Office of the Vice-President, External Affairs

Alliance of British Columbia Students (ABCS)
Trek to the Legislature – Briefing
About the Alliance of BC Students (ABCS)

The Alliance of British Columbia Students is a non-partisan coalition group of 11 student associations from across the province that exists to lobby on issues that affect post-secondary students in British Columbia. The Alliance represents over 180,000 students at 9 institutions advocating on graduate, undergraduate, and trade student issues. The Alliance also encompasses all research intensive institutions in the province. To date, the Alliance has worked with:

- UBC Alma Mater Society (UBC AMS)
- Simon Fraser University Student Society (SFSS)
- University of the Fraser Valley Student Society (UFVSUS)
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University Student Association (KSA)
- UVic Student’s Society (UVSS)
- BCIT Student Association (BCITSA)
- UBC Graduate Student’s Society (UBC GSS)
- Northern Undergraduate Students Society (NUGSS)
- Capilano Student Union (CSU)
- UBC-Students Union Okanagan (UBCSUO)
- Simon Fraser University Graduate Student’s Society (SFU-GSS)
History & Purpose

• “Lobby Days” was a former annual AMS event that would bring students to the provincial Legislature to lobby on post-secondary issues.

• In 2012, the Alliance of BC Students was founded to represent post-secondary students in BC with 11 members representing over 180,000 students.

• In June 2013, with an understanding that there may not be a fall sitting in Victoria, the ABCS decided to schedule a “Lobby Days”, the organization’s first.
Goals

• Introduce the Alliance of BC Students to the outside world
• Begin developing relationships with government ministries, opposition, and civil service
• Advance post-secondary issues into the public eye, and into the hands of decision maker
Numbers

• 32 delegates in attendance from 8 student associations (AMS, GSS, UVSS, SFSS, KSA, CSU, BCITSA, UBCSUO)

• 3 ministerial meetings (Advanced Ed., Education, Technology, Innovation & Citizen Services), 2 caucus meetings (Liberal Caucus, NDP Caucus), 1 evening reception.

• 8 representatives per meeting, with the exception of caucus meetings.

• 3 days (one training day at UVic, two at the legislature)

• 21 MLA’s in total
## Finances

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<th>Line Item</th>
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Topics of Discussion

- Upfront, needs-based grants
- Student financial aid/loan reform
- Core funding to institutions
- Graduate scholarship assistance
- Deferred maintenance
- Public transit investment
- Childcare improvements
Outcomes – Minister Virk (AvEd.)

- Minister receptive to the ABCS, wants a constructive relationship with the organization
- “Student-first” approach to Ministry
- Supportive of most objectives (Needs-based grants, student aid reform, deferred maintenance), very interested in graduate scholarships, not very supportive of Childcare proposal
- Concerns due to tough economic times, some proposals need to be more “solution-oriented”
Outcomes – Minister Wilkinson (Tech, Innovation + Citizen Services)

• Minister extremely receptive to the ABCS, and very willing to work with the organization in future on PSE issues

• Primary areas of interest: Immigration policy for graduate/PhD students, graduate student scholarships, student loan issues, research funding in universities, realistic change.
Outcomes – Minister Fassbender (Education)

- Minister supportive of the mission of the ABCS
- Conversation framed as continuous education (from pre-kindergarten through to employment)
- Minister in agreement with that approach, and working with other related ministers to create a better educational environment
- Very interested in how to get youth interested in trades programs, asked for feedback on ideas
- Potential for mentoring/consultation sessions with PSE students and primary/secondary students
Outcomes – NDP Caucus

• 6 NDP MLA’s in attendance
• Caucus in agreement with most priorities, extremely supportive of the ABCS, and looking for areas of collaboration with the organization
• Interested in receiving personal stories from students regarding their experience related to PSE, transit, and childcare.
• On transit, critic Heyman brought forward concerns regarding short-term transit solutions for Broadway, as well as potential new information about the upcoming referendum
• Some positive conversation regarding liquor laws in the province.
Outcomes – Liberal Caucus

• 9 Liberal MLA’s in attendance
• Overall receptive to the ABCS purposes, very willing to meet with the organization in future in greater numbers. Liked the fact that students were becoming engaged in the process, wants to see more
• Agreement in need for financial aid reform, however, concerns about economic prospects for the province, institutional spending. General consensus to pressure institutions to find additional efficiencies
• Overarching concern regarding BC’s fiscal health, planning for greater investment once economy on more stable footing
Recommendations

• Coordinate the event further in advance, setup additional meetings with other ministerial portfolios
• Improve internal communication around schedules
• Create a more comprehensive lobbying document, with potential for smaller documents outlining specific areas
• Create additional training tools that can be delivered in person, and digitally
Conclusion

• Event was an overall success and surpassed all preset goals
• Organization feeling more stable, and is in a position to have more serious dialogue with the government and opposition
• Additional meetings will be occurring in the next few months with all parties, with the potential for another Lobby Days-like event to occur in the late Fall/early Winter
Questions?

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