

May 15th, 2014

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council (for May 20th meeting)

Introduction

Hello Council!

As the final remnants of winter leave us, I hope you're all taking time to enjoy what is hopefully the start of summer. Similarly, I hope you're settling in well to your role as Students' Union Councilor!

It's been well over two weeks since my official start as Vice President External, and I must say – it's been a whirlwind! For the VPX and the President, much of May is spent out of town, and for good reason! I write this to you on my second day actually sitting in my office!

Most of my time this month will be spent out of town with various transitions and retreats. William and I just returned from the [Canadian Alliance of Student Associations](#) (CASA) Foundations Conference in Ottawa. On Friday morning, we will be leaving to attend the changeover for the [Council of Alberta University Students](#) (CAUS) in Canmore. Below you can read about what happened in Ottawa, but first, I thought I'd give you an overview of the context regarding post-secondary education (PSE) and the various levels of government.

Government and PSE

Not everyone knows the ins and outs of Canadian federalism and how PSE is regulated in Canada, which is why I'll give you a cursory overview here.

There's really interesting history behind this, but essentially, there is a constitutional division of powers in Canada between the federal and provincial governments. The division of powers defines the scope of power of each level of government – they have responsibilities that are either exclusive to their jurisdiction or shared between both. For example, the national government has the power to regulate trade and commerce¹ as well as criminal law.² The provincial governments have legislative control over property and civil rights³ as well as matters of a local or private nature within the province (such as traffic, littering, etc.).

What does this have to do with post-secondary education?

Section 93 of The Constitution Act grants the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over education, allowing provincial governments to structure and manage their own education systems.

Before the 1960s, much of the funding for PSE came from the federal government. However, 1959 signaled a shift. Rather than increasing funding directly to PSE institutions, grants would go to the provincial treasuries instead.⁴ The years after World War Two up until the 1960s showed an increase in federal involvement due to

¹ *The Constitution Act, 1867*, s 91(2), <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/30---31-vict-c-3/#sec91>.

² *The Constitution Act, 1867*, s 91(27) <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/30---31-vict-c-3/#sec91>.

³ *The Constitution Act, 1867*, s 92(13), <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/30---31-vict-c-3/#sec92>.

⁴ Cameron, David. 2004. "Collaborative Federalism and Post-secondary Education: Be Careful What You Wish For". John Deutsch Institute for the Study of Economic Policy. Queen's University. February 13, 2004. Pg. 4.

the influence of external political events and internal changes. The 1960s, in general, marked the start of provincial coordination in higher education, which meant greater balancing between federal and provincial governments to maintain their respective jurisdictions.

A major paradox is as follows: on one hand, provinces have the constitutionally derived responsibility for social welfare, health, and education. On the other, federal responsibility is concerned with the national interest, economic development, and Aboriginal affairs. This paradox has led to a major line of tension in federal-provincial relations as each jurisdiction attempts to fulfill these responsibilities.⁵ Therefore, federal support and involvement in the PSE sector is a result of historical events, politics, and the spirit of federalism.

Even though authority over education is exclusively the purview of the provinces, it doesn't mean the **federal government** can't play a role. In fact, they have a very large *indirect* role to play:

- Raising money through taxation, nationally;
 - Taxation and spending powers – the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer are administered through the Department of Finance. A portion of that money goes to PSE.
- Regulation of trade and commerce;
- The Census and statistics;
- Intellectual property;
- First Nations issues;
- Immigration;
 - International students! Citizenship and immigration issues regarding visas allowing study, work, and travel in Canada.
- Research and Granting Agencies
 - CIHR
 - NSERC
 - SSHRC

Federally, indirectly and directly, they provide about \$20 billion in support for PSE. You may be familiar with programs such as the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP), Canada Student Grant Program (CSGP), and the various Education tax credits.

The **Alberta Provincial Government** has a direct role to play in our PSE institutions. They:

- Regulate tuition and fees;
- Provide core operating funding for PSE institutions;
- Provide student financial aid in the form of loans, grants, scholarships;
- Can be responsible for the creation of internships and work programs;
- Control legislation regarding residences.

Because both levels of government have an impact on post-secondary institutions and students, Students' Unions across the country advocate to our respective provincial governments and the national government. We do this through our lobby groups. UASU does this through CASA and CAUS!

⁵ Fisher, Donald; Rubenson, Kjell; Bernatchez, Jean; Clift, Robert; Jones, Glen; Lee, Jacy; MacIvor, Madeleine; Meredith, John; Shanahan, Theresa; Trottier, Claude. 2006. "Canadian Federal Policy and Postsecondary Education". The Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training (CHET). Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia. Pg. 1.

CASA:

The CASA Foundations conference (May 9th-13th) was an excellent opportunity to interact with other SU executives from across the country and it was also a great learning experience when it comes to policy and advocacy. Though I had a good understanding of our federal lobby organization before, this conference really strengthened my knowledge of the organization and the potential we have if used well. The purpose of this conference was not to set any policy or advocacy goals (that comes later, during our July conference). Rather, this was to provide us with a foundation of how we can excel at federal advocacy. On the final day, the new Board Chair and Board Members were elected, as well as members to various committees.

There are a few key issues that I personally want to focus on federally, which you'll hear more about later. I'm very interested in developing strong research-based policies. A few of the issues I want to work on include creating a policy on the federal Education and Textbook Tax Credits. Simply put, they are an inefficient use of public funding and can be better allocated towards other means of student financial assistance. I'm also interested in discussing international students and their concerns as well as looking at programs to strengthen assistance for Aboriginal students, such as the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). As such, I was elected to sit on CASA's policy committee!

In short, Ottawa was awesome!

CAUS

As you read this report, I will have returned from our changeover retreat! Please ask me questions in Council for updates regarding CAUS.

Conclusion

That's it for now folks! If you went through this entire report, congrats and thanks for reading! I'll try and keep them shorter in the future, but don't mind if I add some external knowledge here and there.

Thank you for your time,



Navneet Khinda

Vice President External 2014-2015 // [University of Alberta Students' Union](#)

Phone: (780) 492-4236 // **E:** vp.external@su.ualberta.ca

Twitter: [@uasuvpexternal](https://twitter.com/uasuvpexternal)

P.S. -- Feel free to reach me via [Facebook](#) or give me a call/text on my cellphone!