



OH, THE POWERPLANT Sure, it's a big, cold empty warehouse—but at least there's plenty of "student space"

More vision needed for VPOF post

Candidates' platforms should be rooted in the 'Plant and its pecuniary woes



ROSS PRUSAKOWSKI

In past Students' Union elections, candidates have rolled out grand new ideas for the SU and tried to rally the campus towards their vision of the future. Unfortunately for us, that hasn't happened this year, least of all in the race that needs it the most. That is, Vice-President (Operations and Finance) and its most high-profile portfolio item: the Powerplant and its financial woes. And while Eamonn Gamble and Jesse Hahn seem like agreeable people, neither has a clear vision with what to do with this industrial-sized money pit.

VPOF is the perhaps the most nebulous of Executive positions, because while it may sound important, this isn't always the case. As current office-holder Chris "part-time" Cunningham and others before him have proved, if the VPOF comes in with an ill-defined plan, he or she will gradually lose interest in the position and force the SU bureaucracy to shoulder the load. Given what both Hahn and Gamble have campaigned on so far, it seems that this is what will be in store for the SU next year as well.

Vying for the VPOF position simply to pad your resumé and throwing out lines about cutting fees and improving

businesses shows only an inch-deep understanding of the position. This is something that should alarm students and make them consider if that's what they really want from someone managing a \$9 million-plus budget.

Given that the SU will likely lose more than \$200 000 on the Powerplant this year, this is where both candidates should be focusing their platforms. Each *should* be explicitly offering students a real solution to the 'Plant—one that they can enact upon assuming office. Doing so now is essential, because to make the major

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changes that are desperately needed will require a popular mandate that only an election can provide.

Both candidates are missing the truth that they should be expressing to students: the Powerplant is comatose, and there's no chance of ever reviving it. Instead, the SU needs to make a hard decision and turn this into an opportunity.

Rather than pumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into a project that will continually lose money for reasons such as obscenely high rent, an inhospitable atmosphere and a poor business plan, the SU should be offering the Administration a trade: the entire

Powerplant building (minus perhaps the coffee shop, which turns a slight profit) in exchange for the Industrial Design building, which sits between SUB and Stadium Parkade, and which is currently undergoing renovation.

While this might look like a Ryan Smyth-style end-of-the-year sell-off, this deal would pay off in the long run. By acquiring this space and committing at least \$150 000 (less than what maintaining the 'Plant for a year would cost), for the foreseeable future the SU could afford to expand SUB by pushing out the basement, first and second floors, and adding student and retail space in the process. Not only would this allow the SU a desperately needed expansion with no rent costs attached, but new revenues from additional tenants could expand the number and size of services that it could provide to students.

This vision for SUB's expansion and an increase to SU services isn't a pipe-dream, but rather a crucial piece of long-term investment that's missing from the VPOF and almost all other Executive races. A generation ago, and again less than a decade ago, our student leaders showed this kind of vision when they built and expanded SUB, respectively. They didn't have the Powerplant losses hanging around their necks, yet they still managed to push ahead with a long-term and controversial plan. We shouldn't expect any less from those hoping for our votes now, since they have an opportunity to take a major drain on the SU and turn it into an amazing opportunity.

LETTERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

U-Pass impass continues

(Re: "The Road to U-Pass," 6 March). The 2007 referendum on the U-Pass has [almost come] and gone, and perhaps I have come too late into a debate that had its first referendum in 2004. However, having lived for four years in Edmonton and having yet to spend \$10 on bus tickets (let alone \$75 per semester), I consequently feel that my aiding other students financially in their daily journey to school, while my journey has yet to subsidized, is a little unfair.

I cycle to school—my journey takes ten to 25 minutes depending on the season, and every now and again my bike needs to be repaired: flat tires replaced, tune-ups and the yearly overhaul after winter has wreaked its havoc. This year, the overall maintenance of my bike will cost about

\$250. And, no doubt, you care about those mundane details just as much as I care about your bus pass costs.

Now, I can't complain about paying for parking, gas, insurance and all the other costs a car driver has to worry about. I don't drive, and I've yet to be charged for using a bike rack. But paying \$300 dollars over the next two years to help you ride the bus on top of the \$[5000] I'll be paying to keep myself coming to school sounds like an imbalanced, frankly laughable concept. I could buy myself a new bike with that \$300 or a year of repairs.

So can you really expect me to pay this "mandatory" fee even if it is found to benefit the majority of students? How about when you start helping me pay to maintain my bike, I'll help you with your bus tickets.

SAM VANCE-LAW
Arts II

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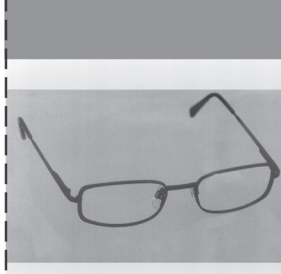
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