

June 13th, 2013

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council (for June 18th meeting)

Introduction

Hello Council,

I hope you are all well. This will be a relatively brief and hopefully informative report on what's been happening in my office over the past couple weeks. I've spent almost the entirety of my time in the office taking care of the organizational and Administrative tasks of my position, as well as dealing with a whirlwind of CASA related tasks. I'll go into these in detail below.

CASA:

As I'd mentioned to many of you before, I was very happy to be elected Chair of CASA's National Advocacy Committee. This is the Committee that coordinates CASA's lobbying efforts throughout the country in individual constituencies rather than just in Ottawa. While this Committee isn't that huge of a time commitment, June is the month in which being involved this committee feels like a full time job.

This is because many of the CASA committees, including Advocacy, must have a list of policies they agree to endorse at the Policy and Strategy Conference taking place in Lethbridge from June 26th to July 1st. There are roughly 80 policy "asks" that are currently considered modern and relevant and therefore deserve consideration. The Advocacy Committee has elected to endorse anywhere from 8-12 of these policies, so to be blunt I would say I've spent most of my past couple weeks "cutting".

The Committee has met three times in the last two weeks via phone conference lines, and we have another meeting next week. Ultimately I would say the majority of my time over the past few weeks has been spent Chairing meetings, preparing online polls, talking to members of the Committee regarding questions or concerns they may have, and doing research into what I personally feel should be endorsed by the Committee.

Currently we have managed to cut down the list from around 80 asks to 25, and we should achieve our goal of 8-12 by next week. For those interested, the policies that I am looking to support in particular all relate to Open Access and Copyright, First Nations, Metis and Indigenous issues and easing the already large burden facing International Students in Canada. Ultimately this process has been very time consuming, but I have thoroughly enjoyed it nonetheless.

In the Office:

As earlier mentioned, the majority of my time in the office of late has been spent on CASA. With that being said, I've also done quite a bit towards gearing up towards my provincial related platform points. As I've indicated in my goals documents, I want to focus on the review of the Post Secondary Learning Act (PSLA), student employment, mandatory-non-instructional fees (MNIF's), mental health, and as of this month the municipal election. Realistically this is not a time where traction will be made towards any of these given the legislatures summer lull period, however I am doing a lot of background work to prepare for when the opportunity to move forward on these actually present themselves.

The goals I've been spending the majority of my time on are the PSLA, MNIF's and student employment. The main reason for the lack of traction towards these issues is both the summer slow-down of the legislature and more specifically the various operating timelines of other student organizations. One thing I feel very strongly about is the idea that we can make the most progress on these issues by working together with other student stakeholders throughout the province. As it stands all of the Students' Unions in Alberta will be meeting with Minister Lukaszuk quarterly. In order to communicate a clear and concise message, we all must be willing to work together.

There are two other provincial lobby groups in the province that advocate for students. The undergraduate students are divided between us (CAUS) and the Alberta Student Executive Council, who represent far more students than do we in our partnerships with the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge. The third, Alberta Graduate Council, is the sole lobby group representing graduate students in Alberta. It's evident that these groups have a great amount of sway when lobbying the government, and therefore I would much rather work with them on these issues than all the groups working separately.

This problem with this train of thought is that the two other groups are still in the process of changeover and principle debate. ASEC for example still needs to select priorities; therefore they are unable to commit to any course of action at this time. AGC also needs to select its priorities in addition to electing its new Board of Directors for the upcoming year.

So in the meantime I have been preparing the principles and communications I will send to these organizations (hopefully on behalf of CAUS) to outline the need for collaboration and issues we should all consider focusing on this year. I am drafting letters of this nature for the roundtable I hope to hold on student employment and the principles I feel should be of the utmost importance when reviewing the PSLA. As I've said before, if Alberta students as a whole ask for similar things we may very well succeed in our endeavors during this upcoming year.

Lastly, I have been trying very hard to get a meeting with a Progressive Conservative MLA as soon as possible in order to bounce some ideas off them and get a general "temperature check". This MLA would preferably be from the Edmonton-Region Caucus. I have been largely unsuccessful up to this point, mainly because during the summer shut down of the Legislature MLA's typically return to their ridings for some quality time with constituents. I am however happy to report that I think I've finally reached some success in terms of getting a meeting, however I will have more details regarding that in my next report. This will hopefully be accompanied by an outline of the principles regarding the PSLA and Student Employment that I have been working on. I want to thank you all for reading and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time,



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