



# **Second 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?

- On July 23, the BC Government cut \$17 million in funding to student aid programs. This is a clear broken election promise by the BC Liberals. In their platform during the provincial election they promised to “maintain this year’s higher funding levels for student aid.”<sup>i</sup>
- The BC September 2009 Budget confirmed the \$17 million cut in funding to student aid programs. According to the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) and the Confederation of University Faculty Associations (CUFA), there were also a \$16 million cut in building repair and maintenance funding, a \$17 million claw back in “internal recoveries,” and a freezing of funding institutional operating funding, which would result in a \$38 million cut.
- The Federal Government announced last year that they will be ending two debt reduction and repayment assistance programs.<sup>ii</sup> As a substitute, they will be introducing a Repayment Assistance Program (RAP). This program is quite problematic as the assistance given to students is substantially less, the funding structure is monthly (i.e. students will receive monthly cheques which mean they are still burdened with the high upfront costs), and the programs requires students to “re-apply” every six months.

### What did the AMS External Office do?

- A soft campaign was launched during the summer to raise awareness of the funding cuts to student aid programs. This campaign focused mainly on rooting out students that have been affected by these cuts. Students were asked to contact the VP External if they have been affected and would like to get involved.
- With the guidance of the External Policy Committee, a formal campaign is being planned and a motion was brought forward to Council opposing the cuts. Funding was then authorized by Council for the campaign. The campaign consists of sending mass amounts of post-cards to the Minister of Advanced Education, letter writing drives, phone calls to the Minister of Advanced Education by students-at-large and a demonstration.

- The AMS External Office issued a press release in regards to the BC September 2009 Budget. This press release focused on the skewed priorities of the government.
- The decision from the Federal Government to end the two repayment assistance program was made a while back. However, the AMS External Office is working with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) to improve provisions within the new program.

### **What did the AMS External Office Achieve?**

- Due to the cuts to student aid programs, the AMS External Office received some media attention. Interviews were done and articles were written.
- Twenty different students approached the AMS External Office because of the awareness raised from the soft campaign. These twenty different students are willing to get involved with the AMS in regards to getting the message out that these cuts happened.

### **Where do we go from here?**

- AMS Council, upon direction from the External Policy Committee, has authorized funding for Lobby Days. Lobby Days is an annual event where student leaders go to Victoria, meet up with elected officials and discuss student issues. The AMS External Office will be planning Lobby Days and it is expected to occur immediately after the awareness campaign. There are two main reasons why Lobby Days are occurring immediately after the awareness campaign as opposed to February. The first reason is that the awareness campaign is meant to show political clout and support, this political clout and support would carry the student representatives to Victoria and give them more leverage when discussing student issues with elected officials. The second reason is to prevent further cuts to student programs. The consultation for the February Budget typically happens in October.
- The AMS External Office will be launching the awareness campaign as soon as the materials are ready and the volunteers have signed up for shifts. There has been a quite significant amount of students wishing to volunteer with the awareness campaign.

## Transit and the U-Pass

### What Happened with Transit and the U-Pass?

- Translink is currently drafting and finalizing their 10-Year Plan. This 10-Year Plan document will be the governing document of Translink for the next 10 years. Translink's Board of Directors has proposed three different options. The first is no increases in funding and this will result in drastic cuts to transit service – up to 40% reduction in transit service. The second is an increase in funding to meet existing demands as the current system is over-capacity. The third option is to increase funding to a level that would allow for growth in the system to meet existing demands and account for growth in ridership. The third option requires funding of up to \$450 million.
- Translink claims to not have any money and requires alternatives to increase revenue or funding from the provincial government. The provincial government has refused to fund Translink and has requested Translink to be a self-sufficient organization. As a result, Tom Pendergast, the CEO for Translink, has publicly stated that the U-Pass Program will be completely frozen unless there is additional funding.<sup>iii</sup>
- The Ministry of Transportation has ordered an organizational review of Translink through the Comptroller General to examine where the Ministry of Transportation can cut funding. This organizational review is on-going and the results from the review are expected soon.
- The BC Liberals promised during the provincial election campaign that they will introduce a universal U-Pass for all post-secondary education students in BC at a flat rate.<sup>iv</sup> However, the flat rate has been estimated to be \$48.00 per month for each student. This estimated cost is approximately double what UBC students are currently paying.
- The new Canada Line opened on August 17, 2009. As a result, major changes were made to bus routes to integrate the new rapid transit line. One major change is the ending of the 98 B-Line along the Granville corridor.
- The initial stages of consultation for the rapid transit line out to UBC have begun. Translink is meeting with stake-holder groups and asking them how the consultation

