



**SFSS Board of Directors Semester Report  
May 2020 - Aug 2020**

**Vice President External Relations**

**Samad Raza**

# Table of Content

Disclaimer.....	2
VP External Portfolio.....	2
Executive Summary.....	2
Project Completed .....	3
BC Budget Consultation.....	3
Just Recovery.....	4
Letter against TMX Pipeline.....	5
Fall UPass.....	6
Ongoing Projects.....	7
Food Hub.....	7
SFSS Rebranding.....	7

## Disclaimer:

This report aims to provide the membership of the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) with the overview of work done by the Vice President of External Relations from May 2020 to August 2020. This report is not extensively detailed and future information can be provided upon request.

## VP External Relations Portfolio

Below is the portfolio of Vice President of External Relations:

- Keeps the Board informed of plans or actions of external organizations and governments which affect the Society or its members
- Is responsible for business involving or representation at conferences by external organizations other than the University
- Liaises between the Student Society and student unions of other schools as the formal delegated by the Board
- Conventionally serves as the Lead of the Advocacy Committee

## Executive Summary

My name is Samad Raza, the Vice President of External Relation for the board year of 2020-2021. This semester I was part of the University and Academic Affairs Committee (UAA), Chair of External and Community Affair Committee (ECAC), lead of Emergency and Student Engagement working group (ERSE) that operates Under UAA, and Co-chair of Upass Advisory Committee (UAC).

Below is the list of project that I was involved with one way or another:

- BC budget consultation (ECAC).
- Fall UPass (ECAC, UAC).
- Just Recovery (ECAC).
- Letter against TMX pipeline (ECAC).
- Food Hub (UAA, ERSE).

Some of the pain points this semester was the workload management and learning curve. As I started my term during pandemic and lockdown, I felt there is the urgency to get much work done to provide better assistants to the membership. I remember on the very first day of my term, I had a virtual meeting with MP Dr Hedy Fry, to discuss problems faced by students due to pandemic. Because of my previous experience and delegation and student leadership I was successfully able to adapt and provide services as VP External Relations. But, as we all are students and we do have coursework to excel. I felt somewhat overwhelmed at times. But, I was lucky

enough to have such an amazing team and board members who helped me out and together we were able to accomplish many tasks in such a short period

The term itself was good and I am happy that even in pandemic we all were able to successfully fulfil our duties and even go beyond it. It was not easy for us to adopt working remotely and juggle online classes as well, but we did it and we did great. I would still like to work on a few things that would help me eliminate some of the pain points. To do that I recommend, seeking support from other board members when needed, sharing tasks, and better managing time between SFSS work, school work and personal time.

Lastly, I enjoy being part of such an amazing team and work alongside them. I have learned many great things from them and I look forward to learning even more.

## **Project Completed**

### **External and Community Affairs Committee**

#### **BC Budget Consultation:**

In June 2020 I was allowed to present a budget recommendation at the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on behalf of the Simon Fraser Student Society. The budget consultation document was prepared by Sarah Edmunds who holds the staff position as Research and Policy Coordinator at SFSS. At the standing committee, I was given five minutes to speak and present our recommendation for the BC budget. SFSS presented three recommendations, which are stated below. To read the BC budget consultation document and full report, please visit the appendices at the end of this document.

#### **BC Budget Recommendation:**

##### **Recommendation 1**

Evaluate and revise the operational funding model for post-secondary institutions and increase post-secondary operating grants.

Over the years the operational funding provided to universities from the government has drastically decreased, which made universities rely on student tuition fees. The increase in university tuition fees has put many students under death and greater financial pressure. We recommended the government increase the funding so that universities do not heavily rely on student tuition, and students can be relieved of the financial burden.

## Recommendation 2

Reduce or eliminate MSP premiums for international post-secondary students

In January 2020 BC eliminated MSP, but at the same time, it increased the Medical fees on internationals from \$37.50 to \$75. Even though the increased amount might not seem much. It still puts international students under more financial burden, as they are already paying higher tuition fees. SFSS recommended the standing committee to reduce or eliminate medical fees on international students.

## Recommendation 3

Revise the Tuition Limit Policy to limit international student tuition increases to 2% annually, bringing it in line with domestic student tuition

There is a 2% cap on local student tuition fees that prevent universities from exponentially increasing tuition fees. But, there is no cap on international tuition fees on international students. Last year alone SFU increased international tuition fees up to 20%. This puts international students in greater financial pressure. SFSS recommended a standing committee to consider putting a 2% cap on international tuition fees so that students can budget their degree better and be able to complete their education.

## Just Recovery:

In June 2020, SFSS submitted the brief on Canada's COVID-19 Response to the federal government, urging them to take steps to ensure long-term recovery from COVID-19. This project was led by At-Large rep Balqees Jama and Science rep WeiChun Kua. They did an extremely good job in putting all the research together and preparing the brief, which was also featured on the government website. The brief overview can be found below, to read the detailed report please check the appendices at the end of this document.

SFSS asked the federal government to provide all students including international students with adequate financial support. SFSS also urged the federal government to commit to the Just Recovery principle.

- Put people's health and wellbeing first, no exceptions.
- Strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people.
- Prioritize the needs of workers and communities.
- Build resilience to prevent future crises.
- Build solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders.
- Uphold Indigenous rights and work in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

## Letter against TMX pipeline:

The Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX) is a great burden on the Canadian economy, our environment and our community. The pipeline expansion puts our students and their health in danger, as it is located down the SFU Burnaby campus, and the exit from the campus runs past the tank farm. This escapes impossible in case of an emergency caused by the tank farm.

