

Reed Larsen for President

Platform 2018/19

Treaty Recognition

I, and my team, acknowledge that our University and our Students' Union is located on Treaty 6 Territory. We are grateful to be on Cree, Dene, Sauteaux, Métis, Blackfoot, and Nakota Sioux territory; specifically the ancestral space of the Papaschase Cree. We hope this campaign can represent a commitment to all students, including those from these nations.

Cover Letter

Hi there! My name is Reed Larsen, and I am running to be your next President.

2018/19 will present challenges and opportunities for the University of Alberta Students Union that will need consistent, reliable, and experienced leadership. The Students Event Initiative, if successful, will change how we interact with students every day and will be the largest project in the Students Union Building's 50 years. Politics in the province of Alberta are growing more divisive, and Students Unions are being pushed, on all sides, to become more partisan. The University of Alberta continues to work through a new strategic vision, with complications like deferred maintenance, shrinking budgets, and low revenues.

Last year, I was honoured to be elected as your Vice President (External), and in the past two years, I have served on all levels of University of Alberta governance, including General Faculties Council, Students Council, and the University of Alberta Senate. I have worked hundreds of hours writing bylaws, developing policies, and advocating for students with the Students' Union. This year I was the Chair of the Council of Alberta University Students, leading a team of ten student association Presidents and VP Externals representing 100,000 students to the Government of Alberta. I built relationships with government member (like the Minister of Advanced Education Marlin Schmidt), oversaw wins like long-term mental health grants and increased university funding, fielded all media relations, was the facing public image of the organization and completed the four major policy and research papers. Asides this advocacy experience, I have been a successful entrepreneur, teacher, property manager, and community organizer.

My presidency would bring consistent, reliable, and experienced leadership to the University of Alberta Students Union. I have the know-how to oversee a major renovation project and the governing experience to oversee the implementation of the Students Event Initiative. I have built strong relationships with members of government and the official opposition and understand how to best ensure that student priorities are a priority going into the 2019 election cycle. Through years of campaigns, media, and outreach I have developed the skills to fight for student interests, not sit idly by.

I am running for President so that I can continue to serve students and fight for the things that matter to them. On March 7th & 8th I hope you place your trust in me to do so.

Cheers,

Reed Larsen

TLDR; Platform One Pager

Protecting Student Rights

There is a fundamental experience and education that all students share when they go through the post-secondary system. Student rights need to reflect these fundamental experiences and be easily accessible as to protect the well being of students.

- Charter of Student Rights
- Tenants Rights

Accessible Post-Secondary Education

The cost of post-secondary education in Alberta is the largest barrier to getting a university education, however, there are also multiple systemic barriers that prevent participation. Students need the programs, supports, and incentives that ensure that university education is financially and systemically accessible.

- Up-Front Grants
- All Gender Washrooms
- Employment Opportunities
- International Students

Engaging Campus Community

The University of Alberta and the Students Union are undergoing major infrastructure updates, policy changes, and building capacity. These changes will have direct consequences on a students experience on campus and the campus community need to be at the forefront in all of these discussions.

- Fundraising & SU Alumni Relations
- Cannabis Policy
- Deferred Maintenance

Protecting Student Rights

There is a fundamental experience in post-secondary education that all students share. Student rights need to reflect these fundamental experiences and they need to be easily accessible to protect the well being of students.

Charter of Student Rights

Students need easy access to a Charter of Student Rights.

According to research conducted by the Students' Union, students often aren't aware of their rights. Many students have said that one easily accessible place they could go to to learn about their rights would be helpful in navigating campus discipline. The groundwork for a comprehensive student bill of rights has been set in previous years and it is a project that will continue to need guidance and a steady presence to complete.

As President I would undertake the creation of a joint committee with the University, complete all necessary consultation, and draft the Charter of Student Rights.

Tenants Rights

Students living in a shared residence should not be exempt from basic tenants rights that all other Albertans have.

Students living in shared residence at the University of Alberta, for example Lister Centre, do not have the same rights as individuals living off-campus. Students are negatively affected by this lack of rights. Lost deposits and overcharges, evictions without notice, routinely transferring students, and many other simple code violations being far too common. Provincial regulation similar to trailer parks and nursing homes is the long-term solution.

As President I will advocate for government legislation in shared university residences. Further, I will push other students associations to do the same by adding this as a formal provincial lobbying point.

Accessibility to Post-Secondary Education

The cost of post-secondary education in Alberta is the largest barrier to getting a university education, however, there are systemic barriers that prevent participation. Students need supports and incentives that ensure that university education is financially and systemically accessible.

Up-Front Grants

Provincial tax credits should be shifted into up-front grants so that students can receive the benefits up-front, plan for the costs of tuition, and graduate with less debt.

The Government of Alberta (GoA) began making significant cuts to non-repayable financial aid in the form of debt relief, grants, and bursaries starting in 2010. As the system became more focused on loans, there was a dramatic increase in the amount of student debt in Alberta. The GoA currently spends roughly \$200.6 million in financial aid through tax credits, however in many cases this aid does not go to those that need it most. This is an indirect measure and does not address the accessibility of post-secondary. Up-front grants reduce barriers to access by supporting students entering higher education so they are able to cover a portion of their costs. Moving those tax-credits into up-front grants will serve to less the debt load of students, make university education more affordable for low income students, and act as an incentive for students to enter the PSE system.

