

UPEI's Residences: slummy or in need of a bigger bucket?

By Thomas Lloyd

Looking through PEI's "Rental of Residential Property Act" I was curious to read about the rights lessees have when it comes to dealing with their landlords. The conditions are laid out very clearly in the copy of the Act which I found on the Legislative Council office web-site. There are ten conditions outlined which touch on rather simple issues which every student renting their home should expect from their landlords.

The first condition is the one that is of the most interest: Condition of Premises. "The lessor (landlord) shall keep the premises in a good state of repair and fit for habitation during the tenancy and shall comply with any enactment respecting health, safety or housing..." As a lessee myself, I simply expect this condition of the Act to be followed, and would expect that any damages to my home be fixed in a timely manner - which of course they are. One PEI, a land-

lord who is in violation of any of these conditions may receive an order to comply from the Island Regulatory and Appeals Rental Board (IRAC). As with many Islander's, I am content in the understanding that my rights are protected by the conditions in the residential property act.

But I wonder, what about my friends in the dorms? I am well aware of the conditions which they face on an ongoing basis. Leaky roofs and damp conditions are proven to lead to mold and horrible air quality problems. How is it that the dorms are maintained at a lower standard? How does UPEI Residence Services escape a Rental Board order to comply? Students do complain, yet little is done. A man walks in and asks if you'd like a bigger bucket to catch the drip coming from your ceiling. This situation doesn't make sense, these students (and future alumni) should not be subjected to such poor living standards, especially when the potential health problems are brought into consideration.

Recently Student Union Prez Brandon MacKenzie went door to door in Blanchard, and heard many concerns from dorm residents, and in particular the state of their health in relation to the ongoing water leak problems. These students expressed frustration with the inaction of their landlords and wondered why UPEI is not complying with the standards established under Provincial Law.

Yet why is UPEI not following Provincial Law? The answer is surprising and appalling. To put it simply, the University of Prince Edward Island does not have to. Talking with Brandon, he discovered that there is a sub-section of the act which lists exempted premises, or those that do not have to adhere to this Provincial law.

The following premises are exempt from the provisions of the Act: premises provided by an educational institution to its students.

It seems dorm students are listed in the company of transition

houses and hostels, group homes under the Welfare Assistance Act and co-operative housing to name a few. Therefore under the "Rental of Residential Property Act," UPEI's residences lawfully do not have to be kept to the same high standards of any other rental accommodations found on PEI.

There is no question that the residences of UPEI are in horrible need of repair. There are obvious benefits to living on campus, especially for out of Province students who do not want to sign a 12-month lease. But at what cost? The price for an 8 month lease is roughly in line with the rental prices found off-campus, but what about the full picture? If your health is being effected, how can the full cost ever be calculated. I just hope that our residence students realize that our Provincial rental laws, which are designed to protect lessees, DO NOT apply to them

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