



University
of Manitoba
STUDENTS'
UNION

TO: UMSU Board of Directors
FROM: VP Advocacy, Liam Pittman
DATE: August 31, 2023
RE: **Report to the Board, August 2023**

Updates

Political Update

UMSU representatives met with Minister Sarah Guillemard to discuss crucial matters pertaining to the well-being and success of University of Manitoba students. The meeting focused on the following three key topics:

Reinstatement of International Students on Provincial Healthcare Plan:

UMSU emphasized the significance of including international students in the provincial healthcare plan. UMSU presented data to Minister Guillemard regarding the significant economic contributions international students contribute to our economy in Manitoba. Further, we were able to convey that the province can enhance its attractiveness to prospective students and promote a more inclusive and supportive academic environment that international students bring.

Student Housing Crisis:

The student housing crisis was a pressing concern discussed during the meeting. The union stressed the importance of addressing this crisis to ensure that students have safe and suitable accommodation options.

Issues with Manitoba Student Aid:

UMSU highlighted issues related to Manitoba Student Aid, including the complexity of the application process, delays in disbursement, functionality issues with the current website, and issues communicating with Manitoba Student Aid. The union proposed streamlining the application process, improving communication, and exploring ways to expedite fund distribution to support students in meeting their financial needs without unnecessary obstacles. Further, the union was able to stress the importance of having students be involved in the consultation process should the website be given an overhaul in the future.



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Internal Update

UMSU representatives convened with Vice-Provost Laurie Schnarr on multiple occasions to discuss significant matters affecting the student body. The meetings covered three primary topics:

Continuation of the Period Poverty Project:

UMSU presented an update on the progress and impact of the period poverty project, which aims to provide free menstrual products in various campus facilities. UMSU has seen the positive reception and utilization of the initiative among students. UMSU emphasized the importance of expanding and continuing this project to reach even more individuals, and the benefits it offers to students on our campus.

Religious Spaces for Varying Religions on Campus:

The need for designated religious spaces accommodating diverse faiths was discussed in detail. UMSU highlighted the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students of all religious backgrounds.

Update on UMSU's Provincial Election Priorities:

UMSU shared its priorities for the upcoming provincial election. These priorities include advocating for improved mental health support, student housing, international student healthcare, and a tuition freeze.

Vice-Provost Laurie Schnarr expressed appreciation for UMSU's dedication to addressing these crucial issues and acknowledged the union's role in advocating for student welfare. The following items were discussed:



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Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students (MAPSS) Update

UMSU recognizes the dire need for a united front in the post-secondary realm. As such, we continue to work with MAPSS and its organizations to revitalize the organization and make structural changes that are integral to the work which it wishes to see done. This is to include working to draft a proposed budget for MAPSS, registering as a not for profit, hiring staff, and updating the constitution and governing documents to ensure the advocacy work can continue.

External Events & Meetings Attended

- Bison Sports Photo – Aug 02
- Meeting with student to discuss residency – Aug 02
- UMSU New Majority Meeting – Aug 09
- Welcome to the Herd – Aug 09
- National Advocacy Committee CASA – Aug 10
- Manitoban Interview Int. Student Healthcare – Aug 10
- OER Committee – Aug 14
- Meeting with Laurie Schnarr – Aug 14
- Meeting with the Honorable, Sarah Guillemard – Aug 23
- National Advocacy Committee CASA – Aug 24
- New Majority Meeting – Aug 25
- Meeting with Laurie Schnarr – Aug 28