

Date: 06/11/20

To: Students' Union Council

Re: Vice President External 2020/21 Report 06/16/20

Hello Council,

For the last two weeks I have been trying to keep the two Boston ferns I recently bought alive, without great success. Despite following all the instructions, they are continuing to slowly wilt. If anyone has a particularly strong green thumb knows how I can save my plants, please let me know! They cheer up my work space a lot so I would hate to see them go. Aside from that, this has been probably the busiest week of my job so far. However, it has also been a change to work on some really important issues, and we have made a lot of progress-- so I consider it a great couple weeks nonetheless.

Maintenance Grant Amalgamation

As many of you will remember, the Alberta government recently amalgamated the Maintenance Grant, which served the unique needs of students with dependents who had exhausted all other financial aid, into a new grant which is not available for students in four year degree programs and does not serve the unique needs of students with dependents. In order to start a conversation about this and encourage the government to reallocate funding to the maintenance grant, I have spoken with CBC Edmonton, The Gateway, the Edmonton Journal, and Global News. I have also encouraged CAUS members to reach out to local media outlets near them.

You can find the CBC story here:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/advocates-fear-what-loss-of-education-grant-will-mean-for-students-with-children-1.5639876>

And the Gateway's coverage here:

<https://thegatewayonline.ca/2020/07/new-provincial-grant-consolidation-may-negatively-impact-post-sec-accessibility/>

As a next step, I have written an open letter which we will send to the Minister's office requesting the restoration of the maintenance grant or the creation of a suitable alternative. I will be trying to get co-signatures from the leaders of other provincial student groups, and sending it early next week.

Federal Francophone Education Policy

Continuing our ongoing advocacy for long-term stability at Campus Saint-Jean, I met with the Policy Director and Policy Development lead for the Canadian Alliance of

Student Associations, our federal partner, to discuss creating a francophone education policy. They were enthusiastic about the idea and expressed a desire to see it go forward this year, with the first lobbying with it likely to occur in Fall 2021. To help move things along, our Students' Union will be providing a briefing note explaining the relevant federal policies and how they are impacting Campus Saint-Jean.

Fall CAUS Campaign

We have been collaborating with CAUS's government relations firm, Alberta Counsel, to create draft messaging and digital strategy for a low-cost fall on campaign social media against post-secondary cuts. Our message will focus on the importance of student success and strong universities to Alberta's economic future, and will try to reach beyond the core PSE audience of students and staff into more peripheral PSE stakeholders like parents and businesses. The timing of this campaign, right before the Alberta 2030 review's initial report and during early budget deliberations, is intended for maximum influence on the budget and the review process.

As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions or want to give some feedback on our external advocacy. I am always happy to talk!

Cheers,



University of Alberta Students' Union Vice President External
Rowan Ley