Date: 22/03/2019
To: Students’ Union Council
Re: VP(X) 2018/19 Report

Dear Council,

I come bearing good news! The federal budget was released AND it’s election season in Alberta! Time to refocus advocacy priorities and get out that vote. I am writing this from the final CASA conference of the year in Halifax, so it is a very bittersweet moment for me.

1. Updates
   - **Federal budget:** On March 19th, the government of Canada released its [2019 budget](https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/en/index.html) which includes significant changes and investments relating to students. You can check out the CASA press release [here](https://casa.ca/) for more on our view on the budget. While it certainly did not cover everything CASA advocated on financially this year
     A brief summary:
     - Hundreds of new research scholarship awards for students announced so that students will get their fair share of government research dollars;
     - Budget 2019 proposes to expand the Student Work Placement Program to give students in fields outside of STEM—such as the arts, humanities and social sciences—access to work-integrated learning opportunities;
     - Student loan interest rates will be lowered and new graduates will be given a 6 month period after graduation where no interest is accrued;
     - The Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities is jumping from a maximum of $8,000 per year to $20,000 per year;
     - Expanding eligibility for the Severe Permanent Disability Benefit so that more students with severe permanent disabilities can qualify for loan forgiveness;
     - Parental leave for students who are Tri-Council Agency funded scholars is being extended from 6 months to 12 months; and
     - $327.5 million over five years to renew and expand funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

   - **Alberta Election 2019:** The provincial election has finally been called and we will be going to the polls on April 16th! Before that, we will have advanced polls on campus (in the SUB lower level) where students will be able to vote for whichever constituency they come from. I will also note that neither the SU nor CAUS will be pushing election advocacy priorities during the campaign period. This is because third-party advertising and lobbying laws during elections are very strict, and as we are running a non-partisan
GOTV campaign we do not want to violate those laws. Remember to visit licensestocomplain.ca to pledge to vote and please pass it on to your friends!

- **Speech from the Throne:** I attended this speech the day before the election was called (March 18) at the Legislature at the invitation

- **CASA AGM:** CASA’s Annual General Meeting conference is currently being held in Halifax, Nova Scotia and as I mentioned it is a very bittersweet ending to what was a fantastic year for the organization. This conference has focused on wrapping up work done around policy development, governance, and ensuring a seamless transition to next years delegates.

- **MSA Advocacy:** I also met with the incoming and outgoing VP Externals of the Medical Students Association to help them strategize on some of their advocacy priorities centering around the lack of medical residency spots in Alberta.

### 2. Coming up

- **Federal Budget Presentation:** On March 27, President Larsen, VP Bhatnagar, EAA Nelson and I will be attending a presentation of the federal budget from Finance Minister Bill Morneau hosted by the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce.

- **UCGSA Presentation:** On March 27th, I will also be driving to Calgary to present CASA to the Council of the University of Calgary Graduate Student Association. This group has been observing CASA conferences all year and are hopefully moving towards member status, which is fantastic to bolster our graduate policy and advocacy approach.

- **Quebec Trip:** From April 4-8 I will be attending the Quebec Student Union’s final conference of the year in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec. CASA and the QSU will hopefully vote to extend our current partnership agreement for another while negotiations conclude. Our partnership with the QSU ensures that CASA truly represents students from across Canada.

Congratulations to all newly-elected Councillors for the next year! I am very much looking forward to what will be an incredible year together.

Kind regards,

UASU VP (External)

Adam Brown