process should occur. Despite the financial situation of Translink, the UBC Line funding has mostly been secured through the base funding of Translink.

#### **What did the AMS External Office do?**

- The AMS External Office, through a Freedom of Information request, obtained information from Translink documenting the number of pass-ups, where a bus passes riders waiting at a bus stop because the bus is full. From January 2008 to May 2009, over 8000 pass-ups were documented. The actual number is significantly higher because the system requires bus drivers to pro-actively records the pass-up. The AMS External Office has been incorporating the new data in the materials being produced.
- The AMS External Office has contacted the Ministry of Transportation to talk about transit issues. The issue of representation for the UBC-area on the Mayors' Council was raised. UBC is an unincorporated area (i.e. UBC is not a municipality) and hence does not receive any representation on the Mayors' Council.
- The AMS External Office has been active in answering questions about the U-Pass. On average, the AMS External Office will receive approximately ninety phone calls and hundreds of emails per week.
- The AMS External Office, in conjunction with the VP Administration, Crystal Hon, has updated the U-Pass Subsidy Application. The new application form includes the SUB Renewal Fee Subsidy as well.
- The AMS External Office worked with other student unions to prevent the imposition of a \$48.00 universal U-Pass. A coalition was formed called "One Pass Now" and it calls for a \$25.00 U-Pass instead of a \$48.00 one.
- The AMS External Office has been working with UBC Trek Office to get Translink to accept the U-Pass on May 1, 2009 despite the fact that the U-Pass expires at the end of April. Translink just needs to finalize this on their end and the U-Passes will be honoured. This extension comes because of the extension of the exam period due to the Games.

#### **What did the AMS External Office Achieve?**

- The AMS External Office received some media attention in regards to the issue of the UBC-area having no representative on the Mayors' Council.



- After speaking with the Ministry of Transportation, the Minister of Transportation herself, Shirley Bond, reassured the AMS External Office that she will give direct guidance to the Comptroller General to examine the issue of the UBC-area having no representative on the Mayors' Council.
- The AMS External Office handed out over 800 Subsidy Application forms to students who have financial hardship.
- The U-Pass has been extended until May 1, 2009 because of the extension of the exam period.

#### **Where do we go from here?**

- The AMS External Office will follow up with the Ministry of Transportation over the issue of representation on the Mayors' Council. We will be keeping an eye out for the report from the Comptroller General to see how it will affect students.
- The AMS External Office will be meeting up with UBC Trek Office to get Translink to formally sign the U-Pass agreement. With the U-Pass contract in place, it will be a deterrent for the provincial government to unilaterally impose a \$48.00 U-Pass on UBC students.
- Due to the consultation process for the UBC Line, the AMS External Office will be working with the External Policy Committee in drafting up a strategy in regards to how to approach the consultation process.

## 2010 Winter Games on Campus

### What Happened with the 2010 Winter Games on Campus?

- In preparation for the Games, UBC has included an appendix in the Residential Contract for all students living in UBC Residences. This appendix is problematic as it restricts signage in the residences during the period of the Games. Compounded with the ability of University personnel to enter students' suites at anytime, there was fear that the University would be restricting free speech. The BC Civil Liberties Association also raised this concern.
- The transportation plan for UBC has not yet been released by Translink; however, maps of the road closures have been disclosed to students by the UBC Olympic and Paralympic Secretariat, Michelle Aucoin.
- There has been no consultation with stakeholder groups on campus in regards to planning of the Games. Hence, decisions are being made without the ability for students to give input.

