

Students Nova Scotia	Board of Directors	students 
	<i>Meeting Minutes</i>	

Meeting Name:	Board Meeting		
Meeting Date:	February 15, 2013		
Meeting Time:	11:00PM, AST		
Venue:	Call-in	City:	Halifax, NS
Attendees			
Primary and Secondary Delegates:	Kyle Power (Chair/ASU), Alana Lawrence (CBUSU), Patrick Carruthers (Treasurer/SFXUSU), Aaron Beale (DSU), Matthew Rios (ASU), Michelle Lahey (Vice-Chair/CBUSU), Kat Lafortune (DAGS), Jesse Smith (ASTSU), Jared Perry (SMUSA)		
Other attendees:	Jonathan Williams (Executive Director), Alexis Zederayko (Volunteer Recorder)		
Absent:	Nick Head-Petersen (SFXUSU) (regrets), Robert Bossler (ASTSU) (regrets), Mike MacDonell (SMUSA), Jamie Arron (DSU)		
Quorum (50% of Members represented?): Yes			

- 1) Call to order
- 2) Roll call
- 3) Approval of Agenda  
Amended agenda **approved by general consent.**

- 4) Approval of February 1, 2012 Minutes  
Minutes **approved by general consent.**

#### DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

- 5) Mental Health Conference on March 1, March 2-3 board meeting, March 4 Student-Government Roundtable.

KP (Chair): Invited JW or MR to discuss this topic.

JW (ED): There is not a whole lot of new information. Preparations are coming along, and funding has been secured. Julia Feltham has been in touch with students. The conference will be held from 9:00 to 5:00 at Acadia University. ED has reviewed the agenda with Julia and Rachel Derrah. Asked the Board for questions.

JS (ASTSU): Requested clarification regarding funding.

JW (ED): The provincial government is funding the conference: specifically, Health and Wellness. Funding is provided up to \$10,000. We're setting aside money for Student Associations who will be travelling, such as CBU.

KP (Chair): Requested clarification regarding the activities planned for the rest of that weekend.

JW (ED): There is a student roundtable in the afternoon on Monday, and Saturday/Sunday would be a good chance to get the Board together, as was previously decided. ED circulated agenda for those meetings, which includes numerous items to fit into two days. Given that the roundtable is in the afternoon, we may want to extend our meetings to Monday morning. If there are any additions to the agenda, ED requested that they be sent to him, along with confirmation of attendance.

KP (Chair): Called for questions. Also encouraged Board members to bring along their successors to meetings.

- 6) Pre-budget meeting with finance minister

JW (ED): Pre-budget submission has been completed and distributed to the Board. ED built a new template for report covers, with a reversed colour scheme. This Tuesday, from 10:00 – 11:00, there is a meeting with the Minister of Finance in Halifax. ED is trying to bring in an international student to help with the MSI request.

PC (SFXUSU): Requested clarification regarding time and date of meeting. (*Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am.*) Who is going? (*KP (Chair) and JW (ED).*) What is the meeting content? (*The asks in the Pre-budget submission.*)

JW (ED): It is not a huge deal, but is about showing support for our recommendations.

- 7) MPHEC submission on quality assurance

KP (Chair): This document has been circulated. It resulted from discussion with MPHEC and the Board. Eleven items are listed, in no particular order. There is a strong focus on student success. Acadia administration warned about their low resources, and are very rigorous in light of tight budgets.

JW (ED): Does not have much to add. Our key intention is about assessing the quality of university services, not their courses which are already being reviewed. Mireille Duguay (ED of MPHEC) said that it is a good opportunity to speak out. We do request curriculum

internationalization, and point to the importance of education respecting globalization and cultural diversity.

KP (Chair): Will send out an email after this meeting and there will be a vote. Today is the deadline.

JS (ASTSU): Noted that funding for MPHEC is not in the budget as a set item. Expressed importance of voicing support for MPHEC funding.

