

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: August 7, 2017

SUBJECT: **Canada 150 Chairs at Memorial University**

The MUNFA Executive Committee would like to update MUNFA members on our position regarding Memorial's participation in the Canada 150 Chairs Program.

In July, the University approached MUNFA with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) asking MUNFA to agree to vary the search procedures set out in Article 7 of the Collective Agreement (CA) with respect to the recruitment of Canada 150 Chairs.

Foremost among the requested variances, as many Academic Staff Members (ASMs) know, the Canada 150 Chairs program is restricted to scholars working and residing outside of Canada. Other requested variances reflect the program's tight time frame. Thus, the University proposed bypassing search committee elections in favour of a committee fully appointed by senior administrators, and waiving provisions for consultation during the interview process as laid out in CA 7.21 (j).

After extensive discussion by MUNFA's Executive and its Academic Freedom and Grievance Committee, the union agreed to sign the MoU provided the University agreed to restrict the applicant pool to researchers who self-identify as members of the target groups defined in Article 29: women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities. MUNFA reasoned that this provision would help rectify documented failures of equity in the Canada Research Chairs Program.

The University replied that the Canada 150 Chairs "open search" requirements precluded them from agreeing to this condition. Ultimately, MUNFA signed the MoU with some modifications designed to safeguard the Search Committee's role in the process (<http://munfa.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Canada-150-Research-Chair-Program-17.07.24.pdf>). As stated in our cover letter:

"It is with great reluctance that MUNFA agrees to a search procedure that requires so many variances to the Collective Agreement. We also have serious misgivings about many aspects of the Canada 150 Research Chairs program itself. In light of these significant concerns, we sign this

MoU on a ‘*Without Prejudice*’ basis only out of respect for the work that MUNFA members have already put into this program and to ensure that our colleagues are not disadvantaged.”

MUNFA’s position is that the Canada 150 Chairs Program is a wrong-headed strategy for reinvigorating Canadian research and for increasing equity and diversity in the academy. Moreover, it will do nothing to counter unfortunate long-term trends clearly documented in the 2017 report: *Investing in Canada’s Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research* (<http://www.sciencereview.ca/eic/site/059.nsf/eng/home>).

Also known as the Naylor Report after its Chair, David Naylor, a central recommendation of this Government of Canada-commissioned report is to reinvigorate funding for investigator-led research, which has steadily lost ground relative to priority-driven targeted research in Canada. Likewise, the Naylor Report notes that funding for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows has not kept pace with inflation or with the size of applicant pools. As with funding for basic research, Canada is lagging behind peer nations. Early career researchers, those focused on basic research, social scientists and humanists, as well as women and other underrepresented groups appear to have been particularly disadvantaged by the current regime of research funding.

MUNFA contends that, instead of funding 15-35 non-renewable positions under the Canada 150 Chairs program, a federal government truly committed to fostering research and equity in Canadian Universities would increase funding for basic research and graduate and postdoctoral fellowships.

We urge Memorial to join forces with other Canadian universities to put pressure on government to implement the Naylor Report recommendations.