontario Student Voices, brought together student leaders and representatives from seven student unions across the province. The conference aimed to provide a platform for advocating for students' rights and discussing important issues affecting the education system in Ontario.

Three delegates attended this conference on behalf of CSI:

* President- Nelson Chukwuma
* Vice President- Monil Jethva

This report will give a summary of each day of the conference and highlight its importance to our student union.

***Day 1: Friday, May 26th***

The day started with quick introductions and a brief on Ontario Student Voices (OSV). Representatives led this session from Ontario Student Voices, providing attendees with a comprehensive overview of the organization's mission, goals, and initiatives. It offered valuable insights into the organization's structure, highlighting the various committees, working groups, and campaigns that students can engage with.

A session on Good Governance training followed it. The session aimed to equip student leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure effective governance within their respective student unions. The training covered essential topics such as transparency, accountability, decision-making processes, and ethical practices. Through engaging discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, attendees gained a deeper understanding of the principles and practices of good governance.

President Nelson Chukwuma states in his report:

*“Presented by Catherine Raso, a leader in Governance Training. It was very important for us to get this training as a new organization. It provides a framework and knowledge on our roles as Board members.”*

***Day 2: Saturday, May 27th***

The day began with a very informative session on OSV’s history – we learned about the grassroots movement that led to the formation of OSV and how it plans to evolve over time to become a prominent advocate for student rights in Ontario. The session highlighted key campaigns that OSV intends to undertake, inspiring attendees to carry on the legacy of student activism and advocacy.

This was followed by An engaging session on "External Partners and Stakeholders" This session aimed to educate student leaders about the importance of building strategic partnerships and engaging with stakeholders outside of the student union. Attendees learned about the benefits of collaborating with external organizations, such as government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups, to amplify their advocacy efforts and achieve common goals.

Vice President Monil Jethva states in his report:

*“The session explored effective communication strategies, negotiation techniques, and methods to identify and engage with key stakeholders. Attendees left the session equipped with practical knowledge on how to forge meaningful partnerships, leverage external resources, and mobilize collective action to create positive change within the education system.”*

A thought-provoking and impactful session on "Anti-Oppression Training" followed. This session aimed to raise awareness and promote a deeper understanding of oppression, privilege, and systemic inequalities within the education system. Attendees engaged in interactive discussions and activities that challenged biases explored power dynamics, and examined ways to create inclusive and equitable environments. A session on Understanding Student Associations capped this.

President Nelson Chukwuma states in his report:

*“Led by the new Executive Director, Jason Seguya, this session saw us discuss our organizational structures and the way things work in our student unions. This was very interesting to see how different our colleagues are in the industry of Student Government.”*

After lunch, there was a session on the current Advocacy Landscape. This session provided attendees with a comprehensive overview of the current challenges and opportunities within the education sector. Participants gained insights into emerging policy issues, legislative changes, and ongoing advocacy campaigns that impact students across Ontario. The session delved into topics such as funding, accessibility, mental health support, and student representation, highlighting the importance of proactive and strategic advocacy efforts. Attendees engaged in dynamic discussions, brainstorming strategies and sharing best practices to navigate the complex advocacy landscape effectively. This session equipped student leaders with the knowledge and tools necessary to drive impactful change and ensure that student voices are heard at all levels of decision-making.

***Day 3: Sunday, May 28th***

A “Long-Term Planning” session was held during the Conference, providing student leaders with valuable insights and strategies to plan for the future effectively. This session emphasized the importance of setting long-term goals, creating actionable plans, and implementing sustainable initiatives within student unions. Attendees learned about various planning models, tools, and techniques to facilitate effective decision-making and goal-setting. The session also addressed factors to consider when developing long-term plans, including financial sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and risk management.

Vice President Monil Jethva states in his report:

*“Through interactive discussions and case studies, participants gained a deeper understanding of the benefits of long-term planning in ensuring the continuity and success of student-led initiatives. Equipped with these skills, student leaders left the session inspired and prepared to create impactful long-term plans that would shape the future of their student unions and positively impact the student community as a whole.”*

Following this was the passing of the baton from the founding student leaders of this advocacy group to the incoming student leaders; this was followed by a couple of meetings, which were the inaugural Annual general meeting which included both the incoming and the outgoing board. The incoming board meeting and the elections for the various positions on the board followed this.

***Benefits to CSI***

Vice President Monil Jethva writes:

*“Attending the Ontario Student Voices Conference was an enriching experience that allowed me to connect with passionate student leaders from different unions. The conference provided valuable insights, skills, and resources to advocate for students effectively. I am excited to bring back these learnings and apply them within my role, working towards positive change and improving student experiences at our institution.”*

President Nelson Chukwuma writes:

*“Our organization is one of the founding partners of this organization. The opportunity to be part of a new generation of provincial advocacy has an immense impact on our students, as we can help create a culture of integrity, dignity, diversity, and acceptance through meaningful and empathetic advocacy efforts that have realistic outcomes for students in Ontario.”*