

May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**To:** Students' Council

**Re:** Report to Policy Committee (for May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Meeting)

### Introduction

Hey there Students' Council! Apologies for this report being belated. Things have been unbelievably busy on my end, especially since I was away for the weekend to Winnipeg for CASA's transition and I was busy networking and lobbying on Wednesday and Thursday at the Alberta legislature. Nonetheless, here's an executive summary of my report in case you find this too lengthy:

#### **Executive Summary:**

1. Kept my campaign promises by advocating that CAUS continue to lobby our stance on MNIFs, market modifiers, and changing the elections act. The following asks are now CAUS' primary external lobby goals. In terms of lobbying for eliminating dormitory property taxes, I revitalized this older CAUS lobby priority and got it on CAUS' secondary external lobby goals. In regards to student work programs, UASU's advocacy department is going to conduct more research on this issue and I'll be sure to bring it back to CAUS' membership when it's a little bit more solid.
2. Met and networked with 15 Ministers, MLAs, and Assistants during the Legislature's Speaker Selection and Speech from the Throne.
3. Attended CASA's Western Regional Conference in Winnipeg. Raised federal lobby issues I promised during my campaign, especially student work programs. This had a lot of traction with other student organizations.
4. A big chunk of my past and upcoming media interviews are dealing with issues in regards to Quebec's Protest.

### 1. CAUS Goals

During the Council of Alberta University Students' (CAUS)—our provincial lobby group—retreat from May 12-15<sup>th</sup>, the following external and internal policy objectives were passed. As I promised during my campaign, I really made sure to push for a focus on continuing our fight against unfair mandatory non-instructional fees (MNIFs), eliminating dormitory property taxes, changing the elections act, and some other policies that the University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) and CAUS have normally have advocated for in the past. However, as promised, I made sure to bring up possibly lobbying on student work programs—pretty much my big new idea for the UASU's advocacy efforts. But since our Department of Research and Political Affairs (i.e. Advocacy Department) is still working away at conducting more research on provincial and federal student work programs, this lobby objective wasn't ripe for the time. Nonetheless, I'm confident that it will become a provincial and/or federal lobby objective overtime when we get some more solid research on it and share it with our partners. Additionally, I proposed revitalizing some old UASU advocacy ideas—such as, conducting rural lobby tours and conducting a textbook campaign. If you want to read more about these ideas, check out my second report to Students' Council on May 9<sup>th</sup>. In conclusion, I feel like I did a pretty good job getting UASU's wants on CAUS' priorities. Nevertheless, here's the list of CAUS' objectives this year.

#### **External**

##### Primary External Goals

1. Market Modifiers
2. Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs)
3. Changes to the Elections Act
4. Scope of the new provincial rural bursary program – participation rates in Alberta

##### Secondary External Goals

5. Residence Property Tax/Deferred Maintenance

**Internal**

1. Recommendations in Audit
2. What's our philosophy on Student Financial Aid (once the August 1<sup>st</sup> changes go through)
3. Board Transition
4. Bylaw Review
5. Textbooks
6. Rural Lobby Strategy
7. GOTV Analysis

**List of Things I Advocated For**

1. Regulate Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs)
2. Student Work Programs
3. Market Modifiers
4. Dormitory Property Taxes
5. Explore Creative Avenues for Advocacy (i.e. Rural Lobby Strategy and Textbooks)

**2. The Legislature, Speech from the Throne, and meeting Ministers and MLAs**

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> (Wed), the first session of the 28<sup>th</sup> Alberta Legislature took place. At this meeting, the speaker was chosen—long time MLA and Minister, Gene Zwozdesky. I was lucky enough to score a ticket to attend this event from the UofA's MLA representative, Steve Young. I attended the event with the purpose of networking and meeting some Ministers and MLAs that I hope to chat with year during the year after the speaker's selection, but my first real lobby outing as VPX yielded modest results.

On May 24<sup>th</sup> (Thur), the Speech from the Throne was given by the Lieutenant Governor (LG). Essentially, the LG outlines what the Premier's plans are for the Legislature's session—which is only six days long in this case. Why have such a short session? It gives the chance for the newly elected government to get some work done (work on the first Bill proposed on work injuries and compensation) before they break for the whole summer and get back to work in Fall. However, since this was the first time the government was debuting themselves after getting elected, its speech. In the speech, they made the following mentions to post-secondary education (PSE):

*Starting with Budget 2012, our most critical public sectors—education, advanced education, health and municipal services—are receiving stable funding in the form of three-year budgets...*

*Your government will partner with industry on research and development through a second Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, to maintain a competitive, world-class resource economy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, grow the marketplace for clean energy and protect the jobs so many Albertans Depend on.*

(Check out the speech at: <http://alberta.ca/thronespeech2012may.cfm/>)

The Speech from the Throne is way more popular than the Speaker selection, so it was extremely difficult finding a ticket for the event (since each MLA gets approximately two tickets that they normally give to family members and campaign volunteers). However, my old UASU connections pulled through and I was (again) lucky enough to score a ticket. After the speech, there was a reception in the Legislature's lower rotunda (i.e. lobby) and my lobby and networking efforts yielded great results. One of the highlights of the day? Standing right outside of the Premier's Office (by chance) and see Premier Redford walk by and give me a warm smile and wave.

