

**Date:** 01/12/21

**To:** Students' Union Council

**Re:** Vice President External 2020/21 Report 01/12/21

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Hello Council,

Happy new year! I hope you had a restful and pleasant holiday and are coming back refreshed and energized. I was feeling refreshed and energized until I stayed up all night like an idiot this Wednesday watching the fiasco in Washington, and now my sleep schedule is ruined again. However I did have an opportunity to rediscover the joys of winter cycling. Finding ways to get out and active these days is really important for mental and physical health, and if you can get a solid mountain bike, cycling is surprisingly easy and pleasant! I spent the rest of my break hanging out with my dog and eating cake. Here's a picture of my dog Tilda in her sleepy Christmas mood. There isn't too much to report coming off the holidays.



### **WTF is happening in Alberta politics?**

A lot of our work for the next few months is going to be happening in a very different context, so I will bring you quickly up to speed on what's going on. A number of senior government staffers, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and four MLAs were caught travelling outside of Canada over the holidays, which is against the government's own guidelines. This has created a pretty serious crisis in the Alberta government. The municipal affairs minister has resigned, the staff who traveled have been fired, and the governing party's poll numbers have dropped dramatically. The government is very distracted by this and the ongoing vaccine rollout (Alberta's is the fastest and most efficient in Canada). So what does this mean for students?

There is a huge amount of unpredictability in the government right now. We don't know if they will choose a more moderate approach or to double down on some of their more controversial plans. This will have a lot of influence on the budget (and the size of the cuts to U of A), which we will see in February, and the Alberta 2030 review implementation.

**Alberta 2030 Town Hall with Minister Nicolaides**

Myself, VP Agarwal, OASIS President Beasley, and a bunch of other folks from U of A attended Minister Nicolaides' town hall last Thursday on the Alberta 2030 review recommendations. Most of us managed to get a question in. We didn't learn too much we didn't already know, but there was some interesting new information. Here's some of the big takeaways.

- The 2030 review report has been delayed until March or April. As you all know it was initially planned for January. This in some ways makes it much harder for us to respond to it because we had planned for a January launch. This also means we will not need to call a special meeting of Council.
- The Minister has cooled to the idea of tuition deregulation and is not interested in a complete deregulation of tuition. He does feel there is room to explore changes to the tuition model in Alberta, but with some form of firm regulation.
- The Minister says his goal is to ensure every Alberta student has access to a quality work-integrated learning program, making Alberta arguably the first jurisdiction in North America to do that. He clarified that he hopes those opportunities will be available for students in arts and fundamental sciences fields, which is a welcome clarification because his government has invested a lot in engineering/applied science and trades work-integrated learning. That is excellent and we were very pleased to see those investments, but it has left a big gap in access to work-integrated learning for students in other areas.

**Lessons in Leadership**

The events of the last week in both Alberta and Washington have some pretty valuable lessons in leadership. Words have a real impact, and it's easier to stoke anger than it is to control it. Doing the right thing doesn't count if you wait until it's in your interest. And maybe most importantly, all real leadership is leadership by example-- bad examples in leadership positions seriously hurt communities and organizations. I'm thinking about how I can learn from those lessons to be a better part of my community, and I'd encourage all of us in leadership roles to reflect on it too.

As always, shoot me a message or email if you want to chat!

Happy new year!



University of Alberta Students' Union Vice President External  
**Rowan Ley**