



REPORT

From the office of the...
Vice-President (Education)

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Elizabeth Wong, Vice-President (Education) & Corporate Officer
SUBJECT: SRA 22M Report
DATE: January 24th, 2023

Dear Members of the Assembly,

I am pleased to bring forth my updates in my report. I have unfortunately not had the opportunity to meet all the new(ly) elected SRA members as I have been away for OUSA's General Assembly and both provincial and federal lobby weeks. I am excited to speak to the SRA on my updates around provincial and federal lobbying. If my last report touched upon year plan progress, this report would give members a glimpse into the external branch of the advocacy department.

I find myself feeling bittersweet at this time of year. With our two main lobby weeks being completed, that wraps up some of the core areas of provincial and federal lobbying from my portfolio. It is exciting to see the direct impact of our advocacy efforts during these periods of time. Advocacy is a long game, but it is an effective one if we continue to build off the work of our predecessors.

I look forward to working with you all in the next few months and I encourage all of you to contact me if you are interested in any of my projects or if you have an interest in advocacy. Though time is short, there is always room to develop within advocacy and to contribute to advocacy efforts for the MSU!

Progress on Yearplan

I won't touch on specifics of my year plan here, but you will see these themes through my recap of my past and upcoming events, projects, and activities. I continue to keep my year plan at front of mind but continue to adapt to the political world as I run the advocacy department. The joys of advocacy are that politics are always changing and myself and my team are always on our feet to adapt to any changes.

If there are any members who want me to touch upon a specific area listed, please let me know. I would be more than happy to elaborate. Otherwise, I haven't listed them clearly in the next sections but these themes are present throughout my activities.

- Accessibility
- Tuition and Financial Aid
- Student Financial Aid
- Community Engagement
- Mental Health Support

- Student Housing
- Communication & Connection
- Review of the Education Team

Past Events, Projects, & Activities

OUSA Fall 2022 General Assembly

- Back in October, the President and I brought a group of delegates to Laurentian University to represent the MSU at OUSA's Fall 2022 General Assembly. We brought a total of 10 delegates including myself and the President to participate.
- At OUSA's GA we discussed and reviewed three papers: tuition, ancillary & incidental fees, and student employment. The delegates participated in breakout sessions to critique and review the principles, recommendations, and concerns of these three policy papers. These reviews were later used by authors to refine their final draft papers that were later brought forward at plenary for the final vote.
- At plenary, the delegates participated in a rigorous discussion lasting 8 hours where we provided final edits and recommendations to all three papers. The MSU delegation worked fantastically as a team and collaborated during those 8 hours. We got such positive feedback from other delegations on how inciteful our delegates were on the plenary floor.
- All three papers were passed at the end of Plenary. OUSA has formally released the Student Entrepreneurship, Employment, and Employability paper as the first paper passed from the ones passed at last Plenary. I look forward to the other papers getting formally released by OUSA.
- We learned a lot from having our first GA back in-person in two years. We learned a lot from the planning side of OUSA where we provided ample feedback on our experiences at the conference. We also learned a lot from the MSU side on what to do or not do when planning to attend a conference. I won't say it was an easy weekend, but it was a weekend full of development and connection.
- It was a great experience to get to know some of our newer students on campus. We got to share a lot of experiences and get to know about what's happening on campus. It was a very reflective experience from the perspective of a VP as we got to spend lots of time getting to know our delegates and their experiences. They not only got to network with other student unions but got a better understanding of the MSU as an organization as well.

OUSA Student Advocacy Conference

- In November, the President and I participated in OUSA's Student Advocacy Conference (Provincial Lobby Week). We spent the week in Toronto at Queen's Park lobbying MPPs about different issues affecting post-secondary students. Our lobbying priorities for this year are Gender-Based and Sexual Violence, Affordability, Sector Sustainability, and Rural & Northern Students (Health & Transit).
- My group had the opportunity to meet with Minister Jill Dunlop, who is the Minister of Colleges and Universities. We had an engaging conversation about Bill-26, Strengthening Post-Secondary Institutions and Students Act, 2022. Our meeting with MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam also gave us a lot of insights into how Bill-26 may be applied and how it would look implemented within post-secondary institutions. After gathering feedback at OUSA, the President Jessica Look

delegated at the Committee with our gathered feedback. Bill 26 received Royal Assent on December 8th, 2022.

