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Ten seats cut from Students' Council

RYAN HEISE
Deputy News Editor

With Students' Union elections looming on the horizon, the opportunity to hold a seat has been slightly reduced.

By passing a first reading of Bill 7 by a vote of 24 in favour, 13 against, and one abstention on 8 January, Students' Council has effectively reduced its size from 42 members to 32 for its next session. The bill also abolishes the Access Fund Committee, rolling its responsibilities into the Grant Allocation Committee.

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"It's an improvement, and it will lead to a more engaged council, more effective debate and, perhaps more importantly, a more streamlined committee system that will be a better use of Council's time."

STEVEN DOLLANSKY
SU VP (EXTERNAL)

effective debate, and, perhaps more importantly, a more streamlined committee system that will be a better use of Council's time," said SU Vice-President (External) Steven Dollansky, who introduced the bill.

However, Bill 7 wasn't without controversy.

While it was originally meant to be introduced in December, it was pushed off of the agenda into January. Over the break, Dollansky reworked the bill, adding in two amendments, the first of which would have reduced Council from 42 to 28 seats and created two "super-faculties" that would have shared representation in the SU. These were planned to be a consolidation of Medicine/Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Law, as well as combining Native Studies and Open Studies.

Dollansky justified this move by claiming it would offer students more equal representation and increase the efficiency of Council.

PLEASE SEE COUNCIL • PAGE 3



TARA STIEGLITZ

HURTIN' ALBERTANS The University of Alberta's wrestlers hosted the Canada West competition this weekend and earned some fancy hardware for their efforts.

Canadian campus bookstores band together to fight rising costs

U of A Bookstore and Students' Union are frontrunners in the struggle to lower academic material costs

KIRSTEN GORUK
News Staff

Tuition fees may be the favourite scapegoat of cash-strapped university students, but a newly launched campaign against federal regulations on textbooks is determined to see cheaper academic materials on campus bookstore shelves.

No matter how you look at it, books aren't cheap—just ask any student in line at the campus bookstore. As Bobby Samuel, Students' Union Vice-President (Academic), explained, the rising cost of books has always been an issue.

"It represents another barrier to affordability, but it's been our desire to try and reduce the costs of academic materials so that students are able to afford the undergraduate education without leaving school with too much debt," Samuel said.

In the past, the SU has worked alongside the U of A bookstore to reduce the cost to students, and to a certain degree, they have been successful at driving down book prices. But in the pursuit of greater results, the issue has been taken to the national level.

"We had to get other student associations, other bookstores [involved], and most importantly, publishers alerted us to where this issue needs to go and how it needs to change," Samuel explained.

The National Round Table on Academic Materials (NRAM) was held in Toronto this past November. The event was organized and executed by the U of A's campus bookstore and the SU. A total of 13 universities,

eight bookstores, and six publishers attended.

Although NRAM was successful in dissecting issues about book prices, speculation surrounding the regulations is nothing new.

On 27 November, 2007, four days after NRAM, Campus Stores Canada (CSC)—a national network that provides educational support and unity for institution-owned campus stores—launched an official campaign to change the federal regulations and reduce the price of books.

In the ten years since the last time regulations were reviewed, CSC and the U of A bookstore have pointed out serious problems with parallel importation, notably the Copyright Act and exclusive distribution rights.

"A Canadian publisher does two things in this country: publish books and distribute foreign books. They make their money both ways," said Chris Tabor, CSC spokesperson and Manager of Queen's University Bookstore.

Essentially, the distribution rights prohibit bookstores from importing used books and restrict their distributor choices to ones within Canada. This is why a student can check out Amazon.com and find their textbook for a lower price in US dollars than at the U of A bookstore.

The Copyright Act, which helps enforce distribution rights, also adds to the inflation of book prices.

"The act allows the Canadian distributor to add ten per cent to an American book or 15 per cent to a UK book that they import and redistribute," Tabor explained.



MIKE OTTO

BOTTOM-SHELF BARGAINS Campus bookstores are on the side of students.

As long as the distributor remains within that percentage margin, campus bookstores have no choice but to deal with them. Todd Anderson, U of A Bookstore director, said that the act is unpopular among his staff and that he stands firmly behind the fight to change the regulations.

"The Copyright Act is potentially going to be one of the most damaging acts for student pocketbooks in the coming years," Anderson explained. "We hold our publishers accountable for what our students have to pay."

Since November, CSC has met with government representatives to discuss the problematic regulations. As the group explained, it was imperative

that the government understand that book price differential is the result of a poorly created copyright policy, and not the result of currency issues.

Tabor noted a welcomed response to the points raised and went on to detail his desired outcome, which he hopes will come to fruition by the end of January.

"Along with asking for the removal of GST, we've also asked for the removal of those specific parts of the act that contribute to inflated prices for the Canadian students," Tabor stated.

"It seems fundamentally unfair that a Canadian student should pay more for an identical book than their US or UK contemporaries."

Inside

News	1-5
Opinion	6-9
Feature	10
Sports	11-13
A&E	14-17
Classifieds	18
Comics	19



Where no class has gone before ...

After a four-month delay, Enterprise Square—the reclaimed Bay Building downtown—is officially open, and the Gateway photogs have the scoop on the new space.

PHOTO FEATURE, PAGE 10