

June 2nd 2015

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council

Introduction

Hey folks, so I really have two major things to talk about in this report as that is what has really dominated my last two weeks. Below you shall find riveting account of the CASA Foundations conference I attended as well as the first win that has come from the Edmonton Student Alliance. Also, I am incredibly sorry for missing this Council meeting, as you may know myself, VP Kwan and 5 other councilors are in Calgary for the U of C's Wellness Summit. If you have any questions for me though, please feel free to send me an email and I promise I will be there for next meeting as I really do miss you all.

CASA Foundations

So most of my time over the past couple weeks has been at CASA Foundations in Ottawa from May 18-22. It was a great time and I learned a bunch about the organization and federal advocacy.

A couple notes about federal advocacy and its relevance regarding federal advocacy. First, for context, the federal government actually designates power over post-secondary education to the jurisdiction of the provinces. That said there are still a bunch of things that the federal government does that affects post-secondary students.

As you may have heard, CASA had a bunch of great wins in the 2015 budget and I just wanted to outline them super quickly here and their significance. The asks we had of the government being put into the budget are even more significant because of the fact that this budget was not generous to everyone, and money was still fairly tight. The wins though:

1. Taking out the expected parental contribution from loans assessment (this means students will be treated as individual learners)
2. \$184M expansion of Canadian Student Grants to encompass students in short-duration programs
3. Eliminating in-study income from the Canada Student Loans Program (the amount of money a student makes working while in school will not influence their ability to get loans)
4. Renewal of the Mental Health Commission of Canada for another 10 years ensuring a focus on students and youth
5. Labour protection for interns and new labour market indicators

The most notable by far is the Canadian Student Loans Program. The program is fairly large and is part of the overall loan that students get. The federal government usually contributes money to student loans in coordination with the provinces loan program. Another significant aspect of the federal government's role in PSE is the Canadian Student Grant Program which gives out grants to students that may need more assistance to access post-secondary, including students living with a disability or low-income students. There are more ways that the federal government interacts with the everyday student but these are some of the most visible and widespread way, if you have any more interest in the role of the federal government in PSE, let me know and we can talk more about it!

Throughout the week we learned about CASA and the policy development process as well as the way that

CASA works and the home office staff who help with the day-to-day operations. As well, we got to see some great presentations from a pollster on the outlook of the federal election (a 3-way tie by the looks of it!!), a session on how to deal with media and a presentation on the earnings of university graduates based on their area of study.

As well, there were elections for the Board of Directors and to fill all the CASA committees and I am excited to report that I was elected as the Director of Advocacy! So what that means is that I will be on the Board of Directors of CASA but also the chair of the National Advocacy Team (NAT). I will be responsible for organizing the NAT to run campaigns on all member campuses in relation to the advocacy goals of CASA. This includes the upcoming federal Get Out the Vote campaign, which dovetails very nicely into one of my platform promises and goals for the year! Anyways, the GOTV campaign will take a lot of work but I am really looking forward to it and working with the CASA Board.

ESA

The Edmonton Student Alliance (ESA) got its first win since it's founding just over a month ago! On Wednesday May 27th, the ESA presented some of the findings and the stories that we had collected through our poll to City Council alongside the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) and a woman by the name of Mari Chartier. We all brought significant concerns regarding the safety of transit and the committee was incredibly receptive. At the end of the meeting Council moved to initiate a 3-pronged approach to deal with transit safety including a public awareness campaign on sexual harassment, sending out a comprehensive survey to transit users regarding safety, and creating a discreet way to report safety issues on transit including a number to text or adding a feature to the existing transit app.

We also accomplished the goal of establishing the ESA and more generally post-secondary students as stakeholders in the city. We will now be brought on with WAVE to further develop the approach that the city will take regarding transit safety and this is a huge (and early) win for the ESA as an organization. I think the fact that we are a partner with an official city committee to talk about transit safety really helps to cement the idea that the ESA and Edmonton students are a substantial part of this city and more specifically, Edmonton transit.

Conclusion

That's all folks! Those were the two major things to report on and in the coming weeks I will likely be doing some things regarding GOTV stuff and more reading. As always, feel free to shoot me an email or stop by 2-900.

Until next time,

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