

Date: 30/10/2019

To: Students' Union Council

Re: Vice-President External 2019/20 Report #10

Dear Council,

It's spooky season! Sorry, I meant to say it's budget season. I won't lie, it has been difficult to see a lot of hard work go down the drain and things will get more expensive for us. But we have a lot of work to do.

1. Provincial Budget: On October 24, the provincial government released their fall budget. You can read about my thoughts, [here](#) (Edmonton Journal), [here](#) (Edmonton Journal), [here](#) (The Gateway), and [here](#) (The Star Edmonton). The SU has also put out a press statement [here](#). I have attached a brief, written by our External Advocacy Advisor, as an information item in these order papers. I look forward to a larger discussion about where we go from here and how we can best both voice students concerns, and make the most progress in still pushing for what students want. The Edmonton Student Alliance has decided to create a video showcasing the stories of students in Edmonton who will be most negatively impacted by the budget (more information to come). The Council of Alberta University Students has issued a [joint press release](#) with the Alberta Students Executive Council and the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council, as different types of students across the province will feel the negative impacts of this budget. CAUS is also discussing what else can be done going forward, which your input will be useful for. This will also increase the need to advocate strongly for federal student financial assistance, which is something CASA will be addressing.

2. Meeting with Minister of Advanced Education: Prior to the budget release, President Bhatnagar, EAA Nelson and I met with Minister Nicolaides on October 10. We were very clear that we are opposed to tuition increases, and that Alberta needs to take a serious look at it's student financial aid system, including how post-secondary tax credits are used compared to up-front grants. The Minister was quite engaging in the meeting, asking us many questions about our thoughts on tuition models for domestic and international students. Unfortunately, what we brought forward was not reflected in this budget. We will next be meeting with the Minister on Monday, November 4th to ask questions about the budget with other student leaders. I will update on that meeting at Council.

3. University budget town hall: On October 30, I joined Executives and Councillors, along with various University stakeholders, at a town hall meeting to discuss how the University will deal with the new fiscal reality of this budget (detailed in the brief). Information on the University's finances can be found [here](#), along with a [portal](#) that will allow anyone to send in thoughts and ideas on how the University can best manage these cuts. President Turpin touched on the numbers that the University has received, and what challenges it could pose going forward. He put an emphasis on communicating that he does now wants students to bear the entire brunt of this cut. The University is also considering allocating a portion of increased tuition into student financial assistance.

4. Federal election: On October 21, the federal Liberal Party of Canada won a minority government. This means that the next federal election is not guaranteed to be 4 years away, but I am wishful that our elected officials can act with courage and pragmatism to solve the issues Canadians are facing, and students in particular. With the election now completed, CASA will begin discussing and reviewing what priorities and asks we will take to Advocacy Week in February. So far, the most prominent topics being

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discussed by the membership, among approximately 10, are: student financial aid, international students, Indigenous student issues, and work-integrated learning. At the end of November, we will be holding our Policy and Strategy conference in Vancouver where the Board will present a proposal of the themes CASA should focus its advocacy on this year. We also wrapped up our Get Out The Vote campaign, which saw over 6,300 students pledge to vote between the provincial and federal elections. We held debate and results watch parties at Dewey's which both drew in great crowds! Our federal on-campus poll also had a turnout of approximately 4,400 votes cast, a massive increase from the 2,500 in 2015! I would like to thank GOTV Coordinator Christian Ford, External Advocacy Advisor Nelson, and the dozens of volunteers who contributed their time to make this happen. It is our job as an SU to engage students in the democratic process so they feel empowered to speak their minds and vote.

5. Francophone Conference: On October 18 & 19, I attended the Congress of the Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta (ACFA), which is Alberta's representative francophone body. I was able to talk with various francophone stakeholders about the direction of Campus Saint-Jean and the needs of those students. I hope to meet with the new President of the ACFA, who has a son at the University of Alberta, soon.

6. Other meetings to note: On October 8, I attended the University Free Expression Workshop where ideas on how the policy is being developed were presented. On October 9, I had an early morning coffee meetings with the University Senate Vice-Chairs and other student Senators. We discussed how to make the most of a year on Senate and the various interests of student Senators Bilak, Banks and Gora. Also attended the Dewey's Bash, a great event hosted by our staff at Dewey's!

7. Coming up: On October 31 and November 1, I will be in Ottawa doing work with CASA's Home Office and interviewing candidates for Executive Director. As previously mentioned, we will be meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education on Monday, November 4th. On November 6th, Executives and Councillors will be jumping in a pool of cold water for JDC West's "Chillin' for Charity" event. On November 14th, I will be watching a panel talking about student financial aid in Alberta hosted by the Alberta Student Awards Personnel Association. From November 19-21, the UASU will be hosting a Counterparts summit of the Council of Alberta University Students. The Executives of all CAUS members will discuss portfolio strategy, transitioning out of our roles at the end of the year, and advocacy strategies towards the provincial government.

Cheers,



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