

August 19, 2021

Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz
President
University of Prince Edward Island

Dear President Abd-El-Aziz,

Given that ultimate responsibility rests with the UPEI President and Board of Governors to protect the UPEI campus community and guests from infectious diseases (*UPEI Infectious Disease Policy*), I would like to provide you with an update on our members COVID-19 concerns as well as address UPEI Administration's recent message to the UPEI community regarding air quality/ventilation concerns.

UPEI Faculty Association Survey

Recently, the UPEI Faculty Association distributed a survey to our members requesting feedback on various mitigation strategies for addressing the threat of COVID-19. Given UPEI Administration's recent announcement (August 13) that you anticipate a return to normal which will see the elimination of physical distancing, masking, and a return to pre-COVID-19 room occupancy, our members were particularly interested in hearing more about UPEI Administration's plan to protect the health and safety of the campus community this fall and beyond.

Over 200 of our members completed the survey representing just under half of our entire membership. In this survey, our members identified the following mitigation measures as a priority:

- Provision of Rapid Testing & Vaccination Clinics for the Campus Community
- Campus Vaccination Requirement
- COVID-19 Ventilation Strategy

While we are happy to hear that UPEI is scheduling vaccination clinics this Fall, we believe it is absolutely vital for you to address the other significant concerns raised by our members.

UPEI Campus Vaccination Requirement

In our survey, UPEIFA members indicated overwhelmingly (**85%**) that they support a vaccine requirement for students, faculty, and staff who will be returning to campus this fall. Our members also stressed that the development of this policy should be a collaborative process among all the campus unions and that for those who are unable or unwilling to be vaccinated, appropriate consideration should be given to (a) human rights accommodations (b) those with documented medical conditions (c) robust privacy protections and (d) any impact this may have on our members' workload. Our members also stressed that a vaccine requirement must be recognized as only one part of an overall UPEI mitigation strategy that includes appropriate masking, physical distancing, and attention to indoor air quality.

Based in part on this survey, earlier this week the UPEIFA Executive Committee voted unanimously to support a campus wide vaccination requirement. Please find attached a proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) that we believe adequately balances the concerns of the majority of our members with those who remain hesitant about introducing such a requirement. We encourage you to give this proposal due consideration and to consult with all the relevant stakeholders as you do everything reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of everyone who works, studies, and lives on UPEI campus.

UPEI Ventilation Strategy

In a previous letter (August 3), the UPEI Faculty Association and CUPE-1870 encouraged UPEI Administration to develop a robust and transparent ventilation strategy as an important measure for reducing the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. In our letter, we asked UPEI Administration to provide us with various materials (i.e., reports, inspections, evaluations, etc.) to support your position that every reasonable precaution is being taken to reduce the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19 in our offices, classrooms, and buildings. We look forward to receiving this information at your earliest possible convenience.


Rather than responding directly to the ventilation concerns we raised in our joint letter, UPEI Administration instead distributed a message (August 4) to the entire campus community. Among other things, this message confirmed that because PEI occupational health and safety standards have not been updated to address the new risk associated with airborne transmission of COVID-19, UPEI Administration does not believe it is necessary to make any changes to its ventilation strategy going forward. Given the scientific consensus around the relationship between indoor air quality and

viral loads, we have serious concerns with UPEI's reluctance to update its ventilation strategy in the midst of a global pandemic.

As a framework for meeting indoor air quality challenges in these unique circumstances, we would encourage UPEI Administration to consider using the COVID-19 Ventilation checklist developed by the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (<https://www.upeifa.ca/ohcow-covid-19-ventilation-checklist/>) to identify places where UPEI's ventilation strategy can be improved in the midst of COVID-19. In our view, this would be an important first step in assuring our members as well as the entire campus community that UPEI's ventilation strategy is based on sound scientific evidence about the transmission of this virus.

Once again, given your responsibility for addressing these concerns, we look forward to learning more about your thoughts on these issues and any concrete steps you are taking to assure the entire campus community that UPEI is a healthy and safe place to work, study, and live now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Dr. Michael Arfken
President, UPEI Faculty Association

cc: Dr. Margot Rejskind, Vice President, UPEIFA
Dr. Katherine Gottschall-Pass, VPAR (Interim), UPEI