

June 8th, 2012

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Students' Council (for June 12th, 2012 Meeting)

Introduction

Aloha Students' Council! Things are starting to cool down as I focus a lot more on Executive Goals. I gave Council a heads as to what my goals are going to be for the next year at Retreat, but I'm still refining them (thus why I didn't include them in this report). Nonetheless, things are coming along swiftly. Additionally, shout outs to everyone who came out to Retreat! (And props to Kelsey for organizing a great one!) Nonetheless, here's an executive summary of my report in case you find this too lengthy:

Executive Summary:

1. There are two reports that are analyzing GOTV's results. One of the them is being conducted by CAUS and it's report will be done by August 31st. Apathy is Boring is having a provincial-wide analysis on youth voter turnout and it has uncertain deadline as to when it'll be completed.
2. Minister Khan was asked three relevant topics in question period: Quebec Protests, Market Modifiers, and Non-Instructional Fees. Good news? Khan doesn't plan on bringing up any market modifiers this year.
3. We've contacted 12 MLAs, creating a rural lobby document, and CAUS is making multiple plays on multiple fronts right now. Also, CAUS has a crucial meeting with the Minister of Justice in regards to amending the Elections Act. This may be our big break folks.
4. I wrote a really well received blogpost in regards to my thoughts on the protests in Quebec. If you want to check it out, here's the link:
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/governance/executives/blog/vpexternal/entry/118/my-thoughts-on-quebec/>
5. I'll be away in Lethbridge this weekend for a CAUS meeting. After that, I won't be travelling much until mid-July for CASA's Policy & Strategy Conference. Also, I've gotten a couple more interviews, mainly in regards to (surprise) Quebec protests.

1. GOTV Results

Like I mentioned in the last Council meeting in my oral report, we should have the Council of Alberta University Students' (CAUS—our provincial lobby group) analysis on our Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign. This will not only include a compilation of "Best Practices" to conducting the GOTV campaign itself, so future executives can produce better campaigns in the future, but it should provide some insight as to the student voter turnout as well. This should be done by August 31st, 2012.

CAUS is also partnering with the non-profit organization that seeks to increase youth voter turnout, Apathy is Boring, to get a more holistic analysis of the youth engagement in the last provincial election. We've shared some our data with them and so far results look extremely positive in that our GOTV campaign really influenced a lot of students to cast a ballot. However, a lot of work still needs to be done by the academics working on this project and there is no concrete deadline for this, unfortunately.

2. Minister Khan's Comments in Question Period

On May 30th (Wed), Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education, Stephen Khan, was asked a question about: 1. Protests in Alberta like Quebec; 2. Market Modifiers; and 3. Non-Instructional Fees. His answers? Pretty decent.

1. Doesn't foresee something similar arising in Alberta since the government's relationship with students has been pretty good and he really wants to keep that up; 2. (**EXCELLENT NEWS HERE**) Believes that market modifiers were a one-time thing and has no plans to reintroduce market modifiers; and 3. Believes that students need to know that any new fees have to add value to their education and that he'll keep up the work by consulting both parties.

Here's the full transcript. (Note that Kubinec is a PC MLA, meaning that this question may have been "planted".)

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This spring postsecondary students in Quebec have participated in a series of demonstrations, protests, and started a province-wide student strike about the cost of tuition. Government and student groups are at odds over the issue. The unrest has even turned violent, and the Quebec government has created legislation to force an end to the strike. My first question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. Student groups in our province have staged protests in the past and most recently supported Quebec's students with a rally in Edmonton. What is preventing a full-scale student strike in Alberta?

*Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address my colleagues for the first time in this House. There are a number of reasons why this government has a strong relationship with Alberta students and postsecondary stakeholders overall. **Like my predecessors, I look forward to meeting with student groups and other stakeholders to hear directly from them on issues such as tuition or any other issues they wish to speak of.** I believe most students understand that this government has ensured that postsecondaries have stable three-year funding and that the rates of tuition are capped at CPI. Alberta is a leader in Canada for scholarships and bursaries, and we will continue to provide this access to education for all Albertans.*

Ms Kubinec: Mr. Speaker, my second question is also to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. Institutions talk about rising costs of their own and how those costs have been passed on down to the student. Is this minister planning to allow the postsecondaries to introduce more market modifiers to help institutions who are finding it hard to cover their costs?

*Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, Albertan tuition costs are in line with the national average, and tuition fee regulation is keeping tuition increases at a manageable level. As a **one-time initiative** market modifiers were introduced on a select number of programs because anomalies existed when the current tuition fee was implemented. The six modifiers were necessary at the time and effective in making these programs more competitive with similar programs outside the province. **We continually monitor the cost of delivery and the costs associated with being a student; however, there are no plans to reintroduce market modifiers at this time.***

Ms Kubinec: My final question is to the same minister. Tuition is only a part of the equation. What is this minister doing to control noninstructional fees, and is it the time now to develop a regulation around these fees?

*Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **Students need to know that any new fees have to add value to their education.** I do not believe that to achieve this, we need to make any regulation changes or develop entirely new sets of regulations. We've asked all Campus Alberta institutions to develop formal policies around these fees with formal consultation with student groups. **My predecessors have done an excellent job in this area, including student groups as stakeholders in the purview of the provincial tuition rises.** Students and taxpayers and Albertans understand that the government of Alberta currently subsidizes 75 per cent of the cost of postsecondary education.*

3. Contacting MLAs

In terms of getting in touch with Alberta MLAs, we've been making a handful of plays so far. We've finally sent our initial mail out letters and emails to the following MLAs:

- Stephen Khan – St. Albert (PC) – Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education
- Rachel Notley – Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP) – Advanced Education Critic
- Steve Young – Edmonton-Riverview (PC) – Government Whip
 - UofA's MLA Representative
- David Dorward – Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
- Veryln Olson – Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC) – Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Augustana's MLA Representative
- Jonathan Denis – Calgary-Acadia (PC) – Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
- Doug Griffiths – Battleriver-Wainwright (PC) – Minister of Municipal Affairs
- Alison Redford – Calgary-Elbow (PC) – Premier
- Raj Sherman – Edmonton-Meadowlark (LIB) – Leader of the Liberal Party
- Brian Mason – Edmonton-Highlands Norwood (NDP) – Leader of the NDP
- Danielle Smith – Highwood (WRP) – Leader of the Wildrose Party
- Janice Sarich – Edmonton-Decore (PC)
 - My MLA representative

Furthermore, the Advocacy department and myself are in the works of creating a lobby document that is tailored for the 3-5 rural MLAs that we plan on cementing a strong relationship with over the summer by visiting their constituencies and establishing a rapport prior to the Fall session.

Additionally, the CAUS Chair (Raphael Jacob—UofC's Vice President External), CAUS Executive Director (Duncan Wojtaszek), and myself will be meeting with the Minister Dennis to discuss about the reforms to the Elections Act. Like I said previously, I really believe now is the time when it comes to reforming the Elections Act, so this meeting on June 18th will be crucial. If you know of any more students who had difficulties voting during the elections, please have them fill out my quick survey ASAP:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dE1NUG5nMF9jM2l4dklIR1htU1JsZkE6MQ>. Also, here's the link to more info regarding Alberta's Elections Act, in case you're interested:
http://www.caus.net/docs/09-09_elections.pdf.

It should also be noted that our CAUS partners are making some serious plays, as well. The UofL has met with Gary Bikman, the Wildrose's Advanced Education Critic, and they said their meeting with him went great. Also, the UofC had a great meeting with Minister Dennis in regards to amending the Elections Act and apparently he's seems to be receptive to the idea. Lastly, CAUS has just completed its gorgeous two page lobby document that contains our priorities for the year. Here's the link: http://www.caus.net/docs/12-05_Priorities.pdf.

4. Outings (e.g. Conferences and Retreats)

Here's a list of all of my past and upcoming outings. In case you haven't noticed. June will be a lot more chill than May.

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

5. Media Interviews

Here's a list of all of my past and upcoming media interviews. I've taken the liberty to link all of my interviews as well so you can keep an eye on what I'm saying. Check it out:

1. May 7th (Mon) – CBC Radio 1 Alberta @ Noon – Topic: Quebec Protests, PSE Issues in Alberta
 - a. Audio: http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/podcasts/calgwildrose_20120507_46901.mp3
2. May 11th (Fri) – St. Albert Gazette – Topic: New Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education and thoughts on the Ministry name change
 - a. <http://www.stalbertgazette.com/article/20120516/SAG0801/305169962>
3. May 22nd (Tue) – La Presse Newspaper – Topic: Student associations across Canada and their support for Quebec students, Albertan perspective on Quebec Protests
 - a. Can't find online or wasn't published
4. May 25th (Fri) – 630 CHED Radio – Topic: Quebec Protests, PSE Issues in Alberta
 - a. Text: <http://www.onestopnewsstand.com/edmonton/u-of-a-students-union-says-protests-in-quebec-raising-the-issue-of-student-debt>
5. May 30th (Wed) – CJSR Radio – Topic: Quebec Protests
 - a. <http://cjsrnews.tumblr.com/post/24200725041/this-interview-with-university-of-alberta>
6. June 6th (Wed) – Vue Weekly – Topic: Quebec Protests
 - a. http://vueweekly.com/front/story/a_national_conversation/
7. (Unpublished) The Gateway – Topic: Market Modifiers, Minister Khan's Comments in Question Period

Signing off,



Petros Kusmu

Vice President External 2012-2013 | University of Alberta Students' Union

P: (780) 492-4236 | **F:** (780) 492-4643 | **E:** vp.external@su.ualberta.ca

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/petros-kusmu/34/b50/605>