Dear Council,

I hope you are all staying cool and spending time in well-ventilated spaces during this little heat wave we are having. I have been taking advantage of the summer days by exploring the ravine systems in Edmonton by bike, and I have found some pretty cool spots that I somehow missed for the last twenty years. There is always more to discover in this city and it doesn’t get old. Professionally, I am enjoying a bit of a lull in my calendar that is letting me catch up on a few long-term projects. It is nice to have days that are bit slower paced. As always, get in touch if you want to chat about our advocacy!

**CASA Policy and Strategy Conference**

Last week, President Agarwal and I attended the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations’ Policy and Strategy Conference over Zoom. It was meant to be hosted in Edmonton, but unfortunately with current travel restrictions and our responsibility to prevent infection we had to move to an online format. We hope to welcome delegates from across Canada to Edmonton another year. CASA as usual gave us an informative series of seminars and presentations on current federal issues, including the ongoing WE/Canada Student Summer Service Grant fiasco and a general political climate update. At the conference, we also voted on a few appointments, including delegates to the CASA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

During Policy and Strategy, I participated in meetings of the National Advocacy Committee (NAC) and the Federal Policy Committee (FPC). At NAC, we worked on brainstorming ideas for CAUS’s countrywide campaign this year, and discussed options for effective online campaigning. At FPC, myself and AUFSJ President Natalie Herkendaal explained the situation at Campus Saint-Jean and the value of a national Francophone Post-Secondary Education policy. FPC was receptive to the idea of creating that policy and has added it to their work plan for the year with Ruan Bouwer, the MacEwan Students’ Association VP External, and I taking the lead.

**Grants for Students with Dependents**

Last week, as a follow-up to our public letter sent on July 17th, the Chairs (including me) and Executive Directors of the three major Alberta student associations met with Demetrios Nicolaides, the Minister of Advanced Education. We discussed the
unique needs of students with dependents, how the elimination of the maintenance grant hurt them, and possible next steps to reinstate at least some provincial grant funding for those students. The Minister was understanding, but emphasized the financial constraints of his ministry and told us he was unable to provide more funding. While we continue to advocate for increased student aid funding, as a stop-gap measure, CAUS will be preparing a proposal on how we can better include students with dependents in existing grants. The Minister indicated he would look at our proposal with an open mind and see if it was feasible.

Alberta 2030 Post-Secondary Review
The Alberta 2030 Post-Secondary Review is starting to move ahead, and we expect to receive consultation invitations shortly. I won’t go too in depth on this here as I am presenting to Council tonight on Alberta 2030, but after extensive work with our provincial partners at ASEC (who represent colleges and polytechnics) and abGPAC (who represent graduate students), we signed a memorandum of understanding outlining how we will work together to ensure the outcome of the review is best for all students and not just one group. We intend to collaborate closely for the next six months in the shared interest of all 250,000 Alberta post-secondary students.

UPass Advocacy
Edmonton Transit Service has continued to not offer acceptable alternatives to the UPass for this fall, and resolving this issue is a major SU priority. VP Krahn is the lead on this file and has been doing a great job, and for the last couple weeks I have been supporting her work through outreach to City Council and the Mayor’s office. In an effort to break the impasse, we drafted a letter which we sent to all City Councillors outlining our concerns and asking for their support in making transit affordable for students this fall. So far, we have met with Councillors Mike Nickel and Andrew Knack, and have meetings planned or anticipated with Mayor Iveson, Councillor Bev Esslinger, and Councillor Scott McKeen. So far we have found Councillors to be helpful and receptive to our concerns and we are hopeful that a breakthrough could be in sight.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

University of Alberta Students’ Union Vice President External
Rowan Ley