



Third Quarterly Report

Vice-President, External Affairs

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2009-2010

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The Role of the VP External

The Vice-President, External Affairs is responsible for government relations and government lobbying. They are also responsible for lobbying other external organizations such as Translink. The VP External is the executive that is responsible for maintaining a relationship with other student unions and organizations.

The VP External is your personal advocate and lobbyist for issues students care about. The AMS External Office deals with issues such as:

- The U-Pass
- Transit service and Translink
- The various levels of government regarding student issues such as:
 - Tuition fee levels
 - Student financial assistance (loans, bursaries, scholarships and grants)
 - Post-secondary education funding

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Summary of the Report

The AMS External Office and the VP External have been working on:

- Fighting against the student aid program funding cuts. The AMS External Office will be launching an awareness campaign and organizing Lobby Days to prevent further cuts
- Getting representation for the unincorporated UBC-area on the Mayors' Council in Translink's governance structure
- Signing the U-Pass agreement with Translink and UBC
- Changing the UBC Residence Contract for greater reassurances on civil liberties and political expression
- Comparing the UBC Residence Contract and the Residential Tenancy Act
- Organizing the Childcare Conference for May 2010 in conjunction with the GSS
- Working with UBC Childcare Services and the Daycare Parents Council over the issue of the Minor Capital Grants cut to childcare
- Fixing up the AMS External Office budget
- Outreaching to students during Imagine Day and signing up over 80 volunteers for the AMS External Office
- Chairing the External Policy Committee which was mandated by Council to come up with an updated Olympics Report
- Chairing the Equity Committee which was mandated by Council to undergo a review on systemic discrimination in the AMS
- The second Quarterly Report

Post-Secondary Education

What Happened with Post-Secondary Education?

- Nothing major happened with post-secondary education in BC. No additional cuts were announced and there were no new additional funding to post-secondary education.
- The impacts of the \$17 million cut in funding to student aid program are beginning to surface. Students are beginning to come forward with issues they are facing.
- The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) ran a campaign protesting the \$17 million cut in funding to student aid programs which included pumpkin cutting (“Cut Pumpkins, Not Funding”).
- The Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in the Report on the Budget 2010 Consultation recommended that there be further investigation into the high interest rates for student loans. The issue of high interest rates for student loans was specifically singled out. Currently, students pay an interest rate of Prime+2.5% for their student loans.
- Recently, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador decided to abolish interest rates for student loans altogether.

What did the AMS External Office do?

- With the guidance of the External Policy Committee, campaign materials were designed and printed. The main focus of the campaign was to get students to sign postcards which would be later delivered to the Minister of Advanced Education.
- There were two rounds of the postcard drive. The first occurred on October 13, 2009 and the second on November 13, 2009. Tents were rented and free coffee was given out to those who signed a postcard. The postcards also allowed for students to write their own comments and had a box where students could check off if they wanted the Minister to reply to them. The AMS External Office also had posters and buttons made up which were distributed at the events.
- The AMS External Office also issued a media advisory informing media outlets of the “cuts and coffee” event.

What did the AMS External Office Achieve?

- The “cuts and coffee” event received some media attention. Interviews were done and articles were written.
- Numerous volunteers showed up for the “cuts and coffee” event and volunteers also came and helped out with the promotion of the event. This allows for the AMS to build up its long-term volunteer base.
- At the coffee booths, the AMS External Office and volunteers managed to collect over 2000 postcards. Many of the postcards have comments on them. From the postcards, the AMS External Office also collected contact information from approximately 1500 students who were interested in the outcome of postcards and what the AMS External Office is doing.

Where do we go from here?

- Presenting the postcards will allow for direct dialogue between the AMS External Office and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. This will be an opportunity to speak with the Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Moira Stilwell, who has been largely silent about the funding cuts and the direction of the Ministry.
- Following up on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in regards to high interest rates on student loans. The AMS External Office will work with the University administration, who have also identified the high interest rates on student loans as an issue, to see what is the best way to getting the BC Government to reduce student loan interest rates.

Transit and the U-Pass

What Happened with Transit and the U-Pass?

- The Mayor's Council of Translink recently approved the stabilization option for the 10-Year Plan. What this means is that Translink will receive an additional \$130 million dollars. Although there is an increase in revenue, the stabilization option only allows for maintenance of existing services and allows for no expansion. The main reason why the Mayor's Council did not vote for the \$450 million expansion option was because the Translink Commissioner ruled the expansion option out of order since it did not detail where the funding would come from. The stabilization option would call for fare increases in April 2010; this would subsequently include the U-Pass. In essence, when the U-Pass contract expires in 2011, Translink will be asking for an increase of 9% (for inflation at 3% per year) plus the additional increase being experienced by non-U-Pass users in April 2010.
- For UBC, this stabilization plan means that there is no money from Translink to create the UBC Line. However, funding for the researching of the UBC Line has been approved. In essence, if there is to be a UBC Line, there will need to be additional funding.
- The report from the Comptroller General reviewing Translink was released in October. This report identifies governance as the main issue with Translink. In the report, it raises the issue of confusing reporting structures in Translink's organization and it questions the role of the Mayor's Council in the overall governance structure. The report recommends that the Mayor's Council be expanded to include other stakeholders and the provincial government. The Mayor's Council will then be renamed to the "Transit Authority." This Transit Authority would have the ability to remove appointed members on the Board of Directors and have complete oversight ability of the organization.
- In December 2009, Translink will be adding two more stops on the 99 B-Line. One will be placed at Arbutus and the other at Fraser. These stops, according to Translink, will be in place until the 99 B-Line stops running.

