

June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**To:** Students' Council

**Re:** Report to Students' Council (for June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Meeting)

## **Introduction**

Bonjour Students' Council. Apologies for the belated Council report. I had an important meeting this weekend that I wanted to include in my report. Nonetheless, here's an executive summary of my report in case you find this too lengthy:

### **Executive Summary:**

1. I've networked with, lobbied to, and organized meetings with quite a lot of politicians and PSE stakeholders since we've last chatted. Notables:
  - a. Met with the Minister of Justice to discuss about the Elections Act (I'm feeling some progress here). We have a meeting scheduled with the Chief Electoral Officer to further discuss this. If we can get him to put one of our asks of eliminating the archaic language in regards to student ordinary residence in his report to the Minister of Justice, then we're one step closer to reality on closing the casket on this issue.
  - b. I have a meeting coming up with the U of A's MLA, Steve Young, and we plan on discussing about ways us student organizations can get our voices heard to other MLAs (especially Rural ones) that normally don't engage with students.
  - c. I have a meeting scheduled with Minister of Human Services and I plan on discussing about Alberta's new Social Policy Framework development.
  - d. Met with two federal liberal senators from Alberta. Our asks was that they continue to raise concern about digital locks within Bill C-11 (Copyright Act) in the Senate and that they push for book importation regulations to be eliminated. I have some hope that the latter may have some actual traction.
2. Alberta is in the middle of creating a Social Policy Framework and it wants Albertan's input on creating a policy framework that will guide Alberta's social policies and programs. CAUS will be creating a document that will give our input to ensure that student issues are represented, I will be heading this alongside CAUS' Executive Director (Duncan), and I want all Councillors to complete the framework's quick online survey so they can represent student issues.
3. Currently, the Redford government and Minister Khan have made some pretty good comments in regards to student issues. Redford wants to ensure that underrepresented students aren't left out of the PSE system and Khan is prioritizing his engagement with student leaders when it comes to his portfolio. Furthermore, a lot has been going on with Access Copyright and Copyright Act amendments, so I've attached a mini-brief on the issue so you can educate yourself.

## **1. Lobby Meetings/Networking**

### *Provincial MLAs*

In terms of meeting with various politicians and other post-secondary education (PSE) stakeholders, it

has been a good two weeks. I convoked on June 13<sup>th</sup> (the day after last Council meeting) and spent most of it rubbing elbows with players who will be of interest to us. I sat on stage (since I'm a member of the Senate as VPX) at both convocation ceremonies during the day and went to the reception for the newly installed Chancellor. So through out the day, I had the chance to further build our relationship with Steve Young (the U of A's MLA; we came up with some good ideas on how to get our voice to rural MLAs), Dave Hancock (Minister of Human Services), Doug Horner (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance), Raj Sherman (Leader of the Alberta Liberals), George Rogers (Deputy Speaker of the Legislature), the Ralph B. Young (the new Chancellor), and some other relatively high profile folks. (Shout outs here to my partner in crime at the event, VPA Dustin Chelen.) What happened as a result? After the event, I got myself a scheduled meeting with Steve Young, where we'll further discuss on how to make other MLAs (particularly rural ones) more conscious of student and PSE issues, and Dave Hancock, where I'll raise CAUS' thoughts on Alberta's new Social Policy Framework creation.

*Minister of Justice, Chief Electoral Officer, and Elections Act*

Furthermore, this week, CAUS and myself met with the Minister of Justice, Jonathan Denis. Calgary met with him two weeks prior to our meeting and explained to him CAUS' stance on Alberta's election act and our desire for the archaic language in regards to ordinary residences being eliminated. The meeting we had with him in Edmonton was more of a follow-up to see if there was any progress on our asks. At the meeting, Denis was being quite defensive of the status quo and really was deferring any asks we had to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and ensuring that his report (which isn't really known when it'll come out) reflects our asks. (Despite my tone here, the others believed the meeting went really well.) Nevertheless, right after the meeting, we revitalized our efforts of getting in touch with Brent Fjeldheim, the CEO. He's been extremely busy recently due to all of the news surrounding recent election law violations, but he managed to get back to us and we currently have a meeting set for Wednesday morning with him. Hopefully all will go well, since it seems like we're getting really close to changing the Elections Act. It should also be noted that we brought Kinnar Power, last year's Faculty Saint-Jean Councillor, since he himself faced difficulty voting and knew a bunch of others who faced the same problem, so we had him share his story with the Minister. It was pretty well received.

