

Students to politicians: stop squabbling

DANIELLE WEBB
CUP ATLANTIC BUREAU CHIEF

ANTIGONISH (CUP) – Sam Pikelin doesn't think students are apathetic towards politics. Instead, he says politicians just aren't working hard enough to let students know they care.

"[Politicians] simply aren't making the issues we care about relevant," said Pikelin, recent graduate of Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B.

Zach Churchill, national director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, also thinks politicians are not reaching their student constituents.

"Students are very civically engaged, but not necessarily in partisan politics, because our politicians haven't reached out with issues that our important to them," he said.

"Instead, we see leaders on both sides of the political spectrum attacking one another on a personal level. It quite frankly disgusts me," Pikelin said.

Pat Connors, a student at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, N.B., agrees.

"It would even make me happy

if they could just stop the childish quibbling that has been so prevalent and actually debate issues in a serious manner. I think Canadians of all political stripes are demanding it and deserve no less," he said.

However, national and provincial student associations are busy lobbying the nation's leading political parties to ensure student issues are on the agenda. Their biggest concerns are post-secondary education accessibility and high tuition levels.

Kaley Kennedy, the Canadian Federation of Students representative in Nova Scotia, is calling on the new government to create a post-secondary education act that would ensure funding for universities would go to the right places.

"We want to ensure that the money is being put into the pockets of students," said Kennedy.

The Alliance of Nova Scotia Students' Associations is also calling on the next government to create policy around post-secondary education in the form of an access agenda.

"This agenda should work to increase the participation rates of under-represented groups across Canada," said Kelly Wilson, executive director of ANSSA.

"It's no secret that Canada's national economy will be facing

significant challenges in the not-so-distant future... Our capacity to build a diverse, skilled, and creative workforce will determine much of our success going forward," Wilson said.

These student associations are also working closely with their member students' unions to ensure students are equipped with all the necessary information come voting day.

Wilson believes politicians will cater to their most demanding demographic.

"Politics creates a forum through which voters can communicate their concerns and priorities. Politicians, in turn, receive these concerns and prioritize our national agenda," she said. "In order to create momentum around student issues, students must vote and participate in the political process."

Student Unions across Atlantic Canada are busy preparing their campuses for election day, Oct. 14.

Kyle Steele, president of the Acadia University Students' Union in Wolfville, N.S., hopes the federal election will encourage students to exercise their right to vote.

"In my own honest opinion, if you don't vote, you can't complain – so everyone should be out practicing their democratic right," said Steele.

As well, Jon O'Kane, VP external

for the UNB Fredericton Student Union, is busy with voter registration, ensuring that every student knows they can vote in their hometown or at school.

"When a student casts a ballot, it is a message to whoever wins the election that the student portions of constituencies will hold governments accountable, making what each individual believes an important platform for national debate and discussion," said O'Kane.

The campus meal hall at Mount Allison University has already been determined as a polling station for the riding of Beauséjour.

"This year the campus is politically super-charged: the years when apathetic young people would vaguely reject old-school politics are over. They are now willing to vociferously assert themselves on the political stage by promoting involvement on a local level," said Mark Brister, VP external of Mount Allison's Students' Administrative Council.

But for Scott Matheson, a St. Francis Xavier University student, this election will be about the issues, not partisan politics.

"I challenge the candidates in [my riding] to convince me why I should vote for them, and I promise to keep an open mind regardless of their party affiliation."

Positive environment, positive campus

ANTHONY ENMAN
SPECIAL TO THE BRUNS

SAINT JOHN – One year ago Travis Price and a friend took a stand for a fellow male student at their local high school because said student was being bullied for wearing pink. Price and his friend weren't just going to stand by and watch, so they purchased and got fellow students to sport a pink shirt, a way of telling the bully to back off.

The campaign grew quickly and was recognized by the province of Nova Scotia. The Province declared that every second Thursday in September would be Pink Day, an initiative to stop harassment in schools. Price is now enrolled and is a first year student at UNBSJ and has brought the "think pink" idea with him.

"I think bullying is a problem everywhere, not just in high school, so to bring Pink Day to UNB Saint John seemed like a good idea because we are standing up for what is right," said Price.