JW (ED): It would be easy and consistent to add it, as it is not clearly articulated.

JS (ASTSU): Fully supported this addition.

KP (Chair): Asked if all Board members are comfortable with ED adding a statement about fully supporting funding for MPHEC. Heard no objections.

JW (ED): Suggested the addition of the word “unduly”, so that fourth paragraph reads:

While we believe such standards to be absolutely critical, they should not be implemented by unduly diverting educational resources toward data collection and related administrative activities.

KP (Chair): Called for questions, comments, or debate. Heard none, and called the question.

Michelle Lahey (CBUSU) **moved** and Patrick Carruthers (SFXUSU) **seconded the motion: Be it resolved** that the Board approve the proposed MPHEC submission on quality assurance.

Vote:

CBUSU - Yes

SFXSU – Yes

DSU – Abstained

ASU – Yes

ASTSU - Yes

**Motion passed.**

8) Thinking about the Graduate Retention Rebate

JW (ED): Spoke with the government a few weeks ago, and part of justifying expenses for student assistance involved cancelling the Grad Retention Rebate. ED asked what the odds were of eliminating the Rebate, and they said that it is slim. They indicated that it serves a different demographic than students. Home-office’s thinking evolved to addressing how we could redesign the Rebate. Even if we perfected NS student assistance, undergrad students who accessed it would still graduate with \$28,000 in federal debt. ED requested direction from the Board. Can the Board be supportive of the Rebate if it goes to students with substantial student loans? One idea is to eliminate \$25,000 of federal debt through the student assistance program, not the tax system, as a replacement of the grad retention rebate. We could push a retention strategy including the best student assistance program in Canada, programs reducing debt after graduation, and programs supporting graduate employment. ED requests that the Board give home-office permission to devote some resources towards finding ways to positively amend the Rebate.

KP (Chair): Requested input from the Board. Questions? Comments?

PC (SFXUSU): Does not necessarily agree: noted importance of having a debt reduction strategy for everybody, not just students with high debt.

JW (ED): Mostly focused on movement away from eliminating the Retention Rebate, as it is not feasible. Noted that debt is one key determinant of retention in NS.

PC (SFXUSU): Is it a matter of the economy or debt?

JW (ED): Suggested that it is an interaction between the two.

KP (Chair): Noted the difference between personal philosophy and public policy goals. There is no evidence that the Retention Rebate works, in fact it is clear that it is not achieving its ends. StudentsNS has been advocating the elimination of the Rebate, as it is not an efficient policy. We would prefer one which will retain graduates, and we would like to explore this further.

PC (SFXUSU): Noted importance of focusing on long-term debt. (*Home-office is just now considering the possibilities.*)

JW (ED): We want it to target people who are more likely to leave, and those with higher debt are more likely to leave.

PC (SFXUSU): Requested clarification concerning likelihood of eliminating the Rebate. (*None in short term.*)

KP (Chair): Suggested moving in camera if discussing interactions with specific government officials.

JW (ED): Does not have much to add, only that there is a lot of money at stake.

KP (Chair): Noted that the tuition rebate is \$30 million.

PC (SFXUSU): How does this Rebate affect college students? (*Same as university students, since there is comparable eligibility.*)

MR (ASTSU): What is the average debt load for college students? Recommended getting data.

AB (DSU): Felt that the government will get rid of the Rebate if it lacks popular support. Noted importance of avoiding sacrificing long-term ends for short-term gains.

JW (ED): The consensus is that it is not good public policy, but nobody is presently running against it. If the money is from two different pots and if the student assistance program were perfected, students would still graduate with \$28,000 in federal debt. We might have the scope to change that.

AB (DSU): Noted that our job is to educate the public regarding what is best for our students.

JS (ASTSU): If we are hoping to make it politically feasible (although JS is not convinced that, philosophically, it is the best plan), it could be retroactive for 5 years. It then might still recapture outmigration and lure people back.

