

Response to MUNFA Provincial Party Leader Questionnaire

Q1. As the only degree-granting institution in our province, Memorial University plays a central role in all aspects of Newfoundland and Labrador's social, economic, and cultural development. Memorial prepares students for their future roles by developing capacities that can be applied in a range of situations, while fostering the skills necessary to be engaged citizens and adapt to our changing society. Furthermore, investments in post-secondary education pay dividends to the province in a multitude of ways. It is important that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially our political leaders, understand the distinct role of a public university and the value it provides to the province socially, culturally, and economically.

How does your party view the role of Memorial University in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of NL? What will your party do to strengthen this role?

Newfoundland and Labrador's future depends on having informed and educated citizens who contribute to the social, cultural, political and economic development of our province. Our province's post-secondary institutions have a significant part to play in shaping our future. Education is a pre-determinant of health and wellness.

Our post-secondary institutions are expected to meet the learning needs of our community, to inspire students to learn, to help shape a knowledgeable, civil, democratic society, and to cultivate graduates who benefit our society and our economy. Our communities have high expectations that our schools will produce well-educated people who are prepared to fill high skills positions as well as be creative and generate employment that in turn supports our economy.

Memorial University is an economic driver. There is employment generated on the campuses as well as the influx of people to attend these campuses from around the province, the country and the world. Students attend our schools, they rent accommodations, they shop in the community and when they finish, many, whether they are from Newfoundland and Labrador, or elsewhere in the country or beyond, want to stay here, to work here and to raise their families here. Having young people make a home here enriches the social, cultural and economic fabric of our communities.

Our post secondary graduates create employment and as a highly skilled labour force, fill needs for specialised skills and sustain labour force growth.

The Liberal Government considers its investment in post-secondary education as money well spent and is truly supportive of the core missions of our institutions. With over \$362 million to Memorial University, our Government subsidizes 80 percent of the full operating budget, compared to the national average of 47 percent. We continue to provide funds to support the tuition freeze, and that amount has increased each year.

Post-secondary institutions play a key role in growing the provincial innovation economy through entrepreneurial training and new business creation.

Building upon the success of Memorial University's Genesis Centre, Centre for Entrepreneurship and Centre for Social Enterprise, our Government will expand entrepreneurship in Newfoundland and Labrador by creating a focus on entrepreneurship and new business creation in our K-12 schools, Memorial University, and the College of the North Atlantic, providing the education and inspiration for the next generation of innovators and founders.

Q2. *Memorial University has a special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but its ability to keep this promise is increasingly compromised by cuts in provincial funding. Since 2015, Memorial University has seen successive cuts to its operating grant with the most recent provincial budget confirming that forecasted cuts to funding for Memorial University would be implemented, as previously announced. The University has seen an increase in precarious employment and fewer permanent faculty and support staff positions, with an inevitable erosion of Memorial's ability to continue offering high-quality programs to the students of this province. While fiscal challenges can create political pressure to cut government spending, investment in education is widely recognized as one of the most effective economic multipliers. Education levels within a society are also linked to socioeconomic stability, equality and to improvements in public health. In short, access to high quality post-secondary education brings very significant individual and societal benefits. Public post-secondary education and research are critical for a successful transition to a postCOVID, post-fossil fuel economy.*

Will your party commit to increased investments in core operating funding for Memorial to support quality research and education?

Our government has a long-standing commitment to affordable, accessible post-secondary education and we recognize that investing in education is one of the most effective ways to advance the socioeconomic prosperity of our province and its people. We currently provide 80% percent of the university's operating costs compared to the 47% national average of other provinces' contributions. We have invested heavily in post-secondary education in our province because we strongly believe it is foundational to our ability to forge a strong social and economic future.

Q3. *Memorial University is key to the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. Facing an aging, declining population, investments in post-secondary education are one of our province's best immigration strategies. Despite this, years of budget cuts to Memorial University have severely impacted our academic mission of delivering high quality education. We need public post-secondary education that is both accessible and of high quality in order to continue attracting and retaining young people to our province.*

How will your party work to maintain a system of accessible post-secondary education that continues as a key driver for immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador, while ensuring Memorial University's ability to meet its academic mission of delivering high quality education?

International students are key sources of immigration to our province and they contribute enormously to our campuses and communities. The Liberal Government is confident that our post-secondary institutions will continue to be able to attract international students by keeping tuition at levels they can afford. Memorial University is well below national averages for tuition for international students - they pay half the national average for tuition here.

Our Government has now set a goal to triple our provincial immigration target from 1,700 to 5,100 newcomers per year by 2026, aligning with the federal immigration targets. Many of these immigrants will have come here originally to attend our post-secondary institutions. Our efforts will involve expanding opportunities for, and further nurturing a sense of belonging among, newcomers to our Province. This includes working with our federal partners to establish new pathways to permanent residency and citizenship, and investing in programming to increase retention.

Our hope is that many who come here to receive a high-quality education, will stay and work in our province giving back to it as a whole, including as alumni of post-secondary institutions.

Q4. *The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the landscape of our world, our country, and our province in the span of months. Like all post-secondary institutions in Canada, Memorial University was forced to make dramatic changes to our day-to-day operations while working to reduce impact on students' educational opportunities. The pandemic has compounded the effects of many pre-existing problems that Memorial has faced due to sustained budget cuts over recent years, such as an overreliance on precarious workers in the face of reduced faculty complement in many academic units, cuts to academic support staff in many units, and an eroding physical plant.*

How will your party work with the Federal Government to support post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether by leveraging COVID-19 recovery opportunities or otherwise?