Here's a list of people that I met and networked with during the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>:

**May 23<sup>rd</sup> (Wed) – Speaker Selection**

1. Raj Sherman – Leader of the Liberal Opposition (Edmonton-Meadowlark)
2. Hon. Donald Scott, QC – Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency, and Transformation (Fort McMurray-Conklin)

**May 24<sup>th</sup> (Thur) – Speech from the Throne**

3. Steve Young – Government Whip (Edmonton-Riverview)
4. Hon. Cal Dallas – Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations (Red Deer-South)
5. Raj Sherman – Leader of the Liberal Opposition (Edmonton-Meadowlark)
6. Hon. Stephen Khan – Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education (St. Alberta)
7. Peter Sandhu – Progressive Conservative (Edmonton-Manning)
8. Dave Quest – Progressive Conservative (Strathcona-Sherwood Park)
9. George Rogers – Progressive Conservative Deputy Speaker (Leduc-Beaumont)
10. Matt Jeneroux – Progressive Conservative (Edmonton South West)
11. Rick Fraser – Progressive Conservative (Calgary-South East)
12. Elizabeth Clement – Strategic Advisor to the Hon. Cal Dallas – Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations (Red Deer-South)
13. Jon Mastel – Assistant to Raj Sherman – Leader of the Liberal Opposition (Edmonton-Meadowlark)
14. Ryan – Assistant to Linda Johnson – Progressive Conservative (Calgary-Glenmore)
15. Linda – Assistant to Matt Jeneroux – Progressive Conservative (Edmonton South West)
16. Brad Tennant and Cody Johnston – Assistants for the Wildrose Party
17. Members from the Progressive Conservative Youth of Alberta (PCYA)

**3. CASA Conference**

The Director of Research and Political Affairs (DRPA, Justin), the President (Colten), and I went to Winnipeg from May 26-29 (Sat-Tue) for the Canadian Alliance of Student Association's (CASA) Western Regional Transition with the UofC (AB), UofL (AB), Red River College (Manitoba), Simon Fraser University (BC), Athabasca University (AB), Mount Royal University (AB), and SAIT (AB). It was an excellent opportunity to meet and network with our counterparts at other universities, exchange ideas, and propose new ones. The Transition is a precursor to CASA's Policy and Strategy (P&S) conference. At P&S, not only is CASA's leadership chosen (i.e. Members-at-Large, Chair, Treasurer, Secretary), but CASA's lobby priorities are also chosen.

The main federal lobby goals I promised during my campaign was in regards to eliminating tariff regulations on textbook importations, making it easier raising the issue of student work programs. As in the case with CAUS, it is quite difficult to make an organization have one of its lobby priorities be based on something that there isn't much recent research on yet. So until much investigation has occurred in this area, it'd be quite difficult to make it a "ask". However, I continuously brought up the issue of student work programs and it really got some traction with the other student associations. Hopefully by P&S (mid-July) there will be more research on this topic and it could be one of CASA's priorities. But nonetheless, I'm doing a pretty good job of continuously raising this issue within our federal and provincial lobby group.

During the Transition, we had a brainstorming session where we listed issues we wanted to advocate on behalf of students. From that, we categorized the list, shortened it, and now have CASA's main headquarters staff to do further research on some of these ideas. I'll be sure to follow up with CASA's Policy and Research Officer and ensure that we're gaining a lot of ground with student work programs. In regards to textbook and international student issues, there was a consensus that these points are still very important—especially considering that CASA has been lobbying on these issues for a while now.

**4. Conferences, Retreats, and Meetings**

Here's a list of all of my past and upcoming outings. In case you haven't noticed, I barely have the weekends to myself.

- ~~1. SU Executive Transition Retreat – May 1<sup>st</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> (Tue-Sun)~~
- ~~2. Council of Alberta University Students' (CAUS) (Provincial lobby group) – May 12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> (Sat-Tue)~~
- ~~3. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) (Federal lobby group) – Western Regional Transition – May 26<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> (Sat-Tue) @ Red River College, Manitoba.~~
4. Students' Council Retreat – June 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> (Fri-Sun)
5. CAUS – Meeting – June 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> @ University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge
6. CASA – Policy and Strategy Conference – July 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> (Tue-Sat) @ Mount Allison University, New Brunswick.

## 5. Media Interview

Here's a list of all of my past and upcoming media interviews. Take note that a great majority of them have been in regards to the Quebec Protests—which have now placed PSE and student debt issues in the national spotlight.

1. May 7<sup>th</sup> (Mon) – CBC Radio 1 Alberta @ Noon – Topic: Quebec Protests, PSE Issues in Alberta
2. May 11<sup>th</sup> (Fri) – St. Albert Gazette – Topic: New Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education and thoughts on the Ministry name change
3. May 22<sup>nd</sup> (Tue) – La Presse Newspaper – Topic: Student associations across Canada and their support for Quebec students, Albertan perspective on Quebec Protests
4. May 25<sup>th</sup> (Fri) – 630 CHED Radio – Topic: Quebec Protests, PSE Issues in Alberta
5. May 30<sup>th</sup> (Wed) – CJSR Radio – Topic: Quebec Protests

Signing off,



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