- My lobby group had rich conversations around food insecurity and mental health concerns with MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy. We also had great discussions around survivor centric and trauma informed approaches to address gender-based & sexual violence with House Leader MPP Peggy Sattler and MPP Terence Kernaghan. We spoke with MPP Jeff Burch about housing and general student affordability.
- I also ran a series of social media engagement through the MSU_Advocacy account on Instagram. We did a series of stories recapping each day of Provincial Lobby Week. I enlisted the help of my fellow group and Steering Committee members to provide more information on what the week entailed.
- All in all, we had a very successful week. We were able to get commitments from different MPPs to write letters to Ministers, give Member's Statements, and to ask questions during Question Period. We were very pleased with the discussions we had with MPPs and look forward to working with them soon.

Federal Lobbying Week

- At the end of November, the President and I participated in UCRU's Federal Lobbying Week. We spent the week on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, meeting with MPs. Since Parliament is under construction, we had our meetings at different locations, so we did a lot of running around in Ottawa.
- Our four lobbying priorities were: Student Employment, Financial Aid, Mental Health, and Indigenous Education. We had working groups for each of these priorities. I worked on the student employment and financial aid briefs. I have currently been working on research and recommendations for the briefs. The AVP PFA also worked on the briefs as well.
- I got the opportunity to meet with MP Ellis, MP Kayabaga, MP Fragiskatos, MP Hepfner, MP Sgro, and MP Green. We had varying discussions around our briefing document. We are excited to continue to connect with these MPs and especially the ones from Hamilton. We also got the opportunity to thank the government for the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness.
- There was a large emphasis on student employment and economic prosperity throughout the meetings with MPs. As we continue to move out of the pandemic, a large theme in federal politics is how we can bolster the economy and help support job development. There was appetite for supporting international students as well as working with students to bolster the job market. There was also high appetite for our recommendations around mental health as well.

Council of Ontario Universities' 60th Anniversary

- In December, I was invited to the Council of Ontario Universities' celebration of 60 years. We were excited to receive an invitation for the celebration from CEO, Steve Orsini.
- At the celebration, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and Minister Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities, spoke as keynotes at the event.
- It was a great opportunity to network with university administrators from across Ontario as well as key stakeholders in Ontario's post-secondary education

sector. We also got to speak to alumni of OUSA who now have their own endeavors within the post-secondary education sector.

- I would also like to highlight that it was also announced that the former Ryerson University was officially renamed to Toronto Metropolitan University on the same day. We congratulate TMU in their next chapter.

High Frequency Rail Project Team Consultation

- I took part in the high frequency rail project team consultation group with other student leaders from Western University and Ontario Tech University. We met with a team from this project and discussed the project and possible impacts to students. We also provided feedback on certain areas we would like to see within the projects and identified areas for improvement as well.
- The high frequency rail is supposed to be a new sustainable rail service that would provide a more frequent and accessible service through Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa, Montreal, Trois-Rivieres, and Quebec City. The government would be working with VIA Rail and other private partners for this project.

Housing Event with SWHAT

- Recently, I held a housing event with SWHAT called Housing Hinge. This event took a more fun approach to housing and was focused on helping people find housemates. We had big group discussions and SWHAT executives facilitated the discussions. There were also volunteers at each of the tables as well.
- We held the event in the Grind, and it was a fun and comfortable event. Even though people didn't all find housemates they were able to find friends and other likeminded people.
- At the event, I also handed out ravers that gave students information about their rights as renters. We also gave out swag at the event and had some winners who will be contacted soon for winning gift cards.

Student Renter Awareness

- We as an organization have been made aware of several concerns of students regarding landlords illegally raising rent or intimidating students into signing new leases with increased rent prices. These concerns have always been an issue that the MSU has tried to spread awareness about, but we have found that these issues have further been exacerbated by rising housing costs, living costs, and inflation.
- We quickly responded by contacting Councillor's Wilson and Danko to inquire about the issue and if this was an isolated issue. We continue to communicate with these offices.
- The communications team developed ravers that listed key points that students should be aware of when signing leases or finding new places to rent. The raver also had QR codes that redirected people to certain resources such as the Community Legal Clinic.
- We also distributed these ravers at the two-day election and referendum awareness event. Our Director of Communications had a table at the end of the giveaway line and spread awareness on student renter rights. We had great reception from students and we had quite a few who noted that they were

experiencing these issues and did not know how to go about addressing these concerns.

- There is also a post with all this information on the MSU's instagram as well.

