

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Tuesday, September 3, 2024

Dear Colleague, on behalf of the MUN Faculty Association (MUNFA) Executive, I would like to welcome you to a new academic year at Memorial University. To those members that are returning for another year - welcome back. To those who are new members of our Union - welcome to your Union. We hope you all had a wonderful summer and wish you nothing but the best in the year ahead.

Your Union has been busy this summer, holding the University administration accountable, addressing and advancing labour relations issues, and working to build a better University for all - one that centres the University community; the students, faculty and staff. Your Union has been actively engaged in the recent issues with the (now former) [Board of Regents Chair](#) as well as working to ensure that the ongoing [Presidential Search Process](#) is as open, transparent, and engaged as possible. This work is ongoing, but we are having an [impact](#). It is crucial that our Union and its membership are actively engaged in the search process. In recent years, MUN's Senior Administration is far too comfortable making major decisions without proper consultation with faculty, staff, and students. Our members can not and must not be excluded from participating in decisions made about our university.

This summer, your Union representatives [met with Senior Administrators](#) (President Neil Bose and Provost Jennifer Lokash) to raise several issues of importance to our members - funding for MUN, grievance/labour relations delays, promotion and tenure and academic service issues, unilateral actions by the University administration, and removal of student protestors.

The examples outlined above are not exhaustive. Work such as this is in addition to the day-to-day operations of the Union in terms of enforcing the Collective Agreement, labour relations, academic freedom, and grievance work, campus and community solidarity efforts, committee work, media relations, etc.

The Year Ahead

Your Union has also been working this summer to prepare for the year ahead on several fronts - campaigns and communications, membership engagement, events, town halls, and socials, University relations (Administration and Board of Regents), government relations, and labour relations.

As always, our work is guided by our Union's mission statement:

The mission of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association (MUNFA) is to strengthen the academy through solidarity, advocacy for fair working conditions, and advancing excellence in teaching and scholarship. Our work is based upon our right to academic freedom, collective bargaining,

and the unhindered pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination. We value collegiality, transparency, accountability, and fairness.

FundMUN Campaign

Memorial University plays a pivotal role in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador - academically, socially, culturally, and economically. This University also has a special obligation to the people of the province. Our University has great potential, but that potential is being squandered.

The University has been in a state of great turmoil in recent years. Various and compounding issues with Senior Administration and the Board of Regents have caused harm to the reputation of the University on the national and international stage. There are numerous search processes happening simultaneously across our campus for a significant amount of leadership positions. While these issues are certainly problematic and have taken up the limelight, they are not the sole cause of the issues Memorial University faces. For over a decade, our [public] University has suffered substantial cuts in core funding. These cuts are impacting every facet of our University; crumbling infrastructure, increasing class sizes, unmanageable workloads, fewer supports and resources, promotion and tenure issues, etc.

Newfoundland and Labrador requires an adequately funded public university where teaching, research, and knowledge mobilization are given the support they need to thrive for the betterment of our society. Simply put, cuts must end and funding needs to be restored (and increased) to Memorial University.

This will be a major focus of your Union's campaigns, communications, and government relations strategy this year. We cannot take on and win this fight alone; so we have been working closely with a coalition of student and labour Unions, the Campus Coalition, to develop and implement our #FundMUN campaign. We will be rolling out and ramping up this campaign in the coming weeks.

Member Engagement

A Union is only as strong as its members - you are the Union. That is why we have been planning ways to increase engagement opportunities between you and your Union. We have plans for:

- MUNFA meet and greets across multiple campuses;
- Virtual office hours with MUNFA Executives;
- Town halls planned for a variety of issues important to you (i.e., funding for Memorial University, contract academic staff issues, etc.);
- Our Annual General Meeting in October;
- A welcome social/meet and greet event

These are just some of the events we have planned thus far. Again, stay tuned for more details and updates.

I encourage you to get involved in your Union and there are many ways to do that; a MUNFA Committee Call is forthcoming, attend one of our events, follow MUNFA updates/social media/bulletin, reach out with your questions, comments, and concerns, etc.

Remember you are MUNFA! Every member is MUNFA!



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Labour Relations / Upcoming Collective Bargaining

Labour relations and member servicing is at the heart of what our Union is and does. Our Academic Freedom and Grievance Committees (AF&G) and the MUNFA staff that support them and take on the day-to-day labour relations effort on both the St. John's and Grenfell Campuses are constantly fighting for our members; enforcing the collective agreement and ensuring our members are being treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Our current collective agreement is set to expire on August 31, 2026. As a result, we have begun to prepare for the next round of bargaining. As this process ramps up, it will be crucial for you to be involved, informed, and engaged - it is your collective agreement and we want to ensure that bargaining reflects the goals and priorities of its members. We will be sending out surveys and providing opportunities for discussions/consultations as this process unfolds in the coming weeks and months.

The challenges that face our University are great, but our Union is strong, our cause is just, and our resolve cannot be shaken. Never forget - this University works because we do.

Together we can create a University that reflects the mission of our Union; a public University that serves the public good.

I look forward to working with you towards that goal. Please reach out to me at any time, as your Union President I want to make myself available to you - the members of our Union. My email is munfa.pres@mun.ca.

In solidarity,

Ash Hossain
President
MUNFA