



Mr. Pat Sinnott
Chair, UPEI Board of Governors

Dr. Greg Keefe
Interim President, UPEI

Via Email

June 15, 2023

Dear Mr. Sinnott and Dr. Keefe,

We are writing to respond to recent comments you have made regarding the long-awaited report on the 3rd party investigation by Rubin Thomlinson. While we are still digesting the report, and will undoubtedly have more to say in the days to come, we cannot in good conscience fail to note your initial public comments on its staggering findings, comments which are already signalling an extremely-concerning effort to frame a, "put it behind us," narrative, rather than acknowledging the desperate need for wide-ranging action and accountability identified in the report.

The scope of the Rubin Thomlinson investigation was, by all accounts, extraordinary. It has taken more than 18 months to conduct, and it has likely cost hundreds of thousands -- if not millions -- of taxpayer and student tuition dollars. The terms of reference created by the Board of Governors were also broad, but at the time of their creation clearly provided hope to many members of the University community: hope that this time would be different, hope that the Board was finally taking seriously its responsibility to provide a safe, open, and inclusive environment to every person who works, studies, and lives on our campus.

The report itself is devastating. It clearly documents an ongoing culture of bullying and harassment, and of racism and misogyny, as well as widespread fear of reprisal. It likewise identifies numerous failures on the part of UPEI's Board of Governors and Senior Administration to act to remediate this culture, even when complaints have been brought to your attention. Furthermore, the report clearly documents a widespread sense in the UPEI community that senior administrators are actively contributing to a fearful and toxic University environment.

Another extraordinary conclusion of the investigators is that they were unable to properly investigate the allegations against the former President, or the handling of these by the Board of Governors, in large part because of lack of cooperation or proper records-keeping by the Board itself.

Unfortunately, in recent statements, including the announcement accompanying the release of the report on June 14, you have made a number of concerning comments that seem designed to minimize the deeply troubling nature of the report, and suggest that very little action is needed to remediate the serious problems it documents. For instance, you said:

- "We deeply regret that, as an institution, we have not always lived up to our values, particularly in the time period covered by the review." (UPEI Statement, June 14 2023)
- "It's clear that the university was not living its values at that time." (Statement to The Guardian, June 14 2023)
- "This is a report that is looking at a time in the university that's part of our history, and we'd like to get that report, close that chapter of our history, and move on to new chapters of writing the story of UPEI moving forward." (Statement to CBC, May 29 2023) The phrasing of this comment is especially notable, since it

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suggests that University administration had not yet seen the report, whereas Rubin Thomlinson clearly state they submitted it to University counsel on May 3

With all due respect, the issues documented in this report are not "history": indeed, they mostly took place on your watch, while Mr. Sinnott was a member of the Board of Governors and Dr. Keefe was a University administrator (a Dean and, latterly, the interim President). The report of Rubin Thomlinson's investigation indicates clearly that none of this is in the past, and we are troubled by your apparent unwillingness to acknowledge that fact. The culture of secrecy and lack of accountability couched as "confidentiality" pervades. The culture of retaliation persists. As the report itself says: **"The problems described in this report are dire, and the University will need a comprehensive plan to address the many issues that require remediation."** (p. 73) Our entire campus community deserves nothing less than the comprehensive and ongoing action called for in the report, and we expect you to take it.

Dr. Keefe, over the last weeks we have heard you talk repeatedly about the need for "healing" on our campus. We've heard you state in a public meeting that "accountability is a core value at UPEI". And of course, we've heard you make countless statements about the importance of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at our University. If any of these statements are to be believed, then you must now commit to the following:

- Acknowledging the seriousness of the problems at UPEI, and acknowledging that they are ongoing, and not a relic of our past;
- Accepting all of the recommendations in the report;
- Acting immediately, openly, and collaboratively to develop an action plan to once and for all change the climate of fear, secrecy, and retaliation that continues to exist at UPEI;
- Working with government and stakeholders, including all campus unions, to appoint an external, arms-length auditor who will monitor progress on this plan;
- Providing regular - not merely annual - campus-wide updates as to progress on the measures recommended;
- Releasing the additional report into the allegations against the former President; and
- Providing substantive explanations for the redactions in both reports.

We must also highlight that the report calls into question the ability of the Board of Governors to adequately respond to the recommendations without outside, arms-length oversight; and recommends that current members of the Board be replaced as their terms end. In a context where the Board is being called upon to act not only on this report, but also oversee several other major initiatives, including the hiring of a new President, and the establishment of a medical school that will have an effect on health care across the province, **we also call for the immediate resignation of all Board members who were members of the Board at the time of the Human Rights Complaints and NDAs against the former President, as well as those who were involved in his renewal in 2015.**

It is time for UPEI Board members and administrators to publicly commit to taking sweeping action that will make it clear that they understand the seriousness of the problem, and are prepared to act seriously to create a safe and inclusive working and learning environment on our campus. Healing is necessary, but it cannot happen without accountability. That is the only way to build a better UPEI, for now and for the future.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the UPEI Faculty Association

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