

Federal lobbying: Advocacy goals for the year Student Beat

Jordan Thompson - An Opinion

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This week student union presidents and vice-president externals are in Ottawa to lobby federal decision makers on behalf of students. They are all there under the umbrella of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), which is one of the two federal lobbying organizations that represents students across Canada.

Although education funding is primarily a provincial responsibility, the federal government plays a large role, as 60% of student loans come from the federal government.

The feds transfer money to the provinces in the form of transfer payments and also, copyright laws are federal jurisdiction and have a profound effect on education.

Each year, CASA delegates travel to Ottawa for the Lobby Conference. This is where students from across the country sit down with Members of Parliament, Senators, and senior policy officials to present advocacy goals for that year. At the 2010 Lobbying Conference, CASA met with more than 110 of those individuals.

CASA's main advocacy goals for this year are: elimination of parental contributions on federal student loans; amend the Student Loans Program's assessment of borrower assets to exempt ownership of one vehicle per student; lift the two per cent fund cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program; eliminate book importation regulations which will lower the cost of textbooks for students; allow the circumvention of technological protection measures for non-infringing purposes; and to eliminate the \$150 fee international students must pay to work off campus.

Each of these goals, if achieved, will ease the burden student's face to study. For example, the elimination of the book importation regulations is estimated to save students across Canada \$30 million annually, with no cost to government. We all know that textbook prices have been increasing; between 1995 and 2007 textbook prices increased over 280 per cent, far outpacing inflation, which increased just 27 per cent!

For more information about CASA and the role that the UNB Student Union plays in it, feel free to contact me at president@unbsu.ca or Joey O'Kane, vice-

president external, at external@unbsu.ca. For more information about CASA in general and to view this year's lobby document, check out CASA's website: www.casa-acae.com.

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