

An Open Letter from the President of the UPEI Student Union to the Mayor of Charlottetown



Dear Mayor Clifford Lee,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your steadfast service in the office of Mayor for the city of Charlottetown. I greatly appreciate the work you, your team at city hall, and the elected councillors do for our fine city. My predecessors have described the relationship between the city of Charlottetown and the UPEI Student Union as having been strong and collaborative. Therefore, I am confident we can work together to find an expedient solution to the issue which I will proceed to describe in this letter.

As you are aware, one of our primary objectives at the UPEI SU is to improve accessibility to postsecondary education, and the issue I bring to your attention today is quite literally a barrier to postsecondary education. On Monday, August 31 a fence was installed with the intention of blocking a city-paved pathway located between the residences of 606 and 608 Queen Street. Since the installation of this fence, more than 30 residents living in this area have had the opportunity to contact the Student Union and express their concern regarding this issue. The residents with whom I have spoken range from students, and working folks to retirees, and senior citizens, indicating that this is not just an issue for students, but an issue for this entire neighbourhood.

Prior to being blocked, this pathway facilitated access to the university and a bus stop along one of Charlottetown's main transportation arteries, University Avenue. According to a Google Maps estimate, the installation of this fence increases the distance a pedestrian must travel by more than five times, causing what was a 250 metre commute to become a 1300 meter commute. Personally, I don't think an increased commute of this magnitude could ever be considered to be in the public's best interest, in particular public who face challenges of reduced mobility for health reasons. Residents use this bus service for transportation to and from work and for access essential services.

In addition to increasing a pedestrian's commute and decreasing accessibility to public transportation, this fence encloses and isolates this neighbourhood. I think it is realistic to say that this isolation could cause difficulty for landlords to find tenants, a diminishment of housing values, and a variety of other unintended repercussions. Furthermore, the majority of the streets in this neighbourhood are not equipped with sidewalks, resulting in pedestrians having to walk alongside the street's curb. This is particularly dangerous when snow and ice reduce pedestrian access. The installation of this fence leaves residents in this neighbourhood with no choice but to risk their own safety when they walk out their door.

Ultimately, this is an issue of accessibility and public safety. This fence is negatively impacting the lives of residents who depend on this city-paved pathway to reach the university and the bus stop along University Avenue. On behalf of the 3800 full-time students I've been elected to represent at UPEI, and on behalf of the taxpaying citizens who have come to the UPEI Student Union seeking support, I bring you this pressing concern. I trust that you and the Charlottetown city council will understand the expedient manner required to bring forward a solution to this matter, given that school begins next week. Please let me know if the UPEI Student Union can be of assistance in resolving this pressing issue of accessibility and public safety.

Thank you,

Dana Kenny
President & CEO, UPEI Student Union

**For the purposes of this letter, when referring to the neighbourhood, I am speaking about many of the street names that are found within the major roadway boundaries of Capital Dr/North River Rd/University Avenue/Belvedere Avenue. Those street names include : Queen St, Beer St, Atlantic Rd, Hunt Ave, Cooper Ave, Skyview Dr, Westview Dr, Warburton Dr, Seaview Blvd, Doc Blanchard Cres, Shell Ct, Carvell Ct, Corrigan Ct, Hutchinson Ct, Dawson Ct, Paton Ct, and Kelly Ct.