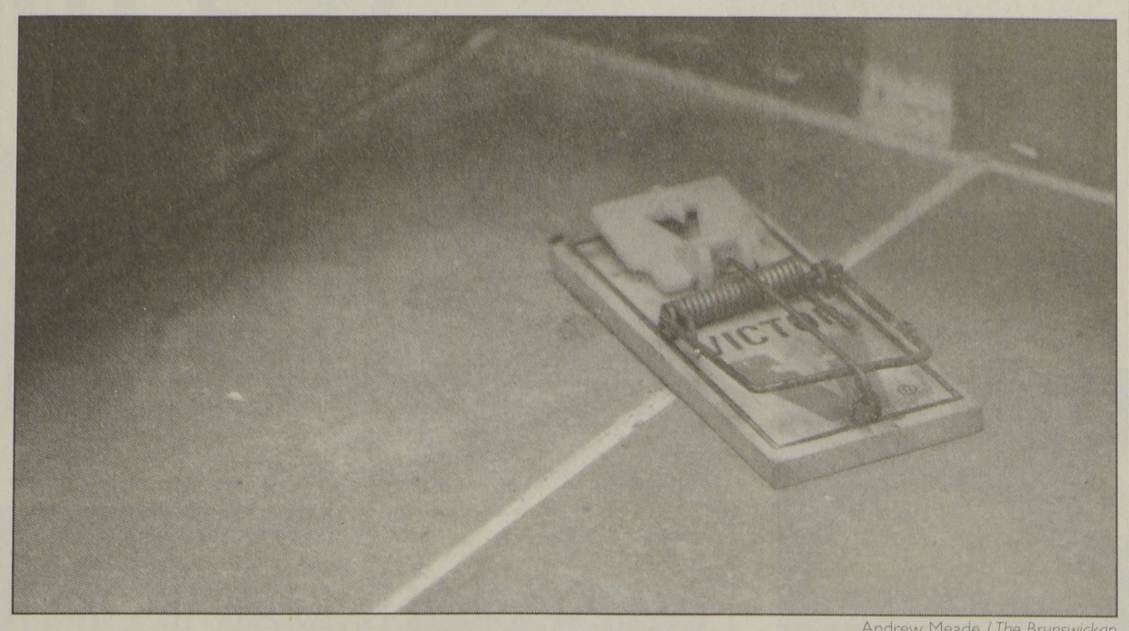
# Mice should not be the norm

*An opinion*
by Josh O'Kane



Andrew Meade / *The Brunswickan*

This mousetrap was found under the cereal rack at McConnell Hall, near one of the prevous entry points for mice at the back doors.

As a proctor in the residence system, I am a thorough believer that residence life can really shape university for a person. I've also put up with the food selection for nearly two and a half years.

I eat at McConnell Hall everyday. Next to no one thinks meal hall food is the greatest in the world. When you're cooking for 500 or more people on a fixed budget, you can't always afford top notch ingredients. Nor can you accommodate 500 individual preferences and tastes. But at the very least, you should expect the food you're eating to be prepared in sanitary conditions.

When I first heard about mice in last week's letter to the editor, at first I was more than just a little disheartened. My first thought was, how could Sodexho let this happen? Multiple mice and mice droppings, last time I checked, were not part of the expanded "choice" that the company touts they provide.

Things started to make a little more sense when I had a chance to speak with Martin Bayliss, General Manager of Sodexho at UNB, and James Brown, Executive Director of RLCCS, who manages the Sodexho contract for the university.

They both offered the same reasoning for the occurrence: that this happens all the time, and that mice can easily get into any building.

At first, this seemed like a reasonable explanation. Mice are tiny creatures, and can fit through the tiniest of holes when it means they don't have to freeze to death.

As someone who reports news and events, I do my best to do so without getting personally involved. But when the sanitation of the food I eat is questioned, I feel that I cannot let this slip by idly. Yes, the health inspector saw all food in sealed packaging, but it has to be unsealed sometime before it gets eaten. Somewhere, somehow, the mice that were found could very well have come into contact with UNB students' food.

