

Urgent Request for Ministerial Oversight: Mismanagement and Governance Failures in the University of Alberta Graduate Students' Association

1 message

Benjamin Kucher

To: ae.minister@gov.ab.ca

Fri, Apr 25, 2025 at 10:32 AM

Dear Minister Sawhney,

My name is Benjamin Kucher. I am a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Alberta, a citizen of the Métis Nation of Alberta and a descendant of both the Michel First Nation. I am writing to you today not only as a concerned student, but as a former executive of the University of Alberta's Graduate Students' Association (GSA), where I served as Vice President Student Life.

I am urging your office to immediately investigate and intervene in the ongoing governance crisis within the University of Alberta GSA. The Association—entrusted to represent and protect over 8,500 graduate students—has become a case study in institutional failure, executive overreach, and structural collapse. As the attached articles from The Gateway demonstrate, the GSA has:

- Failed twice to pass its 2025–26 budget, despite overwhelming concerns from student representatives.
- Silently removed the Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Fund, violating its own policies and eroding Indigenous representation.
- Cut the stipend of the AVP Labour—its key union representative—by nearly 17%, despite a surplus in the Labour Fund, undermining collective bargaining capacity.
- Expanded executive travel and stipends while slashing student supports, suggesting a clear misalignment of priorities.
- Lost its Executive Director—a role essential to operational stability and legal oversight—without any public notice, accountability, or explanation.

Most alarmingly, the GSA operates with closed sessions, limited transparency, and a top-down decision-making model that excludes its own members. The result is a complete erosion of student trust, as reflected in consistently low voter turnout and vacant governance positions. It is no exaggeration to say that the GSA is no longer functioning as a legitimate, representative, or democratic institution.

Minister, the GSA receives public funding, regulates union dues, and exercises exclusive bargaining authority under provincial law. If any other provincially supported body demonstrated this level of dysfunction and disregard for accountability, there would rightly be concern from your office. This situation is no different. I respectfully call on you to:

1. Launch a formal review into the GSA's financial and governance practices.
2. Evaluate the compliance of its decision-making structures with the Post-Secondary Learning Act and Alberta Labour Code.
3. Meet with affected student representatives, including Indigenous and labour voices, who have raised repeated concerns only to be ignored.
4. Implement oversight mechanisms to ensure the GSA can no longer operate in secrecy and without basic checks and balances.

The students of this province deserve governance structures that reflect transparency, equity, and good stewardship. What is currently happening at the University of Alberta GSA is the opposite. We are looking to your office for leadership and accountability.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional documentation or testimony. I am more than willing to share further details and work with your office to ensure this matter is addressed with the seriousness it requires.

Sincerely,

Benjamin J. Kucher, M.A. Student
University of Alberta
Métis Nation of Alberta