

Dear members of the Board of Regents:

In light of the recent announcement that Dr. Timmons' appointment is being ended on a "without cause" basis — despite the allegations that led to her voluntary leave of absence — MUNFA calls on the Board of Regents to do two things: first, to conduct an independent investigation into the alleged false claims of Indigenous identity, and second, to reform and make public the next presidential search. This is an opportunity to demonstrate a genuine commitment to both the goals of reconciliation and the core mission of the university. The administration and the Board of Regents have yet to apologize for what has happened here. Dr. Timmons' tenure has not been a success in general, but the scandal regarding her claims to indigeneity has harmed many people — we feel deeply sorry to Indigenous members of the community that the university has caused these harms.

MUNFA unequivocally supports the work that the Office of Indigenous Affairs and the Indigenous Advisory Committee have been doing to address the harms this situation is causing for Indigenous members of the Memorial community and the province more broadly. Their work is of vital importance. We believe that to support reconciliation, the Board of Regents must also engage an expert on Indigenous identity to conduct an independent investigation, as other universities have done, into alleged false claims of Indigenous identity and their broader implications. Memorial cannot investigate itself.

To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, the Board of Regents must commit to collegial governance by ending secret searches and the use of executive search firms. The administration and Board of Regents must take responsibility for the failures of its processes and commit to making meaningful change. The university community must be involved in the next presidential search. Presidential searches must be carried out publicly in the same way as other administrative positions at the university. MUNFA also believes that the addition of faculty members to the Board of Regents will be crucial to this process — a request that has already been supported by the provincial government.

It is important to be clear that termination of the president in no way relieves the Board's responsibility to acknowledge the detrimental and long-lasting impact of Dr. Timmons' actions on the Memorial University community, nor absolve it of accountability for the processes underlying that harm. MUNFA is committed to pursuing these demands to ensure that we fulfill our obligation to the people of this province by providing the core mission of the University, voicing our concerns, and providing a meaningful path to change.

Sincerely,
MUNFA Communications Committee

April 6, 2023