

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: December 11, 2023

SUBJECT: Meeting with MUNFA and Senior Admin

On November 1, 2023, members of the MUNFA Executive and the MUNFA staff team met with members of Memorial's Senior Administration: President Neil Bose and Provost Jennifer Lokash. A [President's Update](#) was sent out on November 1, notifying members of the meeting and what was on the agenda to be discussed. The meeting was just under two hours; however, due to the breadth of items on the agenda, some items were left for further discussion at a future meeting. What follows here is a summary of the discussion that did take place.

Collegial Governance and the Auditor General's Report

MUNFA representatives reiterated the concerns expressed in the October 24, 2023, [President's Update on the Auditor General's Report of Memorial University](#). It was emphasized that the significant cuts to academic units, the increase in precarious work, and the ever-increasing workloads of ASMs in favour of administrative bloat are unacceptable and need to be addressed.

Senior Admin responded that it was true Memorial was on the high side of administrative spending and that this was a focus. It was asked if the Senior Admin had any tangible actions planned to improve collegiality within the university given the *AG Report*. Senior Admin replied that at the time of the meeting, it had only been 10 days since the release of the *Report* but that this administration is committed to increasing the collegial governance processes of the university.

President Bose expressed that the Senior Administration has difficulties getting ASMs to participate in Senate Committees. MUNFA Representatives outlined how academic service requirements are increasingly difficult for ASMs to uphold because of the additional workloads being put on them from lack of resources. It was also mentioned that many ASMs find Senate commitments difficult because of conflicts in the late afternoon with childcare responsibilities and more equitable scheduling may lead to increased participation.

MUNFA members were clear that the Senior Admin could not let the *AG Report* be used as a justification for further cuts to funding nor the exclusion of Memorial's community in future revisions of the *Memorial University Act*. MUNFA expressed a need for the Senior Administration to take a strong stance to protect the university's status as a public institution.

President Bose stated that the government is not interested in refunding the cuts and the Senior Administration is instead focusing on the future: implementing the recommendations of the *AG Report*, and revising the *Memorial University Act*. MUNFA members highlighted that in 2021, the Senior Administration submitted their suggested changes to the *MUN Act* and that this document was never shared with MUNFA. It was asked if the Senior Administration would now share this document with MUNFA. President Bose committed to checking with his office on the status of the submission. MUNFA later received an email from the President's Office reaffirming their decision not to share the submission to the government on changes to the *MUN Act*.

MUNFA representatives ended this discussion by reiterating the expectations for Senior Administration to address the internal issues outlined by the *AG Report* as well as to be clear to the provincial government on the necessity of protecting Memorial's status as a public university. A public institution must have both strong public funding and strong legislation that highlights students, faculty, and staff.

Student Wellness and Counselling Centre (SWCC)

MUNFA representatives provided an update on the status of the SWCC since the last meeting. It was expressed that while MUNFA was pleased to see the success of the public campaign for increasing the SWCC's faculty complement, [there remained concerns](#) both in the need for a public campaign and in the Senior Administrative response to the crisis. MUNFA pointed to [The Gazette article](#) that had significantly diminished the reality of the crisis and communicated that the reversal of the Complement Advisory Committee (CAC) decision could have been a mutual win for faculty and administration. Clarification was needed on why the Senior Administration decided not to take an opportunity to publicly rebuild good faith.

The Senior Administration felt that they had responded appropriately to the crisis. MUNFA reiterated that part of transparency is being open and honest about mistakes that have been made and that their response did not reflect accountability or transparency.

2SLGBTQI+ Hate in the Community

MUNFA expressed the need for the Senior Administration to act on 2SLGBTQI+ hate in the community. As of late, all statements from the Provost's office concerning social justice issues had been redirecting folks to the SWCC for counselling. This does not address the root of hate and more tangible actions need to be taken. The Provost expressed that this is something she is aware of and is looking to other universities on how to create a safer campus including making classroom locations private.

The limited number of gender-neutral bathrooms on Grenfell Campus as well as in some buildings on St. John's Campus was also highlighted. It was emphasized that this was an important and material step to support queer, trans, and non-binary students, staff, and faculty. Senior Administration stated that they would make this a priority in further discussions with Facilities Management and the VP Grenfell.

Contract Academic Staff

MUNFA asked about the high number of unfilled vacant faculty positions that were discovered during the strike, the current role of the Complement Advisory Committee (CAC), and its relation to the increase in precarious Contract Academic Staff positions.

Senior Administration shared that the CAC operates as a consultative committee but that the Provost makes the final decisions. Full-time faculty positions and 3-year terms are discussed by the CAC. Grenfell positions do not come through the CAC. They said that there was more tenure-track hiring happening than the discourse of precarious Contract Academic Staff positions would indicate.

MUNFA stated that while positions may be getting filled, positions are disappearing faster than they are being refilled. 30 new positions may sound good but if 60 have become vacant in the same period it remains a net loss. Senior Admin expressed the difficulties budgetary constraints put on them and it was reiterated by MUNFA that this was why strong lobbying for public funding was necessary. Bose disagreed and stated that he did not believe it would be in Memorial's best interest to lobby the government on the issue of public funding.

Course Experience Questionnaires

At the last meeting between MUNFA and Senior Administration, the Provost had committed to share the agreement between Memorial and BlueByExplorance, the software being used for the new CEQ rollout.

The Provost emailed MUNFA shortly before the Nov 1 meeting pointing to the [CEQ webpage](#) on the Memorial website and the [Report of the Special Senate Committee for Evaluating Course and Teaching Effectiveness](#). It was also shared in the body of the email that the subscription costs approximately \$80,000 a year and that they are investigating expanding its use to other purposes such as the AUP process. Concerns remain on the equity and use of this service and were expressed.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)

[It has recently been discussed](#) that CSIS has had an increased presence at Canadian universities on Research Ethics Boards and even some offices on campuses. MUNFA asked if there are any current agreements or negotiations underway between Memorial and CSIS for such activity. President Bose stated that to his knowledge there was not. President Bose said that the most interaction Memorial has had with CSIS was information sessions. He affirmed that there is no CSIS presence on Memorial's Research Ethics Boards.