

## **CASA concludes advocacy week**

*The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations held over 120 meetings with officials in Ottawa on student issues*

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Briana Hill — CUP Ottawa Bureau Chief



CASA delegates (left to right) Nikki Harris, Matthew McMillan, Natalie Cockburn and Katherine Tyson meet with Conservative MP Steven Fletcher on Parliament Hill. (Photo courtesy of CASA)

OTTAWA (CUP) — Last week, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) conducted over 120 meetings with members of Parliament, senators and bureaucrats on various topics pertinent to students.

Discussion focused on four particular areas of concern: the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) and unmet student need, copyright legislation and digital locks, the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and improved access for aboriginal Canadians, and international students and an easier visa process for them.

"International students are a very important and vibrant part of our university communities ... one of the issues that international students face is the entry visa process," said Chris Saulnier, CASA board chair. "Even though someone may have a student visa to come and study in Canada for four years, they may only have a single entry permit, so they can only come into the country once — and if they leave, they have to reapply for a new single-entry visa to come into Canada."

Saulnier was optimistic that CASA's advocacy work had an impact on decision makers in Ottawa.

"We had a lot of MPs express that they very much agreed with our policy and understood why we were advocating for it," he said.

"For the Canada Student Loans Program, we were asking that, in the assessment of our assets, that the ownership of one vehicle per student is exempted. Currently, students [are] only allowed to own a car with a value of up to \$5,000 and anything more than that is subtracted from the amount of the loan that they are given," he said. "This number was arrived at in 2001, and currently today the average price of a used car in Canada is \$11,400 — so it doesn't represent the value of the vehicles students have, that they need to get to school and get to work and meet many of their life commitments."

Saulnier added that their proposals to improve the program have also been met with some positive reactions.

"I was able to meet with the director general of the Canada Student Loans Program this week and they expressed that they were quite familiar with our policy and that they were currently investigating some of our asks, and would be moving forward on ones that they saw would also benefit students in Canada," he said.

For now, CASA's national advocacy team will continue to work with MPs in their constituencies and lobby on behalf of their member student organizations.

*The CASA advocacy document can be found in its entirety at [www.casa-acae.com](http://www.casa-acae.com).*