

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, November 14, 2018

MUN-MUNFA Contract Talks Reach Impasse Over Job Security

Collective bargaining between Memorial University’s faculty union, MUNFA, and the university’s administration reached an impasse last week after a year of negotiations. The main outstanding issue is job security for contract academic staff.

“MUNFA entered bargaining with the goal of building equity and protecting the integrity of the province’s only university,” said MUNFA President, Robin Whitaker. “A central issue for us was a fairer deal for our most vulnerable members. Some of them have been teaching at MUN for 15 or 20 years on short-term contracts. They have no job security and little chance of being made permanent. We don’t think that’s acceptable.”

At Memorial, instructors on limited contracts teach about half of all courses.

“The university clearly depends on their work,” Whitaker said. “Yet, they can never be sure they’ll be rehired after their contract ends.”

MUNFA proposed a seniority-based right of first refusal for qualified contract academics. This provision would give contract faculty a measure of security without costing the university anything. The university administration initially agreed to this proposal, but withdrew it from their final offer to MUNFA.

“Continual insecurity is not good for anyone,” said Whitaker. “It’s obviously not good for our contract colleagues. But students also lose out if an inspiring professor is not around to mentor and advise them from one term to the next. And the whole university loses if colleagues can’t help develop programs because they don’t know if they’ll be here to run them or if they lack the security to try new approaches.”

“This is not about money for us,” Whitaker said, noting that MUNFA’s Negotiating Committee had previously agreed to take a three-year salary freeze. “We are fighting for changes that would make Memorial fairer and better.”

MUNFA is part of a wave of faculty unions fighting the casualization of academic work, a trend documented by recent research from the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

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