- The CEO for Translink, Tom Pendergast, recently quit his position and went to the NYC Transit Authority. He cited reasons such as micro-management from the Province and lack of funding from the Province for his departure.

What did the AMS External Office do?

- The AMS External Office has attended information sessions on the potential UBC Line with Translink and other stakeholder groups on campus.
- The AMS External Office has contacted the Trek Office and asked them to stop automatically exempting students from the U-Pass program. By halting automatic exemptions, students who are solely taking distance education courses and three-week courses, (these students typically do not receive U-Passes), will have the ability to receive a U-Pass if they wanted one. Those who do not want one and fall in this category can be exempted.
- The AMS External Office have approved the U-Pass Subsidy applications and are waiting for the information to be put into a spreadsheet which will be sent to the University for crediting.

What did the AMS External Office Achieve?

- The report from the Comptroller General stated that other stakeholders, who are not municipalities, need to be included in the Mayor's Council. If this recommendation is adopted by the Ministry of Transportation, the Mayor's Council/Transit Authority would include a representative for the UBC-area. This was an issue that the AMS External Office raised to the Ministry of Transportation.
- The AMS External Office received over 520 U-Pass Subsidy applications from students who have financial hardship.
- After a meeting with Translink in regards to service out to UBC, Translink said that they will re-examine the transit service out to UBC and have it more integrated with the class schedule. Translink also said that they will look into having the bus departure times for various buses becoming staggered. Currently, a lot of the east-west corridor buses all leave the UBC bus loop in a time window of 9 minutes. If the student misses that time window, they will have to wait for approximately 15 minutes until any bus departs.

Where do we go from here?

- The AMS External Office will follow up with the Ministry of Transportation to see which of the Comptroller General's recommendations they adopt, in particular, the Mayor's Council expansion.
- Due to the consultation process for the UBC Line, the AMS External Office will be working with the External Policy Committee to establish a position as to what type of technology we would like have implemented for the UBC Line.

2010 Winter Games on Campus

What Happened with the 2010 Winter Games on Campus?

- The official transportation plan for UBC has been released by Translink. This includes maps of road closure and detours of the buses coming into UBC. Essentially, all the buses coming from South Campus will be detoured. All the buses that used to come from the East of Wesbrook Mall will be detoured to turn at Blanca Street and come in through University Boulevard. All the buses that used to come from West of Wesbrook Mall will be detoured to at 16th Avenue and Marine Drive. These buses will come to UBC from Marine Drive, around all the residences and enter the bus loop from the North side.
- In terms of transit service, UBC will be experiencing 24 hour bus service during the period of the Games. The N17 will be running once every 30 minutes. Furthermore, the B-Line route to UBC will receive 10 reserve buses which will be deployed if there are huge line ups at certain stops.
- Olympic and Paralympic ticket holders will also receive free transit. This is potentially a problem on our transit system for UBC students during the Paralympic Games as students are expected to attend classes during that period.
- UBC, VANOC, the RCMP and Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (ISU) is currently determining the location of the "safe assembly zones" for campus.
- The BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) and the Student Legal Fund Society (SLFS) are working together to establish a legal observer training program on campus.

What did the AMS External Office do?

- The AMS External Office found out the potential areas where these "safe assembly zones" would be placed on campus.
- The AMS External Office has been in constant dialogue with the University in regards to the planning process.
- The AMS External Office, in conjunction with the External Policy Committee, is drafting the Olympics Report as mandated by Council.

- The AMS External Office is working with the BCCLA to have Know Your Rights training and content for rights card on campus.

Where do we go from here?

- The AMS External Office will be creating rights card and legal observer training with the BCCLA.
- The AMS External Office will continue asking the questions in regards to the impacts on students because of the Games, especially in regards to potentially UBC Athletics' budget being used to finance the Games.
- The AMS External Office will be getting the message out to students so students are given enough time to plan around the Games.

Childcare for Students

What did the AMS External Office do?

- The AMS External Office is organizing a Childcare Conference in conjunction with the GSS. Currently, registration for the childcare conference is about to open and the keynote speaker is being finalized.
- The AMS External Office is in constant contact with the Coalition of Childcare Advocates BC and Sharon Gregson, Vancouver School Board Trustee.

