

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: May 20, 2020

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Town Hall: Next Steps**

MUNFA's COVID-19 Town Hall on May 7th, 2020 was an important opportunity for Academic Staff Members (ASMs) to come together, share problems, ask questions, and offer each other support. Nearly 100 ASMs attended, and the conversations that took place were immensely helpful in informing MUNFA's plans and priorities moving forward.

ASMs in attendance identified concerns related to promotion and tenure, remote course delivery, the challenges of working while caring for dependents, and the impact the current situation is having on their mental health. As well, many attendees expressed how reassuring it was to learn that they are not alone, and that many of their colleagues are facing similar challenges.

Our team of volunteers and staff is now developing a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to provide answers related to many of the concerns raised in the town hall or communicated to us by members through other means. The FAQ will be a living document that will be updated as more information becomes available. We also plan to provide further avenues for engagement among ASMs soon, so that we can respond to issues as they change with the University's response to the pandemic.

What we heard at the Town Hall reinforced the need to go back to the administration with specific proposals for addressing key issues affecting our members. These proposals include: providing reasonable access to offices and labs; supports for moving necessary equipment from campus to an ASM's home; a commitment to maintaining class size limits during a shift to remote delivery; a recognition of the increased workload that comes with remote instruction; training for ASMs to support remote teaching; appropriate flexibility in the Promotion and Tenure process; assurances that contractual ASMs will not lose pay for cancelled course sections and will be compensated for work done to prepare courses prior to the start of teaching; flexibility around sabbatical leaves; and reasonable access to printing services and to library resources. It is our position that agreement on these items is feasible with the appropriate will and will benefit ASMs, our students and the University as a whole.

While we expect some matters in our proposals to involved difficult negotiations, we are somewhat encouraged by our engagement with the administration on a related issue. As noted in a previous [Information Bulletin](#), the MUNFA Executive has sought agreement with the administration that

neither Party shall initiate collective bargaining in the current calendar year. Since the town hall, the MUNFA Executive has had some productive exchanges with Faculty Relations in regard to this matter. Stay tuned for updates!

If you have concerns or questions about employment-related issues, please contact the MUNFA Office (munfa@mun.ca) as soon as possible.