

election dissection



“I feel uncomfortable with any statements that say, ‘I would like to build a strong relationship with the government or the University.’ I don’t know what that means; I don’t know what that accomplishes. The University is not on our side; they have a different agenda, and it’s unfortunate when student leaders don’t recognize that difference.”

SAM POWER

no candidate has attempted to really capitalize on yesterday’s provincial election by trying to use what some of the parties are saying about PSE to mobilize students.

But Kirkham summed up Morin and Samuel the best for the panel: “Both of these platforms are designed to appease the greatest number of students and simply get them votes. That’s what it comes down to.”

Kirkham also best captured the sentiments surrounding the fourth candidate, Sheldon Tibbo, when he discussed his responses during the SUB Stage forum.

“He answered a question about accessibility, and it occurred to me that he simply lacks a fundamental understanding of what accessibility is. He’s making the standard conservative argument that university is only for those that can pay for it. And frankly, [the fact] that that’s an argument coming from a candidate running for Students’ Union president should be deplorable in the eyes of students.”

Kirkham added that Tibbo’s decision to wear a (Conservative MLA candidate) TJ Kiel button and snowman pajama pants should make students ask, “Are you serious?”

THE VERDICT: Two votes for Miller; two votes for Morin.

Board of Governors Representative

Only one candidate is running this year for BoG rep—current SU President Michael Janz—and the panel was resoundingly in support of him.

“I’m entirely convinced that he’s running because he wants to make things happen,” Kehoe said.

Power added that the knowledge gained from his year as president have made him very ideal for the position.

“Janz understands you need to be a critical advocate to [the Province and the University], and he knows how those relationships work,” she explained.

“He’s gained people’s respect. I appreciate the fact that a current executive officer who has performed quite well this year is willing to come back for another year,” Kehoe added. “Not that he has much to get out of it, but he really wants to give more back and take everything he’s learned and put it into action.”

THE VERDICT: Four votes for Janz.

Vice-President (Operations & Finance)

The first of three two-candidate races this year, the OpsFi position is being contended by Steven Dollansky and Peter Rychlik.

Some of the panel members found it odd that Dollansky would choose to run for OpsFi after spending a year as Vice-President (External). However, Power said that she sees where Dollansky’s coming from.

“I can understand it. It does appear that he has concrete goals. I can

understand the feeling of having been in one position and seeing opportunities in another.”

Kehoe added that Dollansky’s platform “is really well thought out. In the last three years, this is probably the strongest platform I’ve ever seen [for VPOF].”

However, Cournoyer suggested that Dollansky is perhaps making a mistake in running.

“There’s no doubt he has a solid platform; maybe, halfway through the year, he decided he should have run for VP (Operations & Finance) rather than (External), but the thing that’s getting me is that he made a commitment when he ran for VPX, and now he’s taking a break in the middle of a provincial election campaign, in order to run for what could be argued as a lesser position on the executive,” Cournoyer stated.

“He’s done students a disservice by leaving the position when they needed him the most to raise issues of postsecondary education. I don’t think it’s fair that one of the guys that’s supposed to lead the movement decided to take time off in the middle of the fight.”

But Kehoe asked if the same criticism could be applied Janz taking time off from the presidency, which all of the panellists agreed was fair.

Power drew on her experience as president to bring up a concern about Dollansky’s platform, noting that “a lot of the ideas he has on here are ideas that I’ve seen from staff members of the organization. Not that they’re bad ideas, but I would be concerned for his ability to say no to those staff members.”

Peter Rychlik turned out to be another relatively unknown candidate that impressed the panel. Though he’s young, Kehoe said, Rychlik shows a lot of enthusiasm and a genuine interest in issues surrounding the position, but warned that “he just suffers from a lack of awareness and knowledge of the distinction between SU operations and University operations.”

“I think the perfect example of that was lobbying for expanded use of UWS. It’s not something that would happen,” Kirkham added.

Still, the panel was unanimous on Rychlik’s potential.

“He seems like the type of candidate who, if he served for a year on Students’ Council and understands where you draw the line between the SU and University, I think he’d be a fine candidate,” Kehoe said.

“I commend him,” Cournoyer added. “I think there should be more students who take things to their Students’ Union that they want to improve and say, ‘I might not be a sitting VP, I might not be on Students’ Council, [but] these are my ideas, and I want to push for them.’ He may not win this time around, but I hope that after this election, if he doesn’t win, he does try to get more experience with the Students’ Union. I think he’d be great in the next election.”

THE VERDICT: Two votes for Dollansky; two votes for None of the Above.

Vice-President (External)

Another two-candidate race, this time between Matt Trodden and Beverly Eastham, saw the second instance of the panel deciding unanimously.

“Right off the bat, I can’t vote for [Trodden],” Power said as she looked over his campaign materials. “‘Build a strong relationship with the University because their interests are our interests.’ That is not true in any way. If the University’s interests were our interests, we would see smaller classroom sizes, lower tuition, and higher quality of teaching. It’s evidence that the University’s interests are not our interests. A failure to recognize that is a failure to recognize the type of relationship that the SU is supposed to have with the University.”

Cournoyer says he reached a similar conclusion.

“It just seems like he doesn’t have a grasp for what the government is doing for postsecondary education, what the VP (External) position entails, or what the Students’ Union has advocated for,” he said.

Eastham, on the other hand, garnered much more support.

“She recognizes that in order to get the University to do something, you’ve got to have the University behind you,” Power said.

The panel as a whole was pleased with Eastham’s pragmatic approach to the question of whether or not the SU should join a federal lobby group—specifically Kirkham, who called federal lobby groups “a huge waste of money.”

It was perhaps Eastham’s approach to dealing with the provincial government that garnered the most attention.

“She hits on all the main issues,” Cournoyer said. “I like that she talks about seeking the University’s support for tuition stability in legislation.”

THE VERDICT: Four votes for Eastham.

Vice-President (Academic)

The final two-candidate race brought up a significant amount of contention amongst the panellists, as it was considered one of the most important in all of the SU.

“These are people who are going to be representing the Students’ Union in a lot of meetings with the University; these are people who are going to be talking with [University Provost] Carl [Amrhein],” Kehoe noted.

“These are things that students care about so much,” added Kirkham of the issues that the position deals with. “It’s why students are here in the first place.”

With the importance of the position laid out on the table, the panel discussed the possibility of the candidates: John Braga and Bryant Lukes.

Kehoe and Cournoyer agreed that Braga had not convinced either of them that he is suitable for the job, but Power differed, stating that he