Upcoming Events, Projects, & Activities

OUSA Visit and New Executive Director Update

- OUSA is slated to come for a campus visit on January 30th where they will be meeting with the MSU team and university administration. They will also be tabling in MUSC to bring awareness to the work we are doing provincially and to educate students on OUSA and what they do.
- I am so excited to announce that a new Executive Director has been hired at OUSA. Malika Dhanani was recently hired into the role, they formerly worked as a Research and Policy Analyst for OUSA.

Policy Papers & Hired Research Assistants

- I am so excited to announce that we have hired three research assistants to the Education Team. We did hire late but we are optimistic that we are on schedule to get the policy paper process going. We have our preliminary paper topics ready and have started PCR editing.
- In the past SRA members have been part of the authorship process, we will be bringing these to the committees.

Municipal Pre-Budget Submission & Delegation

- Historically, the MSU has submitted a pre-budget submission to the General Issues Committee and this year is no different. We have spent most of December and January prepping our pre-budget submission. The pre-budget submission includes recommendations that we would like to present to City Council.
- Our four areas of focus are housing, employment, transit, and sustainability.
- We have a series of meetings before the General Issues Committee delegation where we will be meeting with Councillors in advance to chat about our pre-budget submission.
- We will be delegating to City Council at the General Issues Committee in February.

OUSA Delegate Hiring

- It's that time of year again! With OUSA's Spring 2023 General Assembly around the corner in March, OUSA delegate hiring has begun again. I was able to reflect on the past round of hiring and reflected on timelines and processes. We will be using a similar style of interview format as we did for hiring the Fall 2022 delegates. The shorter, more informal style of interview was successful, and we were able to hire a fantastic group of delegates the first time around. Considering how many delegates we need to hire; these changes have made the process a lot easier on the Education Team.
- Applications were opened in late December and closed early mid-January. I am pleased to report that we received 14 candidates overall. I am very excited to see these numbers as delegate hiring has held its set of challenges in the past. I am excited to see passion for advocacy amongst students.
- We are currently in the application review stage where the AVP PFA and I are both reviewing and shortlisting candidates for interviews. I am so far quite

impressed with the candidate pool and am excited to move onto the interview stage soon.

- We will be hiring a total of 7 candidates who will be going to Queen's University during the first weekend of March to represent the MSU at OUSA's Spring 2023 General Assembly.
- I want to thank everyone who applied and everyone who shared the application and encouraged other students to apply.

OUSA Spring 2023 General Assembly

- OUSA's Spring 2023 GA will be occurring from Thursday March 2nd – Sunday March 5th. The MSU will overall be bringing 10 delegates altogether.
- At OUSA GA, we will be discussing three papers: Teaching and Assessment, Student Accessibility and Disability Inclusion, and Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+.
- We will have breakout sessions where we will be discussing edits to the papers and any new PCR recommendations. These discussions will lead to suggested changes to the authors and will impact the final draft paper. The goal of the MSU delegates is to provide perspectives from a McMaster student lens to ensure that the papers are reflective of MSU students.
- The delegates will have the opportunity to meet with other delegates from other OUSA member schools. This will give them the opportunity to expand their circle of connections and to learn about what other student unions are doing!
- We are excited to have our second general assembly. We will reflect on things that worked and didn't work from the Fall GA. I am continuing to update and refine delegate training.

Valedictorian Selection Process

- Another big project of the VP Education is to facilitate the Valedictorian Selection Process. The VP Education will oversee all logistics and coordinate the faculties in the selection process.
- I am excited and nervous to be starting this process as I know it will be a monster to handle in terms of logistics. I am excited to be a part of this process and to support recognizing student achievement.
- I have been in communication with our IT department to discuss clever solutions to making the process easier to facilitate. I have also consulted with the main contact who ran the spring selection process to refine our process.
- A long-term goal would be to develop an interface that would centralize this process. I am continuing to work with the IT team to build something and we have hopes that we can create a new interface that the next VP Education can use for the selection process next year.

Current Challenges

- Overall, I have a lot of time sensitive projects that are ongoing. It's difficult to keep up with some of the larger projects having similar deadlines. I am grateful to the team, especially the Director of Communications for supporting in completing these projects.
- This time of year is particularly busy as we are wrapping up projects and starting to think about transition.

- I am currently thinking about how positions within the ED team, work with one another but we don't have much time to make so many structural changes, so we are on a time crunch.
- We are currently assessing our positions within other external bodies and assessing whether we are in the best position from an advocacy and lobbying standpoint. We have some big questions to answer and some big changes to make soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Wong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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