As President, I will push to see the entirety of the tax credit money moved into up-front, non-repayable grants for low and middle-income students based on a sliding scale. Further I would see grants invested in demographically underrepresented groups on campus, such as rural, indigenous, and visible minorities.

All-Gender Washrooms

All Students should have access to washrooms on a university campus.

All students should feel that their campus is safe and accessible and every type of student should be able to exist on campus. For some students who are transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming, all-gender washrooms are one piece of infrastructure necessary to attend university.

As President, I will develop the necessary policy to open all gender washrooms in all buildings across campus, with a timeline of completion.

Employment Opportunities

The Students Union should make sure that public employment opportunities for students are as accessible and readily available as possible.

A growing standard is for students to work while studying, to either cover the costs or to gain experience in their preferred industry. As well, there is now data that suggests that students who have any amount of work experience during their studies are far more likely to gain meaningful employment at graduation. To get students into the workforce there are multiple government subsidized work programs available to students, such as Canada Works, Student Temporary Employment Program, and City of Edmonton Student Job Opportunities. All of these programs serve different purposes, however, universally serve to give students opportunity to gain some level of experience. Quite often there are any number of opportunities available to students, they simply are not made aware of them.

As President, I would pursue mutual agreements, starting with the City of Edmonton, to advertise student opportunities in a single resource. Further, I would push that any programs offered by government prioritize year-round, entry level, career positions that serve students priorities.

International Students

International students should be able to study in good faith in Alberta knowing that their tuition and housing costs are predictable and that they have a reasonable opportunity to find meaningful employment.

International undergraduates studying in Alberta are subject to high-cost tuition, limited employment opportunities, and precarious housing. These students are enmeshed within an intricate policy web linking federal, provincial, and institutional jurisdictions, leading to a diffusion of responsibility among policy-makers. This leaves these undergraduates without serious action taken to address the issues they face. Alberta has seen large growth in the number of international students attending universities in the province, but that influx has been exploited rather than nourished. Sudden tuition cost and rent increases and limited employment opportunities are pricing international students out of their education, and in some cases, causing students to go hungry.

As President I would pursue loosened regulation on working hours for international students and allowing international students to partake in co-ops and internships under their student visa. In addition, I would advocate for realistic cost projections in University marketing. Finally, regulation for international students differential fee needs to happen this year and international students need greater access to emergency bursaries and loans.

Engaging Campus Community

The University of Alberta and the Students Union are undergoing major infrastructure updates. These changes will have direct consequences on a student's experience on campus and students need to be at the forefront in all of these discussions.

Fundraising & SU Alumni Relations

The Student Events Initiative will be the first time that the Students Union undergoes a large scale fundraising effort and it should use this opportunity to establish long-term fundraising and SU alumni relations strategy. These efforts should focus on creating new opportunities for SU alumni to engage in events and lowering student costs.

The Students Union has had the ability to take charitable donations for many years. However, the fundraising efforts for the Students Events Initiative will be the first time that we leverage this ability on a large scale. Not only will this be an opportunity for the SU to gain a lot of new skills and knowledge, but it may also showcase an opportunity for new sources of revenue for the Students Union. In particular, there are any number of social services, programs, and events that could use charitable community financial support. Fundraising efforts should go beyond this single campaign, and the student union should use its ability to fundraise consistently.

The Student Events Initiative and SUB50 will also be the first time that the Students Union engages in formal SU alumni relations. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of dedicated, successful, and engaged Students Union Alumni. They are often community, business, and political leaders whose influence can be felt all over Canada. Folks who have either worked, volunteered, or governed here often have fond memories, and the Students Union should establish ways to stay connected with such people. This connection would serve not only to join the Students Union to the greater community; it could open new opportunities for financial support for student-driven initiatives.

As President, I would establish a long-term strategy for the Students Union to consistently and reliably take charitable donations. Further, I would develop a formalised alumni network to build stronger connections with the community.

Cannabis Policy

The Students Union should be discussing the effects that cannabis legalization will have on its operations and campus culture.

There has been a lack of open conversations around how cannabis legalization will affect campus culture. Further, there has been a serious lack of discussion on how cannabis will affect the policies, procedures, and infrastructure of campus in general. A few straightforward examples; it is currently a breach of a Residence Agreement to have any sort of drug paraphernalia on the premise and you cannot smoke in beer gardens during week of welcome. Can a student take a test while under the influence? Will this effect usage of mental health and addictions resources? Do students want a accessible retailer? The Students Union should be proactively looking at these circumstances and asking these questions. Further, it should be involving all students in these discussions, and gauging what the student community feels is appropriate when it comes to cannabis on campus.

As President, I would start mass student engagement on cannabis legalization and policy direction immediately. Further, I would have a full review of Students Union operating policies completed by legalization.

Deferred Maintenance

Campus infrastructure and upgrading projects should serve students first.

As the University of Alberta challenges its growing deferred maintenance bill, aging infrastructure, and multiple campuses, it is paramount that student feedback be taken into consideration when creating infrastructure priorities. Whether this is a lab at Campus Saint Jean or larger desks in humanities, students are the persons who use these facilities the most, and should have a direct say in how the campus is developed. Current research on what student priorities in deferred maintenance should be completed in April, and these will be able to inform strategic direction for student priorities

As President, I will ensure that these priorities, as developed by students, are consider in all future renovation projects, with a particular emphasis on student accessibility. Further, I will ensure that student priorities in deferred maintenance remain current by establishing a renewal process for student consultation. Finally, I would push that any new buildings or renovations not be financed by student dollars.