



The Brief

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Acadian Lines won't increase bus service between cities; union fears job losses

By MARYLYNN CÔTÉ

The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1229, the union for Acadian Lines employees, is among many opposed to Acadian Lines' request for a variance of a ruling issued by the Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) on July 16th, 2010. Citing declining ridership and losses of over \$1.6 million in New Brunswick since taking over SMT in 2004, Acadian Lines is asking the EUB to approve their request to not increase service on key corridor routes between Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton.

The union fears that if Acadian Lines does not expand its corridor routes as promised, eight drivers will lose their jobs. In 2009, Acadian told the ATU there would be no job losses as the company made cuts to services.

Glenn Carr, President and Business Agent for the ATU, says his members believe the company's losses are related to "a lack of marketing skills... overall waste of revenues, bad faith labour relations, management practices... incompetent and wasteful dispatch decisions, establishment of isolated and antiquated depot locations, disjunctive management decisions, and disregard to the needs of the traveling public."

In late October, ATU Local 1229 issued a statement concerning Acadian Lines' moves, saying they had "deliberately misled the public and the Energy and Utility Board (EUB) at... previous hearings... The Company had no intentions to increase the corridor service but only to get the EUB approval and to avoid our opposition."

In an application to the EUB last year, the quasi-judicial regulatory body for bus lines, Acadian requested that they be allowed to cut routes and reduce services on their rural routes in the province.

There was widespread opposition to the proposals to cut bus routes and reduce bus services from the Mayors of Miramichi, Bathurst and St. Stephen, the St. Thomas University Students' Union, the UNB Students' Union, the St. Andrews campus of the New Brunswick Community College, the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, the Conservation Council and many concerned citizens.

The EUB denied Acadian Lines' application to cut several bus routes, however they did allow the route to be cut from St. Stephen to Bangor, Maine, and service to be reduced from seven to three days a week on two routes: Fredericton to Miramichi and Saint John to Bangor. Friday and Sunday service from Moncton to Charlottetown was also allowed to be cut and service was allowed to be reduced on the Fredericton to Rivière-du-Loup route.

Many of the same groups involved in the last EUB hearings on Acadian's proposed cuts are again speaking out against Acadian's request for a variance. In a written submission to the EUB, the St. Thomas University Student Union suggested that "part of the decline in ridership could be due to negative publicity surrounding decisions to move the Fredericton bus station to a less accessible location and the application to eliminate entire routes."

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, also in a letter to the EUB, points out that "when Acadian requested a scheduling variance for a second time, no changes [by increasing runs in corridor routes] had been implemented."

The EUB has also received letter submissions in opposition to Acadian's application for variance from Transport Atlantic, a public transportation advocacy group, the Mayors of St. Andrews and St. Stephen, and several citizens.

The Conservation Council says the EUB decision to permit Acadian Bus Lines to reduce service to regions of the province demonstrates the need for government involvement in providing public transportation. "We want the provincial government to establish a Crown agency to develop a public transportation network for New Brunswick," said Raphael Shay, Energy Coordinator at the Conservation Council.

"The Crown agency can look at models in sparsely populated areas such as Southeast Minnesota, where support from government has enabled the Semcac Community Action Agency to operate small buses to provide in and out of town transit. A provincial Crown agency could also help coordinate various forms of transit in order to make transfers easier," proposed Shay.

Intra-city bus services in Saskatchewan have been operated by a Crown corporation since 1946. The Saskatchewan Transportation Company, operating at arm's length from the government, has 28 routes and services 275 communities.

When the EUB will reach a decision on Acadian's variance request is unknown.

Breaking out of the gender binary

By MITCH RAYNER

When I walk around campus you may not notice who I am. My short red hair and broad shoulders adorned with flannel and wide legged jeans cause my slender frame to appear masculine. Any passer-by would honestly confuse me for male and think nothing of it, for which I hold no grudge or frustration.

However, I am currently female, and once the foreseeable awkward confusion occurs I use the opportunity to educate on androgyny and the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

When mistakes are made they are relatively benign, but it took a bloody lip and a rather embarrassing tussle in the ladies room on campus to prompt me to go public.

On countless occasions, I have been carded in public washrooms, pushed around at work, spit on, and labeled a freak, disgusting and morally void. When I stop and think about my own experiences, I realize that this is happening to many others in our community not just myself.

Being accepted to St. Thomas University as a mature student was rather unexpected and exciting. I had visions of finally joining a progressive, open community full of unique and diverse peoples. However, once the second week of classes arrived, I suddenly discovered that my expectations of the University were too high.

Walking into the women's washroom at James Dunn Hall after class detonated an explosive altercation that occurred for no other reason than my presence was unwanted. A fellow student was standing by the sink, watching my entrance; she verbally voiced her discontent of having a male enter the washroom designated for women. After my explanation that biologically I was female, I was called a "faggot" and brought down to the lowest while punched in the lower lip before I could defend myself. Stumbling out of the door I inexplicably began apologizing to her for essentially what I am.

After experiencing this type of humiliation, I have been asked why I insist on using the facility for women rather than men considering I am coming out as transgendered. It simply comes down to a basic question of safety rather than which gender I identify with; if an altercation occurs in a male washroom then I would be far more unlikely to defend myself than in a female facility. Having washrooms clearly marked by gender lines becomes a safety issue for those who fall between, and after paying for an education there is a certain expectation of security of the person.

This is only one example of students who are disadvantaged by the current system; I have witnessed several students accompanied by children on campus, students who are uncomfortable in public change rooms, and students with mobile disabilities waiting for the single accessible facility to become available. These students would also benefit from a wheelchair accessible "family washroom" installed in every building. I understand that there are students who will not be willing to share a facility with the opposite gender, but with the option of a "family washroom" students can choose the place they feel most comfortable and secure.

It seems to me that a university without at least one gender neutral "family washroom" facility in every building, is catering to social ignorance whether it is aware of it or not. When keeping students and staff segregated into strict "male" and "female" roles it fails to grant freedom to all people and cements a clear boundary in the minds of its students. I hope that if these facilities were created that homophobia and ignorance on campus would dissipate and social awareness of gender issues would serve to better the lives of everyone.



Mitch Rayner speaks at a Rally to oppose violence and discrimination at St. Thomas University which was held on November 25th. Students and faculty gathered to show their support for students whose identities don't neatly fit into male or female categories. Rayner, who is biologically female, was recently assaulted by a female student when he used a female washroom. The rally was endorsed by Bullying Canada, STU Students' Union, UNB Students' Union, Faculty Association of the University of St. Thomas, Fredericton Pride, Fredericton Peace Coalition, Unite!, Strax, NB ReBELLEs, the Moncton Transgendered Peer Support Group, Public Service Alliance of Canada-Atlantic, the STU Anthropology Society, UNB Sexuality Centre and AIDS NB. Photo by Dan McDevit.

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