

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: September 24, 2021

SUBJECT: Revisions to the *Memorial University Act*

The Public Post-Secondary Education Review report, “[All Hands on Deck](#)” and the Premier’s Economic Recovery Team’s report, “[The Big Reset](#)” both recommended revisions to the *Memorial University Act*, the legislation governing Memorial University. MUNFA recently learned that the provincial government is already moving ahead with the legislative review. Although the substance of revisions has yet to be revealed, the MUNFA Executive Committee has significant concerns surrounding the process for such revisions.

In a meeting on September 2, 2021, between MUNFA Executive members and Dr. Vianne Timmons, we were made aware that the provincial government plans to **finalize revisions to the Act in the Fall sitting of the House of Assembly** and that there appear to be no intentions to consult with any parties beyond the Memorial University Board of Regents. Following this meeting, on September 15, 2021, the [MUNFA Executive wrote to Tom Osborne, Minister of Education](#), expressing concern with the compressed timeline, the lack of a meaningful process for consultation, and the lack of transparency surrounding the substance of these revisions.

On September 16, 2021, MUNFA was copied on a letter from Dr. Timmons to Minister Osborne responding to our concerns. Dr. Timmons wrote that “officials from the university and [the Department of Education] have been working together over the past several months to provide meaningful input into the process on behalf of Memorial’s Board of Regents.” She went on to say that “The responsibility is clearly with the authority of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents, and ... the most appropriate channel for any group internal to Memorial to share concerns or feedback is through the Office of the Board.”

On September 21, 2021, [the MUNFA Executive sent a follow-up letter to Minister Osborne](#) challenging Dr. Timmons’ assertion that the Board of Regents is an appropriate gatekeeper for feedback on revisions to the *Memorial University Act*, and noting that MUNFA is not a “group internal to Memorial” but the independent and sole bargaining agent for full-time Academic Staff Members at the University.

As we said to Minister Osborne in our letter of September 15, the university community holds openness, collegiality, and shared decision making to be core values of the academy. Considering that the *Memorial University Act* has a direct impact on our institution’s highest governance bodies, the Board of Regents and Senate, these key principles should be reflected in any legislative revision process.

Furthermore, given Memorial University's special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and as the only public university in the province, the process to consider revisions to the *Memorial University Act* should include broader consultation to ensure all stakeholders are heard. The daily lives of everybody in this province are affected by Memorial graduates and so the stakes of getting this process right, and being seen and trusted to get it right, cannot be overstated.

Although MUNFA's efforts thus far have focused on addressing concerns about the process for revisions to the *Memorial University Act*, we welcome feedback from our members on the substance of such revisions. Feedback can be directed to our office, munfa@mun.ca, and will be used to support the preparation of MUNFA's submission to this process.

As the above issue is directly related to governance concerns within the University, we want to remind members that MUNFA recently struck a new [Governance Working Group](#) to address the erosion of collegial governance and shared-decision making at Memorial University. ASMs interested in participating should contact MUNFA's Organizing, Membership Engagement, and Communications Coordinator, Travis Perry, at membership.munfa@mun.ca.