



September 15, 2021

The Hon. Tom Osborne  
Minister of Education  
P.O. Box 8700  
Confederation Building  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Osborne:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association (MUNFA) Executive Committee, representing the more than 800 full-time academic staff members at the university, regarding the upcoming revisions to the Memorial University Act.

We are happy to see your Government move forward with revisions to the Act, in particular to allow faculty representation on the Board of Regents; however, we have serious concerns about the very compressed timeline and apparent lack of a meaningful process for consultation and the consequent secrecy surrounding these revisions. It is our understanding that your Government plans to finalize revisions to the Act in the Fall sitting of the House of Assembly and that there are currently no intentions to consult beyond the Memorial University Board of Regents and Senior Administration. Given Memorial University's special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and as the only public university in our province, we urge the Government to open this process for further consultation to ensure all stakeholders are heard.

Revisions to such an important piece of legislation, the basis for key governance structures at Memorial University, should not be unduly rushed nor should discussions on it happen behind closed doors. As members of the University community, we hold openness, collegiality, and shared decision making as core values of the academy. Considering the Memorial University Act has a direct impact on Memorial's highest governance bodies, the Board of Regents and Senate, these key principles should be reflected in any legislative revision process.

The Public Post-Secondary Education Review Committee made clear that revisions to the Memorial University Act should be approached very carefully and that the legislation should be opened up only if certain critical conditions are in place. These are spelled out in the following excerpt from their report, "All Hands on Deck":

*Consultations with several past presidents and board chairs of universities and colleges that have undertaken reviews of their respective legislation caution that opening of the governing acts should not be considered unless several conditions are in place: a good and trusting relationship exists between the government and the governing bodies of the institutions; an understanding of the purposes and scope of the review is agreed upon by all parties; and, a statement of guiding principles for how the discussions will proceed has been endorsed by both the institutions and the government departments overseeing the review of the relevant legislation.*

MUNFA is not convinced that these conditions have been secured. It is not clear to us that there has been a discussion or agreement between the University and your Government on the scope and aim of revisions or the guiding principles for how discussions will proceed. If there is a clear understanding of the purposes

and scope of revisions, or a statement of guiding principles, we would ask that they be shared with our office.

Given the importance of Memorial University to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador we ask that you give our request for broader consultation serious consideration. Getting it right is much more important than getting it done fast. Memorial University is one of the flagship institutions of Newfoundland and Labrador. The daily lives of everybody in this province are affected by MUN graduates, from health and education professionals to engineers, to poets, songwriters, and playwrights. The stakes of getting this process right, and being seen and trusted to get it right, cannot be overstated.

We welcome a response

Sincerely,



Josh Lepawsky, PhD  
President, MUNFA

cc. Honourable Andrew Furey, Premier  
Dr. Vianne Timmons, Memorial University President  
Memorial University Board of Regents