

TO: All MUNFA Members
FROM: MUNFA Executive Committee
DATE: August 30, 2023
SUBJECT: Housing Concerns for Students

As many of our members noticed, the August 15, 2023 edition of NEWSLINE informed the Memorial community that a significant number of the 400 new international students arriving in August and September are in need of affordable housing options. This is not surprising given the housing crisis in St. John's. However, the email - strikingly - requested faculty and staff to consider renting their available spaces to these students.

We see this request as a blatant attempt to download the city's housing crisis and the cost of living crisis facing students onto the backs of faculty and staff. This is especially concerning as [letters from 2021](#) show that Memorial's VP Administration & Finance lobbied against the development of more affordable housing units in St. John's. Housing concerns for students have also been [raised at Grenfell Campus](#).

Given the recent discussions from the federal government to introduce a [cap to international student visas](#) due to the housing crisis across Canada, MUNFA is incredibly concerned about xenophobic policies that will further impact [exploited](#) international [students](#) who typically pay [far higher tuition fees](#), often to make up for governments' ongoing defunding of public higher education (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

It is crucial to highlight that Memorial's request places faculty and staff in a situation with potential legal and tax-related ramifications, without transparently communicating these implications. Homeowners, particularly those in the midst of mortgage payments, must notify their mortgage lender, potentially leading to consequences. Renting might result in unanticipated penalties or violations of agreements. Insurance contracts also could contain clauses against using the property for rental purposes. Moreover, employee/landlords are obligated to report rental income on their taxes and navigate through supplementary paperwork, aspects completely absent from Memorial's request. This omission is a concerning oversight.

Rather than downloading this crisis onto the backs of faculty, Memorial should be publicly lobbying for governments to address this crisis in a way that does not further exacerbate harm caused to international students.

MUNFA is requesting information from members who might be considering or have already contacted the Internationalization Office to rent out their accommodations to incoming students. The MUNFA Executive has further heard of instances of graduate students being encouraged to defer their studies if they cannot provide proof of housing. Any MUNFA member with additional information on this is encouraged to contact munfa@mun.ca.