We must urge the government to stop TMX immediately. The letter against Trans Mountain Pipeline was let by Science Rep Weichun Kua, Environment Rep Anuki Karunajeewa, SFU Dogwood, and Justice No Pipeline. The letter can be found attached in the appendices.

The letter included following call to action:

1. Immediately cease TMX and commit to honouring Indigenous sovereignty

- We call for the immediate ratification and legislation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in present-day Canada. This is essential to a Just Recovery. The Senate's failure to pass Bill C-262 was deeply frustrating, and if the Liberal Party is committed to “implement[ing] the Declaration as government legislation by the end of 2020”, then it must recognize that the approval and construction of TMX violate the Declaration.

- We call for the implementation of the calls to action in Volumes 1a and 1b the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

2. Invest in Indigenous-led green infrastructure and green job-retaining initiatives

- We call for the reallocation of funds directed to TMX into current and future Indigenous-led green infrastructure, rather than merely investing the disputed projected revenue into future clean energy projects. This will accelerate the transition to a clean economy, and allow us to ensure that the Liberal Party’s commitment to “all Indigenous communities [being] powered by clean, renewable, and reliable sources of energy” is realized before 2030.

- We call on the federal government to direct funds towards green job-retraining initiatives, such as those proposed by Iron and Earth. It is not only workers who are directly involved in the fossil fuel industry who struggle in the wake of the downturn in oil markets, but those who are involved indirectly, many of whom belong to marginalized groups. All Canadians, including marginalized workers in the fossil fuel industry, deserve a just transition to a low-carbon economy, and an energy transition task force - such as the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power

Workers and Communities - should also be organized for Canadian fossil fuel workers and their communities. The federal government's insistence on expanding fossil fuel production undermines transnational efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C or 2°C. Therefore, it is also time to end subsidies to the failing fossil fuel industry.

The letter was endorsed and signed by many student organizations across BC and was sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The leading member worked on this project with such great passion and they are still pushing it on both social media and through active protest. I feel proud of them.

### Fall UPass:

Due to COVID-19 and class being moved online in summer 2020, SFSS including other participating institutions suspended the UPass program. The suspension was only for the summer term. As I started my term one of the biggest projects was to negotiate UPass for the fall term on behalf of SFSS at the UPass Advisory Committee (UAC). Later at the UAC, I was also elected as the UAC co-chair to lead the negotiations with Translink and Province on behalf of all participating Student Unions.

Throughout the summer semester, I had several meetings with Province, Translink and UAC to discuss UPass issues and how we can accommodate our students during the fall term. We explored many avenues to make sure we get the best possible deal for our membership. SFSS also conducted a survey to consult with its membership to know if students want UPass back for fall or would they like to keep it suspended. Through the survey, we found 51.5% of students voted in favour of UPass reinstatement and 48.5 voted against the UPass. Also, 12% of the students were not planning to reside in Metro Vancouver for the fall term. After several weeks of negotiations and efforts of SFSS, Translink and other participating institutions we were able to get an exemption for all the students who are not residing in Metro Vancouver. Also, without UPass a student might end up paying anywhere from \$100 to \$177 per month depending on the travel needs. But, UPass brings that cost down to just \$42.50 per month. Board considered all the aspects both accessible and financial before voting on UPass reinstatement. The Motion passed and UPass was brought back for Fall term.

Even though we were able to negotiate a few exemption categories. We were still faced with quite a few unhappy students and received quite a few emails from students who were not happy about UPass being back, many of them showed concern that they have their transportation and should not be forced to pay for UPass service, and some showed concern over classes being online so they have no need of UPass. Even though Classes are online thousands of students depend

on UPass service for grocery shopping, transit to work and other essential travel, and not having UPass were putting them under higher financial pressure in this pandemic. I have requested a meeting with UAC to discuss the possibility of getting more exemption limits for the spring semester and see if we can accommodate the needs of our students even better. SFSS did their best to accommodate everyone, consulted the membership and gave them the right to vote on UPass. Please see the appendices for the detailed brief on UPass.

## Ongoing Project:

### Food Hub Program:

At the start of the Summer term at the University and Academic Affairs committee, we started a working group by the name of Emergency and Student Engagement. The group consisted of myself, Weichun Kua, Matt Provost, Phum Luckkid, Gabe Liosis, and Abhishek Parmar. We were tasked with finding out problems our students are facing in this pandemic and try to find solutions for them to support our students. We realised that students are facing high food insecurity due to lost jobs and having financial problems. To tackle this problem, we decided to start a Food Hub program at SFU and support our students during these difficult times. Soon we found a great partner Tara Flynn who works at SFU as the civic engagement coordinator, and we also partnered up with a Burnaby neighbourhood house. The board allocated five thousand dollars as a reserve for this program and Tara Flynn was given grants from SFU to operate this program.

The food hub started at Burnaby campus on July 22 and it was highly appreciated by the students. Weichun Kua and I were leading the food hub at Burnaby campus and Matt Provost volunteered to lead the food hub program at Surrey campus.

We started with 30 applicants, but now we have grown to serve over 55 students every week. Food hub program is providing students with weekly groceries, which includes fresh vegetables, pasta, rice and many other canned items. The program is set to end in October, and as of now, we do not have any solid plan to make it a permanent program. But, Matt Provost and I are looking into the possibility of making it a permanent program.

### SFSS Rebranding:

In August 2020, the board created a working group focusing on rebranding the SFSS logo, and the group consisted of myself, Weichun Kua, Jennifer Chou, Haider Masood and Matt Provost.

Currently, the rebranding project is on hold due to other urgent projects such as the BC election campaign. We will pick up the rebranding project as soon as possible.



