

# Mr. Ashfield goes to Ottawa

CAMERON MITCHELL  
THE BRUNSWICKAN

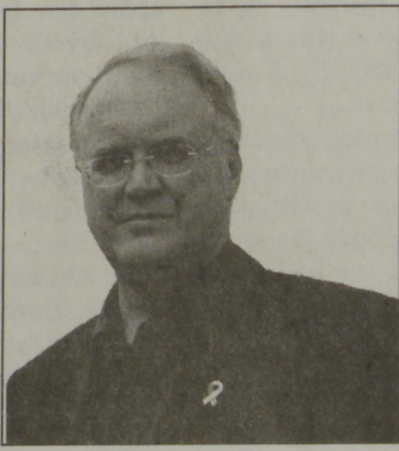
Traditionally, New Brunswick has had just one representative in the federal cabinet. It came as a bit of a surprise for residents when newly elected Fredericton MP Keith Ashfield was recently named to Harper's second cabinet, doubling the number of New Brunswick MPs in cabinet as he joins New Brunswick Southwest MP Greg Thompson.

Thompson served in Harper's last cabinet as well.

"I was surprised by the appointment," said Ashfield.

"But it was a very pleasant surprise, and I'm obviously very grateful to the Prime Minister in his support in this undertaking."

Ashfield was named the new minister of state for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA). This position suits



Ashfield because of his prior dealings in the business community and because of his strong background in business.

"I was very pleased to be appointed to the ACOA because a lot of my life before politics was dedicated to small business," continued Ashfield.

"I have an affinity towards business, marketing, and all those types of things. I enjoy that type of work."

Ashfield has spent the last few weeks getting accustomed to life as a federal politician, and his recent appointment will only accelerate the learning curve.

"My position is called a minister of state, which is sort of a junior ministry," explained Ashfield.

"I'll be working through minister MacKay who will actually carry the files to the cabinet table, and I'll be in cabinet only when they need me. It's a great opportunity, and a great way to start to get a full understanding of

the way things work in Ottawa."

Ashfield served as a provincial natural resources minister under then-premier Bernard Lord, and his experience with the provincial cabinet will certainly help with the transition.

"I have a pretty good idea of how things work (in Ottawa) because of my years in the provincial legislature, but things are much bigger up here," said Ashfield.

With two MPs now representing New Brunswick in the cabinet, the province is in an excellent position to be heard. New Brunswick Southwest MP Greg Thompson will remain the minister of Veteran Affairs.

One of Ashfield's goals is to ensure that his new position is used to better life in New Brunswick and all of Atlantic Canada. He is interested in finding people and businesses that want to invest in Atlantic Canada, and help the region grow. This will

create new jobs and stimulate the economy.

Life as an MP can be hectic, and Ashfield will rack up a lot of frequent flyer points over the next little while.

"A lot of the time I will be in Ottawa, but I will be home on the weekends," explained Ashfield. It is necessary for Ashfield to ensure that he remains close to his New Brunswick roots so that the problems and concerns of New Brunswickers are heard. "It is important for me to be out there and listening to people in my own district," he said.

Ashfield became the first Fredericton Conservative MP since 1993 by winning 42 per cent of the vote over Liberal candidate David Innes. Liberal Andy Scott had previously represented Fredericton during the leadership of Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin.

# Lobby groups visit SU



Doug Estey / The Brunswickan

The UNBSU student council met last Thursday for presentations from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA). Pictured above at council are SU VP External Jon O'Kane, President Bethany Vail, and VP Student Services Stephanie Lord.

HILARY PAIGE SMITH  
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Two prominent Canadian student lobby groups introduced themselves to the University of New Brunswick Student Union in a recent council meeting.

CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and NBSA, the New Brunswick Student Alliance paid a visit to the UNBSU in order to acquaint the council with their principles and purpose.

Dan Murphy, Member Relations Officer for CASA and Heather Elliot, the Executive Director of the NBSA each made a presentation outlining the core values of their organizations and how they impact the lives of Canadian students.

CASA represents 23 universities and 300,000 students nationwide. This lobby organization is also the

only student organization in the country that has met with the past three prime ministers. Murphy calls CASA "a big driving force in post-secondary issues."

NBSA is not only an agent for New Brunswick Universities like UNB, Mount Allison and Universite de Moncton, but also community colleges, including the Dieppe campus. This organization represents about 16,500 students and has been a link to the government for student stakeholders since 1983. Elliot assured the council that the NBSA truly works for their members with, "if you bring it to the table, we'll discuss it."

