One of the most common debates I have heard is whether both inside and outside of university, a student organization is in regards to their university, or that of provincial or federal lobbying groups. The McMaster Students Union is a member of both the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), as well as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). We pay $21,972.00 to be a part of OUSA, and $23,973.00 to be a part of CASA. Yeah, you're reading that right, there is a lot of money. But does that money go for you?

One of the MSU's core purposes is to represent you. You hear this repeats around student-politician election time every year, but what does it actually mean? To have someone speaking on your behalf to the powers that affect your well-being as a student. You have someone who can speak up and speak out on your behalf. That's my entire job, to represent you on a day-to- day basis at the university, as well as the provincial and federal governments. I'm elected to make sure we're doing the best job of lobbying we possibly can. In my opinion, I have business to see to.

However, I'm only one person. There's more than enough going on at the university level to keep one person occupied year-round, never mind the ever-evolving political landscape where much of our lobbying efforts take place. Now, do you want your student representatives simply watching developments and making comments as they happen? Or do you want them analyzing, criticizing and developing new solutions to the problems facing us in the education system? I personally think the latter is the preferable option.

What about experience and professionalism? Since it's your nation, tax, and OSAP dollars on the line, you probably want the people representing you to be thoroughly prepared and professional in their approach to lobbying. Well, I'd glad to tell you that you have all of this. You have engaged, experienced, professional representation that works for you year-round, to not only keep track of important developments and speak out, but also to propose educated solutions to the underlying issues surrounding our education system. Most importantly, we have a well-respected voice at both the provincial and federal tables. As a result, student voices shape the provincial and federal agenda every year. We are able to do this because of our OUSA and CASA memberships.

You see, one, one or even three people is simply not enough to keep track of three different governments and socio-economic trends in different sectors. I wish it was possible for one person to be able to cover all the duties listed above, but it simply isn't. So for less than a couple of bucks per student, the MSU partners with schools from across Ontario and Canada to combine and coordinate our lobbying efforts, as well as our expertise to help us. We call those partnerships OUSA and CASA.

I prefer to call OUSA and CASA partnerships, rather than organizations. In the end, they are vehicles for student governments to accomplish our core mission; representing students effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to know more about the MSU's relationship with either OUSA or CASA. And definitely give it a touch if you have an item or issue that needs to be addressed at any level of governance.

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