

TO: All MUNFA Members
FROM: MUNFA Executive Committee
DATE: October 17, 2022
SUBJECT: Statement on Administration's Use of Confidentiality Agreements

MUNFA has learned that many members who have volunteered for various committees at Memorial University, such as advisory committees to senior administration and a variety of search committees, have been required to sign confidentiality agreements in order to take part. Some of these documents include language requiring ASMs to “agree to return all printed material including personal notes made during this process or a summary thereof... at the last meeting or the following business day, unless authorization is granted in writing by [date]” and suggesting that the agreements are in force “into perpetuity.” While it is unclear as to the real legal force of such documents, MUNFA finds the use of such language worrying. It places ASMs in a vulnerable position and undermines any notion of collegial governance.

MUNFA wishes to advise members that there is no obligation to sign such agreements. In fact, MUNFA has grieved the fact that these censorship measures are even considered necessary (click here to view grievance letter). In the context of a major, publicly funded Canadian institution; an organization that claims to value equitable, transparent, and accountable collegial governance; and one that is a signatory to a collective agreement that enshrines and protects academic freedom, including the fact that academic freedom “includes the right to discuss and criticize policies and actions of the University and the Association and protects against the imposition of any penalty by either Party for exercising that right,” the need for such agreements should be anathema to all MUNFA members and the university administration alike.

MUNFA continues to advocate for members' rights in this area and is working to get a comprehensive picture of how prevalent these agreements are. If you are presented with such an agreement, please contact MUNFA at munfa@mun.ca.