The program has already made some substantial leaps going from a small school based initiative to a province wide campaign. Price even stated that, "we've even received emails from great people like Yoko Ono and you don't take something like that lightly."

The campaign is now in stages of production says Price. "Left Foot First Productions has created a play based on our story which will be in Saint John at Imperial Theatre in March or April. On top of that we also have our website which everyone is encouraged to visit (forceinpink.com). If they make a donation on the site then that money will be used for upkeep of the site and the Pink Day shirts which are soon to be in production."

Although Pink Day has had considerable success, Price says he hopes more lies in the future. "Today was great. It was the start of something even bigger than what we originally accomplished last year in our school. I hope that soon we will see this become a national initiative."

Cecil Clark, Justice Minister of Nova Scotia, will be in New Brunswick soon discussing the possible signing of a proclamation in this province as well. Price closed with the following remark: "Hopefully the incoming Canadian Government will also see the merit in our cause and will consider signing a proclamation."

Paul Gallagher, fourth year Sports and Exercise Psychology student and Social Director of the UNB Saint John SRC, got behind Price because of the worthy cause. "Travis approached me with a great idea that had a lot of meaning," Gallagher said. He then went on to explain that he felt bullying is a larger issue than

just in high school. "I don't think that bullying in just in high school, it's all around us in all facets of life and I think attention needs to be brought to it."

This comment was evident thinking back to last year when some UNBSJ international students were being harassed and bullied in the Milledgeville area. Gallagher says he hopes this is only the beginning. "I would like to see a larger awareness come out of this regarding bullying and harassment. It does happen and even though it may not be as bad after high school, it's still there. Education is the tool and we are the carpenters."

He finished with some words of encouragement for current students on a national scale: "Nova Scotia has made this a province wide initiative, and even though New Brunswick is a little different I would like to see this become a province wide initiative here as well. The ultimate goal would be that every school, whether it is public or post-secondary, would take part in this cause and make it national."

Mark Walma, Human Rights Officer at UNB, says bullying is part of the larger picture. "Bullying, I believe, is recognized by the education systems as well as the workforce. I and the Positive Environment Committee believe that bullying is one of the concerns that we wish to address very much so. I think Pink Day is an initiative that the Committee and I could be involved with in conjunction with our plan."

Walma explained that the Positive Environment Committee is a committee wishing to meet specific goals while serving both campuses. "Of course, bullying is an area of interest for us, but we also want to deal with some positives. By this I mean we wish to make sure everyone feels accepted within the UNB Community. We also wish to provide accessibility for disabled persons. It's all about removing barriers."

Walma will soon be holding sessions on both campuses, with one coming up in Saint John in late September. "I would like to hold a series of sessions, near or at the lunch hour, which will discuss different issues. They will be quite informal in the way that I will briefly discuss some issues and then open the floor to questions and thoughts on the issue and ways to improve." Walma's position is new, and although undefined he has a clear view of what he needs to do.

"It's interesting because my role is still developing, however I would say my role is to help everyone from both campuses to understand their rights as individuals." The Positive Environment Committee, created by ex-VP Academic Jane Fritz, was responsible for creating the declaration of rights and responsibilities as well as Walma's current position.

Brown proposing \$25 SUB fee

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I personally would be willing to pay \$25 to support its upkeep, however I'm not sure if that is the best solution because if we keep continuing giving in to the administration and giving in to the government by continuing to put these fees on ourselves then people aren't really going to take us

seriously and believe that we really want to have the government and the university pay for these things and we don't want to have them on our backs."

Students may notice that many other buildings on campus are also in dire need of repair, some of them buildings that house classrooms and are seemingly more

vital than a building that is home to the organizations and clubs of UNB. Students may also notice that though some buildings are looking forlorn and unkempt that the \$50 million Currie Center is being erected at the bottom of the hill. However can one make sense of that?

Vail said she believes that the

university cannot afford the Currie Center. While she does believe that Richard Currie's vision for the centre will bring good things to the school, she said that James Brown has mentioned that there isn't enough money for long-term upkeep of the facility. Vail said that she doesn't see the good in having the enter if there also isn't a Student Union Building.

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