

August 25, 2015

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Students' Council

Hello Council!

With only a few weeks left until the start of the Fall term, things are getting busier and busier as I finish up my summer projects and get ready for the school year and the return of students!

Meeting with Councillor Knack

I was lucky enough to sit down with City of Edmonton Councillor Andrew Knack this week, to talk about washroom signage and some of my goals for the year around creating alternatives to gendered spaces. It was a fantastic meeting, and Councillor Knack was very interested in what we are doing not only with washroom advocacy, but also with student governance projects in general. He let me know that City Council unanimously passed a motion to include ungendered washrooms in all city facilities, and to sign them appropriately. He also put me in touch with a spokesperson for the washroom movement, and hopefully I can meet with her in the near future and move forward on the plans to lobby the provincial government for additions to the building code requiring single unit ungendered washrooms in all buildings going forward.

Political Policy on Gender

I was in Vancouver last week, and have been busy with Week of Welcome prep, so I have not had a chance to create the full text of the gender policy, or first principles of a safe spaces policy. These will be coming to a future Council meeting.

Social and Environmental Responsibility Committee

This year, SERC will be tackling food labeling, and will be starting research on what other schools do soon. The hope is to incorporate labeling standards into our businesses, by focusing on things like the amount of water that goes into creating food product, and the labour put into growing ingredients.

Student Union Development Summit

Last week, the rest of the Executive team and I headed to Vancouver for SUDS, an annual conference put on by UBC's AMS for student executives across Canada (and this year, Cornell and Harvard too!). I had an absolute blast, and loved attending the sessions and social events, and meeting a lot of interesting people throughout the weekend! I have a breakdown of the different sessions below:

Professional Development: this was put on by Lev Buhkman, the CEO of Studentcare (the company we host our Health and Dental Plan through), and was a good first session for the conference. He talked

about how to be successful in our roles over the year, and gave a lot of good advice around taking time for yourself and knowing your limits, while shooting for success.

The Art of Persuading Governments: Spencer Keys, a former lobbyist and employee of CASA (our federal lobby group), hosted this session and gave some great insight on the different ways to persuade government officials to get on board with your advocacy plans as students.

Club House: UBC AMS's VP Student Life-equivalent facilitated this, and we got a chance to see how everyone's governance structures looked. I should point out that we are still the only student association (present) with a research and advocacy department.

Vote PopUp: Samara, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to engaging voters walked us through their pop-up voting project. They also had some good advice on connecting voting to potential voters as something personal and unique to each person; not asking people to vote because it's their right or responsibility, but asking them "why are you voting?"

Elections Canada: a representative from Elections Canada ran through the changes to the election process after the Fair Elections Act, including mail-in ballots, choosing which riding to vote in (important for students who live in residence or outside Edmonton), and advance polling.

Sustainability: The manager of their Sustain SU-equivalent facilitated a discussion around how sustainability as a concept had changed over time, and how to be effective in a post-sustainable world. I loved this session, because I personally have found sustainability turning into an increasingly buzzy word, and people will sometimes only practice it to be trendy, which can be classist (ask VP Hanwell about his Honours thesis on this sometime – you won't be disappointed). We talked about how to combat this and how to reconcile the differences social, environmental, and economic systems have under the growing umbrella of sustainability, and how to view issues in a context that accounts for both environmental and ethical/social factors.

Digital Marketing: AntiSocial Solutions, a media company for businesses on the internet, hosted this session about viral content, making the best marketing campaign, and reaching out to students in unique ways. It was definitely valuable, as they gave some advice that is counter to what you may think of as classic media, and is counter-intuitively genius.

Other Thoughts: Last week was honestly one of the best weeks I've had so far in this job. I loved getting to meet other executives, see how different schools operate, attend sessions, party hard and responsibly, and above all, get to spend time with my team. There was so much to take away from the conference for so many reasons, but above all the message I got from the week was teamwork, and what can be accomplished when people work together.

Thanks for reading through, and have a wonderful week!



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