Can we accept this in a meal hall where more than 500 people eat every day? 1,500 meals are put on those counters each day, with a possible chance of mice droppings underneath – or for all we know, on – those counters at any given time.

The fact that mice can get into the buildings is not Sodexho's fault. Physical Plant is in charge of the maintenance for the building and, as such, when holes were required to be patched, Physical Plant did their job.

However, the initial inspection was on November 6, and the holes used by mice to enter the facilities were not patched upon re-inspection on November 19. How quickly did Sodexho call Physical Plant? How quickly did Physical Plant respond? Nearly two weeks went by and nothing was done to prevent mice from further entering the building.

We pay nearly $6,000 a year for undergraduate tuition, and residence students pay $3,500 or more annually for the food services they receive as part of their residence fees.

For $9,500, we should not be accepting the status quo that mice could be in any building. On November 6, a dead mouse was found beneath the cereal area. Did you eat cereal, or perhaps toast a bagel that day? How close did you come to that rotting mouse? And for that matter – how long was that mouse sitting there unnoticed?

Even if mice are in every building, as Bayliss and Brown both explain, we should not be accepting them in our dining facilities. Even if it is not Sodexho's building, if they want to keep a reputation of valued customer service, they should be proving they are proactively assuring that the facilities they use are acceptable to the Department of Health: Physical Plant should be immediately notified, and this should be given high priority. Why did two weeks go by before any attempt was made to patch the holes?

UNB should be proactively assuring that all of its services are acceptable, not just waiting for a biannual review or a complaint phone call – given the recent incidents, UNB should be proactively assuring that no mice should enter McConnell unnoticed, or at all. The holes should have been patched immediately, and a deeper look should have been taken to assure that this does not happen again – that mice in dining facilities do not continue to be the status quo.

For $9,500, we should not have to see our dining hall listed as yellow – meaning not up to health code – on the Department of Health website for over half of November.

In a time when UNB's status as a nationally comprehensive university could be at risk, and President John McLaughlin consistently states that he is calling for transformational change to our university system, we should not accept the status quo. It is unfortunate, however, that in 2007, a mouse-free dining hall could also be considered transformational change. We should not let something like this go unnoticed. We should not accept the status quo of mice getting cold and wanting to go indoors.

If you are unhappy with your food service, contact Martin Bayliss and let him know. If you feel uncomfortable with Sodexho as your food provider, contact James Brown, who manages the Sodexho contract. Unless something truly drastic happens, Sodexho will continue to exclusively provide dining services until 2013.

If you are unhappy with your $9,500 status quo, let President John McLaughlin know. A quick trip to unb.ca/ph can get you all the contact info you need.

Or, you can continue to eat your food and sit by idly, wondering how close your plate of fries came to mouse feces this time.

# Graham's Plan for the province: Hope

**ROUSING THE RABBLES**

*by*
Nick Ouellette

Another season of the Legislature is upon us this week and once again Premier Graham has outdone himself. Shawn must think that voters are not paying attention, dim-witted, or just plain dumb, because now he wants them to accept an "action plan" that outlines no actions, no plans, no benchmarks, and no timelines. After reviewing the 91 recommendations made by the province's Self-Sufficiency Task Force, the government last Friday released a report outlining how New Brunswick will become "self-sufficient" by 2026. Just when we thought his plans couldn't be any more vague or devoid of factual information, he releases a plan that amounts to little more than committing to studying it further and hoping the province will fall into good fortune.

Folks, this has gone far enough. The Liberals have been in government for over a year now, and we haven't seen much from them. When they aren't breaking election promises by raising taxes, they're creating buzz words to divert attention from the lack of any real policy discussion.

We have yet to see what exactly Graham plans to do to achieve his lofty goal of "self-sufficiency." The details will come later, he says, but this comes as no real surprise because Graham has yet to define what he means by a "self-sufficient" province. Phrases like "a clear identity within the Canadian federation" sound nice while they're in vogue, and the Premier talks about them so much that he must want them to have meaning. However, the province will be hopeless if it relies on hype alone in moving forward toward "transformational change"—whatever that means.