### What did the AMS External Office do?

- The VP External, Timothy Chu, raised this issue to the media. The VP External received substantial media coverage over this issue. The VP External did TV interviews, live radio interviews, newspaper and print interviews. This issue was the headline news for the 11:30pm late night news on CTV. This issue was also discussed about on Talk 1410 during the rush hour period.
- The AMS External Office has been in constant dialogue with the University in regards to the planning process.
- The AMS External Office is sharing information with other stakeholder groups on campus, such as the childcare facilities and the Faculty Association. They are reciprocally sharing information with the AMS.
- As mandated by Council, the External Policy Committee is creating an updated report on the Games on campus.

- The External Policy Committee created a document which was sent to Translink to inform them of some of the unique situations facing students when planning the transportation plan. For example, students still require access to research facilities during the Games despite the extension of reading week break.
- We've been developing an outreach strategy to inform students of the impacts of the Games.

#### **What the AMS External Office Achieve?**

- The Residence Contract was changed unilaterally by the University to give greater reassurances to students that there is no intention to restrict political signage and opinions. This change affects over 8000 students.

#### **Where do we go from here?**

- The AMS External Office will continue asking the questions in regards to the impacts on students because of the Games.
- The AMS External Office will be working with the University, RCMP and the Vancouver Integrated Security Unit (VISU) in mapping out the security zones and "safe assembly areas."
- The AMS External Office will be getting the message out to students so students are given enough time to plan around the Games.
- Point-persons will be established so students have someone to go to from the University, RCMP, VISU and the AMS.
- Continued pressure will be placed on the University and Translink to get the Transportation Plan for campus to the students.

## Housing Issues

### What Happened with Housing?

- Besides the ongoing issue of lack of affordable housing, there has not been too much action from the provincial government over this issue.

### What did the AMS External Office do?

- The AMS External Office created a brief comparison between the rights enjoyed by renters covered by the Residential Tenancy Act and the rights enjoyed by renters in UBC Residences. The following is a chart detailing these differences:

	<b>Residential Tenancy Act</b>	<b>UBC Residence Contract</b>
<i>Failure to pay rent</i>	10 days notice before eviction	Immediate termination of contract and eviction
<i>Suite entry</i>	Written notice given at least 24 hours in advance	University personnel can enter without prior notice and without just cause
<i>Change of tenancy agreement</i>	Parties involved must agree to changes	University can amend the contract at will
<i>Application fees for renting</i>	Application fees are illegal under the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i>	University charges \$50.00 application fee even though you may not be guaranteed a residence
<i>Quiet enjoyment</i>	Ensures right to quiet enjoyment	Does not recognize the right to quiet enjoyment
<i>Suite assignment</i>	Landlord cannot force tenant to move into another suite and pay the potentially higher rent	University has the power to move you into another residence and force you to pay the higher rent
<i>Additional Furniture</i>	The tenant is allowed to move in additional furniture without prior approval from the landlord	Additional furniture is prohibited in the residences, such bookshelves, unless there is written authorization

- The AMS External Office has been planning an awareness campaign with the SFSS as they have expressed interest in working over the issue of affordable housing for students.

**Where do we go from here?**

- Work with the SFSS in developing an awareness campaign.
- The AMS External Office will approach the Municipality of Vancouver to see ways that they can change their zonings to benefit students.
- The AMS External Office will also contact the Residential Tenancy Branch so that they can establish jurisdiction over the areas on campus that are covered by the Residential Tenancy Act. By doing so, students would have a go-to person over tenancy issues.

## Childcare for Students

### What Happened with Childcare for Students?

- The BC Government decided to cut 60% of the Minor Capital Grants. As a result, \$3000.00 was cut from each grant. This affects UBC Childcare Services, according to Darcelle Cottons, the Director of Childcare Services at UBC, because it means each facility at UBC would need to make up the \$3000.00 and there is no fundraising effort that would be able to make it all up.
- Despite new facilities being opened at UBC and more students entering the facilities, the waitlist for some categories (age range) is still the same.

