

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: May 27, 2022

SUBJECT: **Newfoundland Auditor General's Report**

On April 4, 2022, the provincial government announced that before the process to revise the *Memorial University Act* could proceed further, the Office of the Auditor General would be undertaking a comprehensive review of operations and spending at Memorial University. While this has precedent, it appears set to be more wide-ranging than previous similar investigations. This has worried some members, who have raised concerns about further encroachments on the university's autonomy. The MUNFA executive committee also has heard and shared concerns about the provincial government's apparently unilateral announcement that several faculties in health and health-related fields would be amalgamated. The latter is especially concerning for how it appears to violate both the autonomy of the university and the Memorial University Act.

While the MUNFA Executive shares these concerns and will continue to defend the university's autonomy, the Auditor General's Report will surely provide greater transparency on decisions made by senior administration and the Board of Regents. Greater financial transparency from the university is a boon to all workers and students and should be the default for any institution that truly values collegial governance. Knowing more about the finances and operations of our workplace will allow for more meaningful participation in the shared decision-making processes that affect the core teaching, research, and service missions of the university.

Looking to jurisdictions elsewhere, MUNFA Executive wishes to direct members' attention to the Ontario Auditor General's preliminary report into the solvency issue at Laurentian University. ([That report can be viewed here.](#)) In addition to clearly stating the need for greater financial transparency, Ontario's AG writes that "universities are crucial institutions in democratic societies... [that] thrive when governments ensure they can maintain a high degree of academic independence." MUNFA Executive concurs with that statement, and with the further claim that "mechanisms need to be set up that both respect universities' academic independence and prevent them from falling so deep into financial distress that the situation negatively affects students, faculty and staff." We call on MUNL's administration take a more active role in advocating this position to the broader community. Meanwhile, MUNFA continues to organize and advocate for the university as a public good.

As always, we welcome members' feedback and concerns.

We are MUNFA.