

Date: 03/19/21**To:** Students' Union Council**Re:** Vice President External 2020/21 Report 03/23/21

Hello Council,

As you can all imagine the last few weeks have been quite an adventure with elections happening on top of my normal workload. I would like to give a very special congratulations to VP Fotang on being elected the next VP External. I have known him for a long time and am fully confident that he will do a spectacular job. I also want to congratulate every councillor who was re-elected to serve in 2021-22, I could not be more excited to work with you all again!

Clinical Placement Student Vaccines

For the last two months or so CAUS has been working on getting medical and nursing students on placements in clinical environments priority access to COVID vaccines. This has been a huge issue as they were often working on teams where they were the only ones not vaccinated, at significant risk to themselves and their families. To give you an idea of what our approach was on this, we worked with the medical students' associations at the U of C and U of A. Several other stakeholders including the medical student associations put bottom-up pressure on vaccine decision-makers by meeting with AHS officials, and we contributed by putting top-down pressure through the Minister of Health's office. Working with our government relations firm, Alberta Counsel, we got the support of the Minister of Health's office just prior to the decision on the phase 2B and 2C vaccine eligibility. Students on clinical placements will now be eligible for vaccines in phase 2C, likely in early-mid april (depending on supply). This is not quite ideal as this is still another two-week wait, but it is still a small win and worth celebrating under the circumstances.

Response to Budget 2021

We have been working on a number of approaches to respond to the cuts in the 2021 Alberta budget. It's important that discontent about this from voters is clear and registers with the government so that they think twice about doing this again, particularly as we move towards an election year. We do have some evidence that this sustained public pressure works-- this year's cut was not quite as bad as was for some time suggested.

Our first major approach is on the advertising side-- some of you may have seen our advertising on facebook and instagram. These ads have been performing extremely well, particularly the ones targeted at students, and direct users to information about the

cuts and what they mean as well as a letter-writing tool. This kind of advertising doesn't show instant results but it is important because it slowly pushes the needle of public opinion. We are focusing on messages for students and for parents, with the theme being around brain drain and keeping young people in Alberta by offering good quality post-secondary. In order to facilitate this and any future public campaigns, as of last week CAUS has been registered with Elections Alberta as a third-party advertiser, which allows us to spend over \$1000 on political advertising. This is a very important tool if we want to seriously try to influence public opinion and I anticipate it being used much more in the future.

Our second major approach is through bringing in grassroots student participation in opposing the cuts. CAUS is hosting an event on Sunday the 27th, which you will all have received invitations to, called the Alberta Emergency Student Congress. We know from examples in other jurisdictions that the buy-in and support of student leaders in departments and faculties is essential to making campaigns and organizing successful, so this is a first step towards building that more grassroots-level network. Usually we would never organize an event on this short notice, but we want it to happen while anger at the budget is still fresh. I hope to see many of you there!

Transition

One of my biggest tasks for the next few weeks will be transitioning Councillor Fotang into his new role as VPX, and it's something I've been looking forward to. To make sure it goes well I have been working on compiling reading materials, inviting him to meetings, and setting up a series of one-on-one meetings. By May 1st he will be fully into the swing of things and ready for the job.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all back on campus soon! The end of the pandemic is finally starting to feel closer and more real as we will be back in person and my parents become eligible for vaccines this month. Like many of you I have found the social isolation of this experience rough and am looking forward to putting it behind us and never thinking about it again.

Cheers,



University of Alberta Students' Union Vice President External
Rowan Ley