It's funny we should turn to the idea of hope, though, because that's about all Graham speaks of these days. It's the only indicator he mentioned when introducing his new plan of action, although he bizarrely acknowledged that Statistics Canada has no "hope index" to measure progress.

His words from Saturday's Daily Gleaner speak for themselves: "As government, we have to provide hope for the future. I have faith in our province. I have strong faith in our civil service. And I have every faith in the people of New Brunswick that we will achieve this goal." That's ironic, because the report offers few substantive goals, if any.

Now hope is certainly a powerful thing, and faith can help you along the way, but neither supplants logic, reason, and a concrete outline in securing the economic prosperity of a province. Nothing will suffice short of a vision that includes benchmarks, quantitative criteria, and actual initiatives instead of further studies.

Mr. Graham, for all the hope you purport to bring this province, you have actually done the complete opposite by failing to reject the PSE report. You have paralyzed the students of Saint John with hopeless uncertainty and the stability of our system is quickly melting away. Soon the only hope we'll have left is that you stop using the catch phrase "university presence" before it is too late because every day that you let stand the recommendation to reduce Saint John's university to something other than UNBSJ is another day that our hopes for a quality education in that region erode.

*Nick Ouellette, a UNB law student, has served on the UNB Student Union Council and the UNB Board of Governors, and now serves on the UNB Fredericton Senate and as an Assistant Don in UNB's Residence Community.*

# Bars and their staff deserve your respect

by Julie Marion,
*The Cord Weekly*
*(Wilfrid Laurier University)*

WATERLOO (CUP) -- University is a time where you do endless amounts of school work, but it's also when you do some of the best partying of your life.

After a long day of hitting the books, most students hit the bar for a good night out. These evenings are amusing for those looking to party, but those few hours of craziness are sometimes dreaded by the establishment.

Having waitressed my entire university career, some students are often unaware they're doing things that either put a damper on the night for those providing service to them or just make them laugh and shake their heads.

Take younger students who just can't handle themselves while drinking for instance. They get sloppy and ridiculous, often because they aren't of age in their first year and the bar scene is still new.

There's also the matter of showing respect towards those working. In most university towns, the servers and bartenders are students themselves. While everyone is out drinking, servers are sauntering around with those desperately needed drinks.

It's always interesting to stand back and watch the crowd around the bar and observe the variety of tactics used to catch the bartender's attention. Whistling, crazy arm gestures, a little head nod, leaning right over just to make sure you're seen. Trust me, they see you.

They serve in a manner that's fair to everyone and being obnoxious will get you nowhere. If you're at a bar that lets you grab a table for the night, most likely you'll have someone look after you. They'll run around for you most of the night and keep a tab for your table.

When the cheque comes, you may be surprised by the amount of liquor ingested and some tabs may be higher than you thought. Being a student myself, I understand money is tight at times, but if you can spend $100 drinking with your friends, you've got the money to tip at least 10 per cent if not the regular 15.

You have to pony up at the bar too. If you've ever been to Phil's in Waterloo, you know the sound of cowbell – it's to make sure everyone knows that someone didn't tip. Don't forget, students working at a bar are liquor servers making less than minimum wage.

And to all you aspiring party-vandals: breaking glass and stealing things from a bar is never appreciated, nor is it as funny or awesome as you think it is.

So while you sit in class hungover after a night of irritating me, just remember, I'll be right there beside you, tired from running around all evening.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**JAN. EDITION**

**DROP OFF:** Jan. 7 & 8, 9am to 4pm
**SELL DAYS:** Jan. 9 & 10, 9am to 4pm
**PICK UP:** Jan. 11, 9am to 4pm
Jan. 12, 9am to 12pm

Books will not be tagged by Student Id this semester, instead they will be given a 'book number'. Students will be given a corresponding card containing the 'book numbers' from the books they've dropped off.

Anyone with questions on concerns should contact Bethany Vail at academic@unb.ca

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