*Federal Senators, Copyright Act, and Book Importation Regulation*

Additionally, a while ago, I noticed that the Liberals were having a convention here in Edmonton this weekend so I coordinated myself with CASA and we organized a meeting between Colten and myself with two federal liberal senators from Alberta—Senators Grant Mitchell and Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate). Both of them were excellent and super friendly. Our two asks was that they continue to raise the issue of digital locks being permitted in Bill C-11 (Copyright Act) and they push for book importation regulations to be abolished by raising it in the Senate and pushing their members on various committees to make this recommendation in their committee's reports. Despite our first ask being somewhat limited in success since the Conservatives have a majority in the Senate, I truly believe our second ask has some hope since it's a regulation – meaning that it can be easily changed without having to go through the various levels of government – and because it goes against the Conservatives strides for greater free trade with other countries. We're going to keep our eyes on this and keep our fingers crossed.

*Festival of Ideas (FOI) Advisory Committee Board*

Pretty self-explanatory title. FOI is a weeklong festival that the U of A hosts every year that features a variety of very popular and merited speakers and events. For some reason the VPX sits on this advisory

board. I soon found out that I was sitting with some very high profiled folks, from the new Board of Governors Chair (Doug Goss) to City Councillors (Jane Betty) and the Mayor's Wife (Lynn Mandel). Additionally, I also familiarized myself with some of the top folks at the university's government relations office. Overall, the meeting was great and I've definitely made some new contacts that will prove to be extremely useful when I'm executing some of executive goals. (Particularly in regards to my conference/roundtable on PSE in Alberta... I'll explain this more next time.)

## 2. Social Policy Framework

The Albertan Government and its Ministry of Human Services (Dave Hancock; I'll be meeting with him in July) are in the process of creating a Social Policy Framework (SPF) and the want the input of Albertans via an online. (Here's a link to their survey: <http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca/Survey>) What's the purpose of this SPF? Good question. That's why Duncan (the Executive Director of CAUS) and myself met with Bill (the Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta – CAUS is an associate member of it) to further discuss about the SPF and how to tackle it and make sure that PSE and student issues are represented. The SPF is going to be the Albertan government's new social policy framework that will "guide the future of Alberta's social policies and programs – things like childcare, employment, housing, and poverty; issues that affect all Albertans." (<http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca/>) It's a very interesting idea. Anyways, Duncan and I are going to work on a document that CAUS will submit to this survey and to Minister Hancock when we meet with him in July. More importantly, we **need Councillors to fill out this survey raise student issues!** Expect to hear more about this in the upcoming weeks from me.

## 3. News/Brief

Here's some recent news on relevant issues to my portfolio and a 101 brief on Access Copyright and the Copyright Act.

### *Government Mandate Letter*

Allison Redford issued a mandate letter to all of her Ministers that outlined her goals. Here's what's relevant to us:

"3. Education and Entrepreneurship: are the cornerstones of a dynamic economy, which Albertans build through knowledge, adaptability and an entrepreneurial spirit.

- Close the participation gap of underrepresented groups in post-secondary and increase high school graduation rates."

Additionally, Redford talks a lot about results-based budgeting, which is something the last Minister of Advanced Education and Enterprise (Greg Weadick) used to talk a lot about in regards to the university fixing up its finances. Very mixed emotions here...

Here's a link to her mandate letter: <http://alberta.ca/mandate.cfm>

### *Minister Khan's Comments to the Gateway*

Minister Khan was interviewed by the Gateway. Here are some very promising quotes from the article and Khan. (Keep in mind that we have yet to have had a formal meeting with him yet, despite my ask weeks ago.)

"Khan's first goal is to connect with the province's stakeholders, including student leaders.

