

NEWS RELEASE

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MUNFA RESPONDS TO BOARD OF REGENTS REPORT ON AUTONOMY OF THE UNIVERSITY

Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association (MUNFA) is pleased to see the release of the Report of the *ad hoc* Committee of the Board of Regents at Memorial University of Newfoundland entitled *Balancing Autonomy and Accountability*. Given our frequently stated concerns for university autonomy and noninterference by government in university affairs, we are hopeful the provincial government will see the wisdom and value of adopting each of the report's recommendations.

We saw last year the negative impact on the university's stature and reputation from government becoming prematurely involved in the process leading to the appointment of the university's president. As the report points out, MUN is one of a small minority of universities in Canada where government directly participates in the selection of the university's president. MUN is clearly out of step with practices common to most universities across Canada. MUNFA reiterates its call for the appointment of MUN's president to be vested with the Board of Regents in consultation with the University Senate.

The report also calls attention to critical issues related to the constitution of the Board of Regents. We agree that the Board and university community would be positively served by a process whereby the Board of Regents appoints its own chairperson, and by having academic staff representation on the Board of Regents. The former further contributes to the autonomy of the university. Having representation by academic staff members on the Board provides a logical balance to representation on the Board of Regents of students and alumni.

Finally, we welcome the recommendation that removal of Board members should be permitted only when recommended by the Board itself. The removal by government of four Board members in December 2008 and one member in January 2009 further compromised the autonomy of the university. The optics suggest the Board of Regents lacks independence from government, and tells a Board member holding a view different from government that s/he risks being dismissed and replaced by a member that will support government's agenda.

MUNFA shares with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and others in the university community (administrators, staff, students, and alumni), a desire for MUN to be a world-class institution – vibrant, innovative, and an academic leader in Canada. Implementing the *ad hoc* committee's recommendations will go a long way in restoring MUN's positive reputation and will emphasize government's commitment for MUN to have the same autonomy as enjoyed by most universities across Canada.

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