

MUNFA’s Take On

the 2023 Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Budget

MUNFA is deeply disappointed by the lack of respect for public post-secondary education evident in the provincial government’s 2023 budget announcement. This most recent cut makes it clear that no matter what evidence is presented to this government about the substantial and positive economic benefits of this province’s only university, they will act to undermine Memorial’s special obligation to the people of this province.

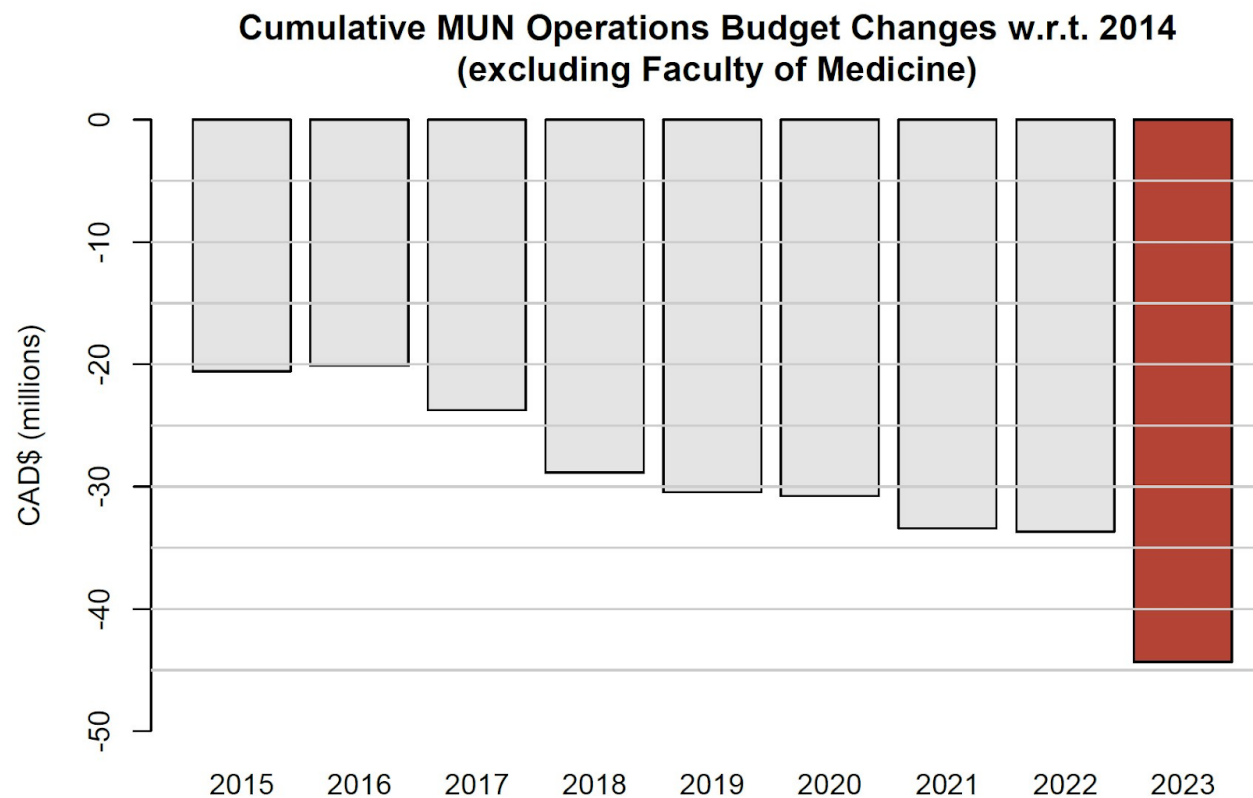


Figure 1. Government has cut MUN’s operating grant every year since 2015. These cuts increased significantly this year by ~\$10 million, resulting in a cumulative loss of \$45 million. (Source: Dr. Peña-Castillo, professor; used with permission)

According to Finance Minister Siobhan Coady, the \$10-million cut to the university’s operating grant was due to a request from MUN’s senior administration for permission to raise tuition fees. These cuts are a blatant act of contempt toward students and their families, further jeopardizing access to quality post-secondary education and prospects for a future in this province.

Neither the faculty association nor the student unions were consulted on senior administration’s “request” to raise tuition, in what appears to be its ongoing and misguided attempt to turn the

public good of post-secondary education into a private commodity affordable only for a privileged few.

As Newfoundland and Labrador's sole university, Memorial needs to offer a broad range of programs across the arts, sciences, and humanities to ensure continued flourishing of the rich and diverse culture for which this province is internationally celebrated and renowned. These courses of study, along with the programs that train the future healthcare professionals and tech experts that the Furey government seeks to attract, combine to help shape the vibrant culture of our province.

The dire fiscal restraints imposed by recent budgets, tell us that the provincial government falsely assumes the university can be cut to the bone and still continue to deliver standards of excellence in teaching and research. It's time for government to put down the scalpel.

By casting the university only ever as a drain on the public purse, instead of an investment in the futures of generations to come and a source of public good, the government jeopardizes the quality of education available to students, and therefore the health and wellbeing of the province.

Memorial has demonstrated time and again that it brings substantial economic gains to the province, and our graduates and professors produce rich and diverse scholarship in the sciences, arts, and humanities. This scholarship and cultural production plays a significant role in making the province a great place to live. It is one of the significant reasons for why people come to Newfoundland and Labrador and why we choose to stay. As was evident in the substantial public support demonstrated for MUNFA during the strike, the people of this province care deeply about their university.