

**UFVSUS**

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**UFV, Kinder Morgan, and Government Funding:**

**An Open Letter to UFV Administration & The Minister of Advanced Education**

The Student Union is aware of conversations between UFV and Kinder Morgan to receive some form of funding or support with regard to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Based on examples at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Thompson Rivers University, and the City of Chilliwack, this likely would be an offer of funding for scholarships, bursaries, and/or support for relevant science and trades programs.

The status of pipelines in BC has been contentious for years, with a huge diversity of groups weighing into the issue with many important points on both sides. We all have witnessed the strong outcry from communities at Kwantlen due to their acceptance of funds from Kinder Morgan. These same types of communities exist at UFV, and I would doubt that UFV would prove to be an exception to experiencing this type of reaction.

To contrast, the City of Chilliwack was widely lauded after its decision to reject a similar proposal.

Universities should be schools of thought and knowledge; they play an important role in both the education of our communities through teaching, and through independently reviewing and critiquing the community around us. What does it say about the validity of a critique when funding is attached?

We all recognize the fiscal pressures that the BC Government places upon UFV with continual funding cuts and freezes. This inherently places an incredible pressure on UFV's need to secure donors as it becomes a game of trying to cover the hydro bill and shore up deteriorating facilities, rather than securing pure educational donations. Donations to universities should not be politically or economically motivated, as is the case with Kinder Morgan, but represent an honest appreciation of the ideals and values of the institution and of education itself.

It is easy to depict administrators as being unprincipled, selfish, or corrupt when in reality many are just trying to fund their university in an environment that impoverishes institutions and students alike. It is the Government, though, that causes these people to make a decision from a position of supreme weakness. Almost any time a university has to make a difficult funding decision, the Government holds partial responsibility, and this should never be forgotten.

Further, UFV has repeatedly said that it will not undertake any political action or statement because it is a "publicly supported institution." Note the word "supported" instead of "funded," as the Government now covers less than half of the operating costs. What happens, though, when corporate funds are accepted? Will this too preclude the University making any statement on a matter, or from taking a position?

As the autonomous representative of your largest non-government funder, and arguably the biggest stakeholders, we recommend you take action if you are to pursue such an agreement. Consult your students. Consult your faculty and staff. Consult your alumni. Consult the Stó:lō Nation, on who's traditional territory you recognize this university resides.

Sincerely,

Thomas Davies

President, UFV Student Union Society

**UFV STUDENT UNION SOCIETY | 2015**

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