JW (ED): Good point. It may not only keep students here, but may bring them here. Getting money back on student loans is attractive.

KP (Chair): Called for further discussion. Heard none, suggested a straw poll. Requested clarification regarding scale of staff resources that would be devoted. (*Not much.*)

JW (ED): Is currently getting in touch with the government regarding costs of the program.

KP (Chair): Is it possible to have concrete policy ideas ready for the next Board meeting? (*Not likely, as there is a delay in getting information from the province. If possible, they will be coordinated with student assistance.*)

JW (ED): Home-office is working hard on position papers, so it is not a priority.

KP (Chair): Noted importance of having this discussion in person. Called for debate or comments. Heard none, called for a straw poll approving Home-office investigating the aforementioned options.

**Passed unanimously.**

## REPORTS

### 9) Reports of the Officers

- a) Chair – Kyle Power (ASU)
  - i) Noted changed structure of the meeting.
  - ii) Has been busy preparing submissions, MPHEC report, and releases concerning SFX strike.

*(Jared Perry left the Board meeting.)*

- b) Vice-Chair – Michelle Lahey (CBUSU)
  - i) Nothing to report.
- c) Treasurer
  - i) Reduced discretionary spending, resulting in a possible large surplus at the end of this year.

### 10) Reports of the staff

- a) Executive Director – Jonathan Williams
    - i) We won approval at SMUSA referendum, by at least 2/3 support. This is a strong vote of confidence.
    - ii) Budget: already discussed.
    - iii) Attended PC convention of Friday night. ED hesitated to go, but will do so in the future, as it is a good chance to get our name out.
    - iv) There has been movement on NSCCSA, and it is positive.
    - v) Rebecca Rose is no longer the organizer of CFS, and has been replaced by Gabe Hoogers.
    - vi) Put out a press release on the SFX strike. The last week was handled in a textbook way by the SU. SFXUSU made a good contribution by calling for arbitration.
    - vii) SMU Student Assembly: 30-40 people attended the event at SMU: there was a good turnout.
- KP (Chair): Commended Home-office staff on their hard work.

*(Jesse Smith left the Board meeting.)*

### 11) Reports of the members

- a) ASU
  - i) Held elections. MR re-elected.
  - ii) Movement regarding Liquor and Gaming.
  - iii) Met with Mr. Strang.
  - iv) Worked with Julie Feltham and ED on the mental health conference.
  - v) ASU held a vote on the student U-pass. It was defeated.
- b) CBUSU
  - i) Election has been moved to March 5/6.

- ii) Signed an MOU with Dalhousie Medical School. Encouraged symposium in late March on the top 10 medical advances.
  - iii) Will meet soon with transit officials.
  - iv) John Gainer (psychologist) will come to CBU to talk about mental health.
- c) DSU
- i) It has been a busy week, with event at the Grad House.
  - ii) Last week before Reading Week.
- d) SFXUSU
- i) 3 week strike settled on Saturday. Asked for arbitration on Tuesday, then both sides came to an agreement within 48 hours.

JW (ED): Noted that there is no option for additional business on the new agenda format, but requested a moment for BF (Comms) to speak regarding live tweeting.

BF (Comms): Observed that Dalhousie is good at broadcasting council meetings. It is a movement towards transparency. Would like to live-tweet all Board meetings, with the exception of the parts in camera. Felt that it would be an effective way to communicate new updates.

KP (Chair): Called for comments. Suggested a trial run. Heard no objections: we will try it. Called for other business.

JW (ED): Held a press conference this morning regarding changing cellphone contract regulations. It was akin to the inter-city bus story, in that it's peripheral to our mandate, but concerns regulations that would be positive to students.

Patrick Carruthers (SFXUSU) **moved** and Matthew Rios (ASU) **seconded the motion to adjourn.**  
**Motion passed by general consent.**

ADJOURNMENT