### What did the AMS External Office do?

- The AMS External Office is working with the UBC Daycare Parent Council to see what we can do together to raise awareness of the cuts to Minor Capital Grants.
- The AMS External Office is organizing a Childcare Conference in conjunction with the GSS. Forty years ago, when UBC Childcare Services were founded, a conference took place to discuss the issues of childcare. Forty years later, we find ourselves still discussing the same thing and hence the GSS and the AMS External Office decided to organize a conference. This conference would bring together academics and activism. The conference is to occur in May 2010.
- The AMS External Office also attended the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Block Party raising awareness of the issue to parents.
- The AMS External Office is working with the Student Administrative Commission (SAC) and the VP Administration to install change tables in washrooms for students who have babies.
- 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 the President, wrote up a press release about the cuts to the Minor Capital Grants. We received media attention from the Courier Newspaper.

### Where do we go from here?

- Finalize the plans for the Childcare Conference.
- Work with the UBC Daycare Parents Council to raise awareness of the Minor Capital Grants cut.
- Do tabling to raise awareness of the issue of students.

- Finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University in regards to the \$1 million transfer in return for 40% of the spaces for students. This was a deal that was negotiated by former President Jeff Friedrich.

## Other Pertinent Information

### **Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)**

After the provincial election, the BC Government announced that it would harmonize the sales tax. The Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) would include items that were previously not included. For example, school supplies will not be subjected to an additional 7% of sales tax. This is an increase in sales tax for school supplies of 140%. This would affect students' ability to pay for their education.

The AMS currently has no position on the Harmonized Sales Tax.

### **AMS External Office Budget**

Due to the budget crunch, there were certain areas in the AMS External Office Budget that were slashed. However, these cuts would affect the ability of the AMS External Office to do its job. Hence, the AMS External Office worked with the External Policy Committee in coming up with budget revisions. We have also been working with the Budget Committee.

### **Outreach Efforts**

The AMS External Office has focused quite a bit of energy on outreaching to students. As a result, we created AMS flags to bring to events in order to create the AMS presence. We have also been making a lot of AMS buttons and giving it away to students.

For Imagine Day, at the AMS External Office's table, we had, at any given moment, approximately 8 people at the table. For Imagine Day, we also managed to sign up over 80 volunteers for the AMS External Office. Emails from interested students have been flowing in. Since the beginning of the 2009-2010 term, the AMS External Office received over 40 emails from students interested in what the AMS External Office is doing. Students-at-large have been dropping by the office to talk about student issues.



## Committees

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

### **External Policy Committee**

The External Policy Committee has grown substantially in size. The mailing list for the agenda and meeting times has grown to over 21 individuals. Students are expressing interest in getting involved with the External Policy Committee.

The External Policy Committee has been working on the Olympics Report, as mandated by Council. They have also been discussing outreach methods and messaging for the funding cuts campaign. They have also been looking into the AMS' relationship with CASA and will be preparing Council with the proper documents and background information.

### **Equity Committee**

The Equity Committee has been having difficulties with meeting time. The Equity Committee will be working on the review on systemic discrimination, as mandated by Council. The Equity Committee will also deal with family-friendly spaces on campus.

## 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!*

### 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

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.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> BC Liberals 2009 Election Platform, *Keep BC Strong: Proven Leadership for BC's Economy*, 24.

<sup>ii</sup> These programs are the Canada Student Loans Interest Relief Program, which provides students a six month break from repaying their student loans without penalty, and the Canada Student Loans Debt Reduction Program, which would forgive up to \$10,000 in student loans for students.

<sup>iii</sup> Mayors' Council Meeting – September 15, 2009.

<sup>iv</sup> BC Liberals 2009 Election Platform, *Keep BC Strong: Proven Leadership for BC's Economy*, 24.