COVID-19 has taken a toll on many sectors. Our post secondary institutions are to be commended for stepping up so quickly with online options for our students. The Government congratulates Memorial with having the highest enrollment ever this past September. Our Government has leveraged \$3.1 million so far in the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) and we continue to work on maximizing opportunities for federal funding to support economic recovery in response to COVID 19. We are keenly aware of the deferred maintenance and new construction needs at the university and will continue to work with Memorial University and the federal government explore opportunities to address maintenance and staffing challenges.

Q5. *Students, faculty, and staff at Memorial work and study in significantly aging infrastructure. In the absence of adequate funding, Memorial applies band-aid solutions to occupational health and safety concerns. Long-term neglect of existing infrastructure is putting the physical and mental health of many students and employees at risk, and many facilities are no longer fit for their designated teaching and research purposes. Direct investments by the provincial government to address deferred maintenance at Memorial ended effective the 2015-16 fiscal year.*

What will your party do to address the deferred maintenance, repair and renewal needs of Memorial University?

The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes the importance of infrastructure that is not only safe to occupy but conducive to study and innovation, and hence attractive to prospective students, faculty and researchers. We are committed to exploring with Memorial University ways we can work together to identify and leverage funds from the federal government and other stakeholders to address these pressing needs.

Q6. *Canadian universities traditionally practice collegial (shared) governance without political or private sector interference. Collegial governance means that students, faculty, staff, and administrators share in key decision-making processes. The Canadian Association of University Teachers ranks Memorial University at the bottom among Canadian universities for practices of shared/collegial governance. Memorial is the only university in Canada with no faculty representation*

on its governing board, putting the Memorial University Act out of sync with widely accepted standards of collegial governance.

What will your party do in its commitment to improving the collegial governance and autonomy of Memorial University?

Our Liberal Government values diversity of representation and skill set on the Board of Regents, which is currently composed of 17 general members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (LGIC), including the Board Chair and three joint Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic (CNA) representatives; four student members also appointed by the LGIC and who represent the students unions; six members elected by the Alumni Association; and three members who sit on the Board by virtue of their office (the Chancellor, President, and the Provost/Vice-president (Academic) of MUN).

The general members appointed by LGIC are selected from recommendations made by the Independent Appointments Commission, an independent body established by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide merit-based recommendations for appointments to entities like the Board of Regents.

The merit-based appointment process is open and accessible and ensures the people appointed have the necessary qualifications and are reflective of the population they serve.

Our Government is proud to have enshrined the independence of the Independent Appointments Commission in legislation to ensure merit based appointments. That said, we welcome dialogue with Memorial University on ways to improve collegial governance and autonomy.

Q7. The Province's over-reliance on the fossil fuel industry combined with the cost of the Muskrat Falls project has pushed our province into a state of great uncertainty even as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing problems here. These include a lack of accessible childcare, the vulnerability of workers in minimum wage jobs with inadequate security and benefits, and the difficulty of accessing primary health care in many rural and Northern NL communities.

What will your party do to make Newfoundland and Labrador the kind of inclusive and equitable society that will make our province the kind of place where graduates of PSE can imagine settling?

The first budget of the Furey Government put affordable childcare at the forefront and managed to have it implemented almost immediately on January 1, 2021. Affordable childcare allows parents access to the workforce while providing safe and nurturing environments for their children. We have also taken a formula-based approach to the minimum wage and have tied it to the Consumer Price Index, the most widely used indicator of inflation, to help ensure adjustments will keep pace with price changes. This also ensures that workers as well as employers such as small businesses can appropriately plan for these increases.

The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador shares as a top priority primary care reform. Collaborative models of primary care are supported by research. They result in improved outcomes for individuals and increased satisfaction for health care providers.

COVID has caused a disruption in health care of sorts, accelerating our work in the field of virtual care. We need to make the most of this disruptive opportunity to reimagine and reinvent how we deliver primary care around the province so that it's meeting the needs of our citizens. Our low population density in Newfoundland and Labrador makes health care delivery challenging. Expanding eHealth initiatives and integrated health care teams will help address that demographic challenge.

We are committed to advancing the well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and reimagining what healthcare means in our province. This is the purpose of establishing Health Accord NL, which will examine the social determinants of health and balancing hospital and community based care.

Under the Furey Government, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development will undertake a review of existing actions related to housing and food insecurity, poverty reduction and will lead development of a renewed strategy to reduce poverty in consultation with stakeholders, experts and community leaders. Of immediate concern are single parents and seniors in poverty who have been particularly negatively impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Government will create InvestNL, a one-stop trade desk for investors to access opportunities in the Province. This online portal will provide companies and entrepreneurs with the access to customers and investors on an international level, helping them prosper here at home.

The Furey Government will invest in technology literacy and entrepreneurship in education to create a new generation of innovators who not only will create start-ups and jobs but solutions to pressing and evolving challenges like climate change.

Building on our province's global reputation for hospitality and openness, the Liberal Government will work to position Newfoundland and Labrador as a national leader on immigrant settlement and retention. Our efforts will involve expanding opportunities for newcomers to the province and further nurturing a sense of belonging.

We will put forth every effort to make Newfoundland and Labrador a desirable, affordable place for young people to live and work. And we value and need Memorial University, and the faculty who make it a world class institution, in helping us achieve this vision.