



UPEI Student Union invests \$20,000 in new Mental Health Initiatives Fund

Fund will be used to fund projects aimed at combating student mental illness and starting conversations around the topic.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The University of Prince Edward Island Student Union is pleased today to announce a \$20,000 investment in the newly created Mental Health Initiatives Fund. The \$20,000, withdrawn from the UPEI SU's Health & Dental plan reserve fund, was approved unanimously by UPEI SU Council at its March 1st meeting.

"This money will be used to fund projects and proposals aimed at combating mental illness on our campus; with an emphasis on prevention, awareness, and support. As we know, student mental health is an emerging issue on Canadian campuses, and we have to take steps to address it," said Lucas MacArthur, UPEI SU President.

Research demonstrates that most mental health illnesses form around or before the age of eighteen. Those aged 15-24 are most likely to suffer from substance abuse, mood disorders, and are more likely to commit suicide. The UPEI SU believes that targeted initiatives aimed at UPEI students will help to address some of these issues. Treena Smith, Manager of UPEI Student Affairs agrees; "This is a very thoughtful investment as we begin our 3rd Annual Mental Health Week here at UPEI. This funding will go towards initiatives to enhance the mental wellbeing of current and future UPEI students and further to the campus as a whole".

The UPEI Student Union has been addressing this issue at the federal level through its partner the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Recommendations have included extension of the mandate of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and funding to pursue stigma-busting campaigns.

"We have been active federally on this file, but it's time to take action here at home as well," noted MacArthur. "I am pleased that our student union is taking action on this, as it is an issue identified by our members. We look forward to working with students, the University and other key stakeholders to fight mental illness."

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