What did the AMS External Office Achieve?

- The AMS External Office, with SAC and the Renovations Committee, successfully installed baby change tables in some of the washrooms in the SUB.

Where do we go from here?

- Finalize the plans for the Childcare Conference.
- Promote the installations of the baby change tables to student parents on campus.

Outreach Efforts

The outreach efforts of the AMS External Office have been largely successful. For Clubs Days, the AMS External Office had a booth on the main concourse and signed up over 200 volunteers. These volunteers have been helping out in the day-to-day tasks of the AMS External Office such as data entry, filing of papers, and creating banners. These volunteers have also been doing classroom announcements to promote the "cuts and coffee" event.

The AMS External Office created a contact list for any type of outreach campaign the AMS External Office may run. This list is different from the list we receive from the University as this list is a list of students who actively signed on. Furthermore, those who have signed on to this contact list have spoken, in person, with at least a staff from the AMS or a volunteer of the AMS. Hopefully, this type of outreach will change the apathy among students in terms of the AMS.

Committees

The VP External is the chair of the External Policy Committee and the Equity Committee.

External Policy Committee

The External Policy Committee has been busy dealing with the CASA situation. Upon the recommendation of the External Policy Committee, Council decided to withdraw from CASA. Furthermore, the External Policy Committee has been organizing and editing the content for the "cuts and coffee" campaign. The External Policy Committee has also been working on the Olympics Report as mandated by Council.

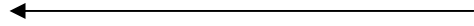
Equity Committee

The Equity Committee has sent out the Request for Proposals (RFP) on the Organizational Review for Systemic Discrimination. Responses so far have been quite positive. The date for the closing of the RFP is November 20, 2009, after which the committee will be sitting down to consider the RFPs. Furthermore, the Equity Committee has been dealing with equity issues from various clubs and constituencies.

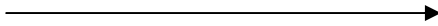
Photos



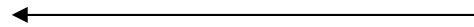
The AMS External Office at Imagine Day! Students taking pictures of the giant U-Pass costume that was made.



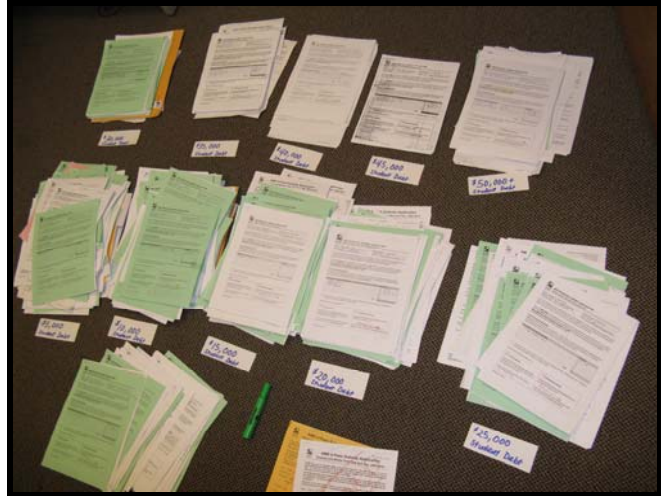
A typical line-up of students waiting to get on to the 84 VCC-Clark bus. More buses more often!



November 13, 2009 – Cuts and Coffee Campaign. Getting students to sign the postcard.



U-Pass subsidy applications divided into specific debt loads. Average student debt in BC is \$27,000.



A banner demanding that Minister Stilwell reverse the \$17 million cut to student aid programs.



A dirty office means work is being done!



Acknowledgement

The VP External would like to acknowledge the work put in by students and individuals.

External Commission

Rory Green – Associate Vice-President, External Affairs

Mary Wong – U-Pass and Transit Commissioner

Jeremy Wood – AMS Paralympics and Olympics Commissioner

Brad Morrison – Childcare Commissioner

Thanks for putting up with me!

The Volunteers! (all of them!)

External Policy Committee

Tahara Bhate – Science Councillor

Matthew Naylor – Arts Councillor

Elena Kusaka – Arts Councillor

Ekatarina Dovjenko – Commerce Councillor

Kyle Warwick – Arts Councillor

Kiranpreet Dhillon – Member-at-large

Dusty Chipura – Member-at-large

Students who got involved with the External Policy Committee

Colin Simkus – Student-at-large

Alissa Westergard-Thorpe – Student-at-large

Guillaume Houle – Arts Councillor

Geoff Costeloe – Student Senator

Elin Tayyar – Student-at-large

Patrick James Crawford – Student-at-large

Staff

Adrienne Smith – Policy Advisor

Kelli Seepaul – Communications Manager

Joanne Pickford – Administrative Assistant

Tessie Sy – AMS Catering Manager

Kathryn Will – AMS Bookings Representative

The VP External would also like to acknowledge that the services of the AMS External Office are being delivered on traditional Musqueam and Coast Salish Territories.