‘University students are a big component of our portfolio. They are enormous stakeholders all across Alberta,’ Khan says.

‘One of my early goals is to get out and meet with student leaders, and have a dialogue about what student concerns are, and let the students know the Government of Alberta is willing and wanting to work with them and listen to them and be responsive to their needs.’

**‘I can remember being a student. We all share the concerns students have, that those non-instructional fees need to be for real, tangible things that students are receiving a benefit from,’ he says.”**

Here’s a link to the article:

[http://thegatewayonline.ca/article/view/new\\_minister\\_of\\_enterprise\\_and\\_advanced\\_education](http://thegatewayonline.ca/article/view/new_minister_of_enterprise_and_advanced_education)

*Brief 101 on Access Copyright and the Copyright Act*

(Here’s what I wrote to the Policy Committee in my Policy Implementation Goals document.)

In terms of academic materials, there has been quite a lot going on because of Access Copyright changes and Bill C-11 (amendments to the Copyright Act).

Access Copyright is a non-profit organization that’s a collective of copyright owners that license copyright materials to, amongst other things, schools and libraries. From 2004-2010, nearly all universities in Canada had an agreement with Access Copyright in which the institutions paid nearly \$3.38 per FTE (full-time equivalent student) and \$0.10 per coursepack page (that employs copyrighted pieces from one of Access Copyright’s copyright owners). On average, the cost per FTE was \$17.00, after taking into account FTE fee and coursepack pages.

Access Copyright’s agreement with various universities expired on December 31, 2010, unless these institutions agreed to Access Copyright’s interim tariff, which was approved by the Copyright Board of Canada a week before its expiry date. This interim tariff was drastic in that it proposed to charge institutions \$45.00 per FTE, however there would be no coursepack fee—a \$28 increase in costs per FTE. However, the agreement has serious problems in that it further restricts the use of copyright materials, for example, the ability to email hyperlinks to copyrighted materials. This caused a lot of institutions to opt-out of the interim fee and to creatively work without Access Copyright. However, solidarity amongst universities to boycott Access Copyright broke when the University of Toronto and University of Western Ontario agreed to the interim tariff conditions but paid \$27.50 per FTE. A new agreement has been drafted by Access Copyright to reduce the fee to \$26.00 per FTE to encourage other universities to sign. So far a couple have, whilst others have written non-binding letters of intent to do so.

In regards to the Bill C-11, it is a long overdue bill that seeks to amend Canada’s Copyright Act, which was last amended in 1997. After multiple failed attempts of updating the Act, due to federal elections and other things, the Conservative majority government has swiftly moved Bill C-11 through the House of Commons to finally get it updated. One of the negative aspects of C-11 is the fact that digital locks on copyrighted materials are allowed to exist now. On the other hand, a positive aspect of C-11 is the fact that education has been expanded under the fair dealings section,

meaning that, amongst other things, activities relating to research or private study can have free access to a certain percentage of copyrighted materials. Nevertheless, Bill C-11 has gone through the House and is now expected to have the Senate's approval shortly, with practically no amendments.

#### **4. Outings**

Here's a list of some of my past and upcoming outings.

1. ~~CAUS – Meeting – June 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> @ University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge~~
2. CAUS – Member Schools Executive Meet-up and Meet Politicians at Stampede Events – July 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> (Fri-Mon)
3. CASA – Policy and Strategy Conference – July 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> (Tue-Sat) @ Mount Allison University, New Brunswick.

#### **5. Media Interviews**

Here's a list of the most recent news pieces that I was featured in:

1. June 11<sup>th</sup> (Mon) – The Gateway – Topic: Market Modifiers, Minister Khan's Comments in Question Period
  - a. [http://thegatewayonline.ca/article/view/news\\_brief\\_minister\\_khan\\_says\\_market\\_modifiers\\_were\\_a\\_one\\_time\\_deal](http://thegatewayonline.ca/article/view/news_brief_minister_khan_says_market_modifiers_were_a_one_time_deal)

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](mailto:vp.external@su.ualberta.ca)

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