

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: August 10, 2021

SUBJECT: Update on Fall Return to Campus

As COVID-19 restrictions within Newfoundland and Labrador and on Memorial's campuses continue to lift we have heard from many Academic Staff Members (ASMs) who are concerned about the return to campus in the Fall. We encourage any ASM with concerns/suggestions/feedback to communicate them directly to your Administrative Head and also to the MUNFA Office, munfa@mun.ca.

MUNFA is currently in communication with the senior administration, advocating for the reinstatement of the mask mandate on our campuses. Despite NL vaccination rates moving in a positive direction overall, we are mindful that the lowest uptake is in 18-29 year-olds. We also anticipate an influx of students to the province travelling from jurisdictions where vaccination rates are lower, and who may have been exposed to new, more transmissible variants. We have heard from ASMs with small children, or other family members who are unable to be vaccinated that the change to the mask mandate is incredibly distressing.

In addition to a request to maintain a mask mandate, MUNFA is pushing the administration to implement a more aggressive vaccination campaign. This includes significantly increased promotion of vaccination to students, online links to vaccine clinics, and an increased provision of walk-in vaccination clinics. As well, MUNFA is encouraging the administration to communicate directly with international students who may not have MCP coverage and are uncertain about their options, letting them know where they can get vaccinated.

Although we recognize that public health guidelines continue to change, we encourage ASMs who believe their health, or the health of a family member, are at risk to follow [the procedure outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) for the right to refuse work. If you encounter challenges with this process, please contact our office, munfa@mun.ca.

In addition to the above noted health concerns, MUNFA recognizes the increased workload associated with a possible rapid transition from on-campus teaching to remote teaching if public health guidelines are required to change. To this effect, MUNFA proposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the administration that stated:

“In the event that the COVID-19 pandemic or other public health emergency requires an ASM to change course delivery from on-campus to remote format during the 2021-22 Academic Year, the ASM shall be compensated with one (1) course remission to be used in a future semester of the ASM's choosing.”

On July 14, 2021 the administration informed MUNFA that the University declined to sign the MOU. Despite this we encourage ASMs to document and inform their Administrative Head of any increase in workload due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that this is a stressful time for many and encourage ASMs to take advantage of supports in our current benefits plan such as the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP). The EAP is a comprehensive, confidential service available to Memorial employees, retirees and their immediate family members (provided they are also covered under the university's health plan) at no cost, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Individuals with urgent mental health concerns should avail of one of the following community-based services:

- 24-hour mental health crisis line: (709) 737-4668 (local) or 1-888-737-4668 (province-wide).
- Mobile Crisis Response Team: 1-888-737-4668 St. John's Region.
- 24-hour Walk-in Psychiatric Assessment Unit at the Waterford Hospital Site on Waterford Bridge Road: (709) 777-3021 or (709) 777-3022.
- A Doorways Clinic – locations throughout the province.
- Bridge the gApp – <https://www.bridgethegapp.ca>