

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: June 30, 2021

SUBJECT: MUN's Bargaining Offer

On June 1, MUNFA received a proposal from the administration to renew our Collective Agreement (CA) for two years ([the offer is outlined here](#)). The MUNFA Executive has serious reservations about the offer and is eager for members' feedback. This bulletin outlines the administration's offer and the Executive's concerns and describes how members can express their view of these proposals to the Executive.

The Offer

The Memorial University administration's offer includes salary increases for all ASMs of 2 % across-the-board in each year ([Appendix A, no. 2](#)). However, the package also mandates that MUNFA accept changes to post-retirement benefits for any ASM hired after Aug. 31, 2021 ([Appendix A, no. 4](#)). The changes include paying a larger proportion of post-retirement life insurance and supplementary health and dental benefits premiums, and agreeing to establish a Joint Committee to explore joint trusteeship of the group benefit plans ([Appendix A, no. 3](#)). The offer also stipulates changes to the amount of pensionable service required to qualify for post-retirement benefits ([Appendix A nos. 3-6](#)).

As outlined in the administration's covering letter, this offer is a "take-it-or-leave-it" package, which precludes accepting only particular parts of the package or engaging in significant negotiations on the package's terms. In addition, if MUNFA accepts the package, there would be no bargaining on other issues in the CA – the existing CA would simply be renewed, save for the limited changes described in this package.

This package in part reflects wider attempts by the Province to reduce the cost of post-retirement benefits in the public sector, which have been rising due to increases in life expectancy and increases in the costs of pharmaceuticals and supplemental health services. The new requirements would reduce the proportion of union members who qualify for these benefits, as well as requiring future members to pay a greater proportion of premiums. We understand from the administration that MUN has also presented this package to two other campus unions: NAPE and CUPE.

MUNFA Executive's View

On the one hand, most ASMs have not received a salary increase beyond regular progression steps and equity adjustments for several years. On the other, accepting changes to post-retirement benefits for any ASM hired after Aug. 31, 2021 would effectively create a new class of ASMs in our bargaining unit, one defined by inferior working conditions. Such inequality carries the risk of undermining the long-term solidarity among MUNFA members that is the critical source of power for organized labour.

Second, the package creates serious new vulnerabilities for future and existing contractual ASMs, whether regular or teaching term. Being rehired after Aug. 31, 2021 would redefine such ASMs as “Newly Hired Employees” ([Clarification Point 6](#)) and, as such, would make them ineligible for current post-retirement benefits. Clarification from Faculty Relations indicates that an existing contractual ASM must have 5 years of continuous employment without a break of more than 4 months to qualify for more costly post-retirement benefits. Furthermore, all ASMs hired after Aug. 31, 2021, including contractual ASMs, must have at least 15 years of pensionable service at MUN to be eligible for any post-retirement benefits whatsoever.

In short, this proposal puts our contractual members at continuous risk of eroded working conditions, given that any break greater than four months renders them “new” employees. It will also be much harder to ask these or any new MUNFA members to stand with existing members in the future if the administration asks for concessions that target longstanding ASMs.

More generally, the MUNFA Executive is concerned about the ethics of agreeing to eroded benefits changes that would apply only to future members, people who by definition do not have a voice in, much less a vote on, the decision.

Finally, agreeing to roll over the existing CA for two years also means delaying our chance to bargain for changes that would enhance equity, support Indigenization and decolonization, improve workplace accommodations, and secure commitments to universal design and to climate mitigation on our campuses.

Tell Us What You Think

Can we do better? Can we do something different, something that will not sell-out future ASMs and will leave us stronger and more united? Can we bargain for a new CA that will not put contractual staff at continual risk, even after we secured them a measure of security by obtaining the right of first refusal in the last round of collective bargaining? We think so, but we need to hear from you. After all, you are MUNFA.

The MUNFA Executive will be holding two virtual town halls to hear directly from members. To register to attend, click you’re preferred date below:

- [Thursday, July 15th – 10:00am-12:00pm](#)
- [Tuesday, July 20th – 2:00pm-4:00pm](#)

If you can’t make it to either of the town halls, feedback can be sent along to the MUNFA Office, munfa@mun.ca.