

Date: 01/12/21**To:** Students' Union Council**Re:** Vice President External 2020/21 Report 01/12/21

Hello Council,

I hope your January was wonderful and you are all staying warm and cozy in this brutal cold snap! As I'm sure most of you will understand, it has been a really bizarre week for me. Let's just say this is not what I had in mind when I ran to be a student leader, but I'm not complaining.

Penguin Protest Chaos

I assume you all remember the penguin protest that I was planning at our last meeting. Huge shoutout to Councillors Dixon, Monteiro, and Motoska for coming out, their help was greatly appreciated! The penguins were set up at the Legislature grounds, with about 800 in total built. The next day the groundskeeping staff demolished about 600 of them, so we cancelled our planned media availability. However, this had the unintended consequence of making our protest much, much more effective. The story ran first in the Gateway, then CTV, Global, the Edmonton Journal and Calgary Herald, and finally in papers all over Canada through the Canadian Press. My guess is that at least a million people have seen the story-- likely more. Seriously-- this story has been in papers from Squamish to Halifax. It was also picked up by major figures on social media like Rachel Notley and Thomas Lukaszuk. All in all, this was an incredibly successful protest. We are working to expand the penguin campaign and branding, which has picked up a lot of traction on social media.



This is an interesting example of how important humour can be in politics. It captures attention, but it also reduces tension and anger. Altogether this protest was probably more successful than a traditional rally would have been, even in non-COVID times-- and there is more to come.

Here's a small sample of the media coverage:

<https://bit.ly/3oPGwO3>

<https://bit.ly/3jigX6Y> (This one appeared across Canada)

<https://bit.ly/3rmlnLV> (The Gateway's article which broke the story)

Progress on Alberta 2030

You will all remember the conversations we had earlier in the year about the risk of tuition deregulation and superboards as part of the Alberta 2030 review. I am very pleased to report that we are continuing to hear very encouraging things about tuition policy, and as Don Braid mentions in [this article in the Herald](#), we also believe the government may be dropping the idea of a provincial superboard. I want to emphasize that these are huge wins that I and the other VPXs in the province have worked tirelessly towards for months. The largest successes of my term will no doubt be the things that did not happen instead of the things that do, but they are still achievements to celebrate.

Student Leaders' Meeting

On the 9th (just before Council), President Agarwal, VP Kidd, and I are attending the 3rd Student Leaders' event with Minister Nicolaides and the Department of Advanced Education. I have been promised by the department that we will have an in-depth conversation about sexual violence policy and the government will give a progress update. I hope that we won't be disappointed, and the Executive team will report back on what we hear. We also intend to continue to discuss tuition policy with the Minister, as many smaller details may still change.

Leave of Absence

I will be taking a leave of absence from the 11th of this month to March 4th, as I will be participating in the UASU elections. Please see my letter further in this order paper for more information. I'm disappointed to be leaving you all during such a critical time, but I know the rest of the exec team will do an excellent job in my absence. I'm always happy to chat or exchange 🔥 memes, but I will be fully stepped back from my work as VPX.

Take care of yourselves and good luck as we roll into midterm season. It has been a pretty tough semester for most of us so far I think-- but the light at the end of the tunnel is starting to get clearer.

Cheers,



University of Alberta Students' Union Vice President External
Rowan Ley