

## Lost in the shuffle? UPEI removes disabled parking spaces...then replaces them

BYERIN FAGAN

A mistake concerning the removal of disabled parking spaces on campus caused protest earlier this month.

In what Neil Henry, UPEI Vice-President of Finance, described as being "at least partially a mistake," the six handicapped parking spaces outside of Main Building were removed during the summer. This was done in an attempt to restrict traffic entering the campus via that location, says Henry.

Lee Ellen Pottie, a student at UPEI, was concerned and annoyed when she learned of these changes at the university. She proceeded to write letters, addressed to Dr. Elizabeth Epperly, complaining of the situation. These letters were replied by Henry.

"We have enough problems with accessibility on campus without removing those parking spots," she said.

Rose Ellen Berardinelli, a professor of Modern languages, met with Henry to discuss the issue. This discussion helped to bring about a solution to the problem. On Wednesday of this past week, three new parking spots were

reinstalled outside of Main Building.

Henry stated that it was not his intention to make life difficult for anyone.

"Those who addressed the issue to me made it clear that it was not satisfactory. They made it aware how difficult it was, particularly in February, March and April, to travel on campus."

Automated gates will be installed beside the security buildings, and special cards will be given to those who need to use that disabled parking so that they may enter the inter-campus area, Henry said.

Pottie also met with Don Coles, the supervisor of the Physical Plant.

"It really bothers me," she said. "No matter how much I have done to get parking -- backing the issues, and voicing concerns. . . I got the implication [from speaking with Mr. Coles] that as a student I am powerless." She then remarked that it took a faculty member to return these disabled parking spaces.

Pottie also questioned other attitudes on campus regarding the treatment of the

disabled.

"I did speak with someone in student development, and I was informed that if it was needed, security or the physical plant could offer a golf cart for transportation [around campus]," she said.

"Nobody wants a symbol that says 'Look at me, I'm disabled,'" she added. "It is nobody's business but mine, on or off campus, whether or not my doctor feels I need to use handicapped parking."

Berardinelli was quick to note that the placement of parking spaces near every building on campus is not simply a "good" idea.

"It would not be good," she said. "We all must demand to have more spaces around different buildings. It is a right. These are public buildings."

She concluded with a statement she had expressed to Henry.

"It would be a good sign to have many empty handicapped parking spaces [around the buildings]. Then we would know that no one has to use them."

## Better access to UPEI

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Road crews are now working on creating a less dangerous access to the campus off of University Avenue. This joint project, a cooperation between UPEI and the City of Charlottetown, began on Wednesday to construct a safer intersection by which vehicles may enter and exit.

"That road is still a part of the Trans-Canada," stated Neil Henry, UPEI Vice President of Finance. "I believe that about 20,000 vehicles go along the [University] Avenue every day."

"Creating a better entrance and exit at that location will remove the considerable danger in trying to turn left (onto University Avenue)," he added.

The new intersection will be situated where "existing lights are" across from Brown Court. Henry said that it was "accidental that the developer of Brown Court was also interested in the developments."

UPEI is financing all work that occurs within the campus, a quarter of the entire cost of the project.

To this, Henry added that they would "like lights on Belvedere," but that arrangements for this are not in the interests of the city.

In addition to the access roads from the city streets to campus, there are currently extensive changes taking place along the inter-campus roadways of UPEI.

The interest, according to Henry, lies in greatly reducing the traffic along the paved roads interconnecting the buildings, which in the past have been heavily used by students and professors as well as service vehicles. This use of the roads has been posing a danger to pedestrians, and so blocking these routes to non-service use has been enacted over the summer.

"We have placed barriers everywhere we can -- heavy wooden flower boxes. There are at least twenty of them, although we have probably missed a couple," he described.

Special exertion has been made to plug those areas where vehicles have usually been able to enter, such as the area along the Main Building and the access behind the Steele building. The parking spaces at the latter location have been removed, and barricades are now in place to create a strictly "drop-off" location.

Another chief concern is the access located beside the physical plant and security buildings.

Henry said that, particularly surrounding rink events, the place turned into "a real zoo." Parking spaces between the rink and the Sports Centre have been removed, and the area is now restricted to service and utility vehicles.

The final implementation of safer inter-campus access, according to Henry, will be the installation of an automated "arm gate" at the area beside the security building.

"It will be operated by cards, which will be distributed to authorized service vehicles (food and services inclusive) and to those requiring access to disabled parking within the campus," he said.

With all of these safeguards in place, Henry stated that service and Physical Plant vehicles would "have to do work" within the inter-campus area. This traffic, however, will be encouraged to use a certain route throughout the campus, which is currently marked out by yellow dashes, to avoid damage to narrower roads and the land surrounding them. The concern lies in an incident last year, where an individual tripped over the frozen tire tracks embedded in the ground.