The current president of the New Brunswick Student Alliance is Duncan Gallant, St. Thomas political science student and President of the St. Thomas Student Union. The position of Vice President External is currently vacant, with current UNBSU Vice President External Jon O'Kane as the only person vying for the job.

The main focus of this year's NBSA campaign is financial aid. Elliot adds that this is not a surprise to the council. NBSA's largest lobbying point in this campaign is a \$6,000 debt cap, which ensures that students pay no more than \$6,000 for each year of study at a New Brunswick university. The alliance is also lobbying for more funding for low-income families, students in rural areas, and First Nation students.

Values that both CASA and NBSA share are accessibility and affordability for a high-quality education. Murphy outlines some of CASA's accomplishments for the 2006-2007 school year, "CASA was part of a larger coalition that worked towards getting the rights for international students to work on campus. That was a huge success. We've also been able to secure \$1.5 million in transfer funding for federal student loans, and dedicated \$800 dollar transfer for post-secondary education."

Prior to the federal election,

CASA met with policy members from each political party and discussed that party's future in post-secondary education funding and brought some of CASA's policies to the table.

They also met with candidates in local ridings and organized on-campus debates.

To better convey CASA's principles to the government they hold a regular lobby conference in Ottawa. Members of Parliament, public servants, and other student-driven organizations and government officials attend this conference. Student Union President Bethany Vail and VP External Jon O'Kane will be attending the upcoming conference in February.

The advocacy priorities of both organizations are set by their student members. Every summer a conference is held for student leaders to come and discuss post-secondary issues and bring their needs, as well as the needs of their fellow students to the table.

## GSA elects executive

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The Graduate Students Association of UNB held a byelection last week for the positions of President, Vice President External and Vice President Finance.

The GSA elections were originally held in the spring; however, no candidates ran for the positions of President and Vice President Academic. Carl Burgess, the outgoing President, agreed to stay on until another candidate was elected on November 5.

Roughly 30 people, the majority of them council members, showed up to vote. There were a total of seven candidates running for the positions. The candidates stated their positions before the council prior to the election, hoping to

influence voters in their favour. Neil Cole, the incumbent VP External and Samuel Johnson, a forestry student, were the two candidates for the position of VP External.

Cole, as the incumbent, outlined some of his achievements within the council during his previous term. "I feel this pushes me in a unique way of knowing what to do, because I've already established this level of experience. I feel it also gives me a little bit of insight in what kind of processes I can work to fix within the next year."

Cole remained the VP External by a majority vote.

There were three candidates in the running for VP Finance. Jason Ainslie won the position with a majority vote. Ainslie is currently working toward his masters in business administration with a specialization in finance. His previous experience in finance includes working as the VP

Finance for Amnesty International in their small business sector.

Ainslie reveals his platform to the council, "My platform is all around budgeting and planning. It's about transparency. You hear a lot of students wondering where their money went and what goes toward funding which program. Everything I would do would have financial reports and budgeting reports. I think that that's a huge problem in an organization such as this."

The two candidates for President of the GSA were Carson Butts, former Vice President Communications and Doug Godsoe. Butts, also the council representative for Querty, a creative writing journal written by grad students, won the top position by a majority vote.

Butts emphasized his interest in unifying grad students at UNB by saying, "If everyone acts as an individual, then there is no association."

## Here and abroad, in brief

### International Education Week comes to UNB

An International Education Week will place next week to educate students on the international community and opportunities at UNB, with events including an international movie night, exchange information sessions, panel discussions, a fair trade expo, coffee house and more. See [www.unbf.ca/international](http://www.unbf.ca/international) for times and places - or any of the posters around campus.

### Premier says NB needs presence in China

At the end of a week-long business trip to China, premier Shawn Graham has determined that New Brunswick would benefit from the installation of a representative of our province in China. China's economy is doing better than other countries, and businesses in N.B. would gain new opportunities from the placement. The premier intends to raise the idea at the next Council of Atlantic Premiers meeting, to be held in Newfoundland in the coming months.

### Domestic death review committee in the works for 2009

Following the recent murder of STU professor John McKendry, the New Brunswick government is planning to give birth to a committee which will automatically review any death having to do with family terrorism. The assistant deputy minister for the province's women's issues branch, Norma Dubé, says the province can expect the committee to be established by approximately April 1, 2009.

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