



March 27, 2023

Mr. Peter Bevan-Baker
Leader,
Green Party of Prince Edward Island

RE: Provincial Post-Secondary Funding

Dear Mr. Bevan-Baker:

Numerous UPEI FA members and supporters have told us that they welcomed the comments aired on CBC March 22nd from all four party leaders, including yourself, highlighting the need to respect the collective bargaining process in achieving a fair deal for our members and emphatically ruling out any prospect of back-to-work legislation. Particular appreciation has been expressed for your comment that the best avenue for resolving the outstanding issues is at the negotiating table: as you're aware, a return to negotiations is what the Faculty Association has been [requesting for almost a month](#). And, of course, the presence of yourself and your candidates on the picket lines and at our rallies has been a great boost for us all!

The Board of Governors' continued intransigence – even in the face of such strong expressions of solidarity and support – is troubling and baffling to our members and supporters, and there is growing concern that the University administration is paralyzed with fear or indecision at the prospect of making any commitments – even urgently-necessary ones – that have long-term financial implications. This impression is underscored by UPEI administrators' assertions that the costs of even a modest employee wage increase will have to be borne directly by students, in the form of tuition increases. We agree with [the recent statement of the UPEI Student Union that this increase is unfair and unwarranted](#). Further, the purported need to reach directly into students' pockets as the only means of absorbing institutional cost increases points to a longstanding over-reliance on student fees to fund University operations, due to continuing shortfalls in the institution's other core revenue stream, the provincial operating grant.

The University administration's reporting for the [Canadian Association of University Business Officers \(CAUBO\) Financial Information of Universities and Colleges](#) clearly shows that the General Operating Grant from the Government of PEI has remained flat, in inflation-adjusted dollars, over the past decade, even as enrollments have grown by 30%. This is obviously unsustainable, especially considering all other University revenue streams, notably external research funding and donations, have declined significantly. In all events, it is not appropriate for our provincial university – [mandated as a public institution in its foundational legislation](#) – to be receiving the majority of its funding from non-public sources. It has not gone unnoticed or

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unappreciated that your Party has shown great leadership in commitment to begin addressing this issue through a multi-year funding agreement that will provide, [“financial stability and predictability,” for UPEI.](#)

As greatly appreciated as the Green commitment has been, we would very much welcome the opportunity to talk further with your Party regarding UPEI’s financial (and other) needs. Your Party’s pledge to a multi-year funding agreement is excellent, and a hugely-important step in the right direction, but more will be needed to place UPEI on a sustainable footing.

As the only University in PEI, UPEI’s value to the province as a whole is incalculable. The work of the University – teaching our next generation of innovators and leaders, undertaking research that answers urgent questions unique to our Island, providing service in our province and across the country – is done by members of the Faculty Association. An investment in UPEI’s faculty is an investment in UPEI’s students, and in a stronger future for all of Prince Edward Island.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Michael Arfken, PhD
President
UPEI Faculty Association