



March 27, 2023

Mr. Dennis King  
Leader  
Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island

**RE: Provincial Post-Secondary Funding**

Dear Mr. King,

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. Particular appreciation has been expressed for your comment that the best place for both parties in the current labour dispute to resolve their differences is, “at the table.” As you’re aware, a return to negotiations is what the Faculty Association has been requesting for almost a month.

That said, we are concerned that you did not take the opportunity to unequivocally rule out back-to-work legislation. As we’ve explained, the University Board of Governors’ refusal to meet with us at the negotiating table will only continue, further prolonging the current labour disruption, if the prospect of back-to-work legislation is not removed as clearly and quickly as possible. We hope that you will speak to this at your earliest opportunity.

The Board of Governors’ intransigence 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 own budgetary analyses clearly show that the General Operating Grant 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

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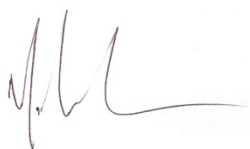
the majority of its funding from non-public sources. Thus far in the election campaign, only the Green Party of PEI has clearly committed to begin addressing this issue, promising “adequate and predictable funding” for Island post-secondary institutions (p. 32 – ).

**Our members and supporters are anxious to hear more about your Party’s plans for supporting our Island University.**

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