

TO: All MUNFA Members

FROM: The MUNFA Executive Committee

DATE: November 3, 2025

SUBJECT: Academic Freedom Rights Reminder

MUNFA has recently heard from ASMs inquiring about Academic Freedom rights and protections, especially related to scholarship and research on areas considered 'controversial', world events and political views, and posted social media content on non-academic matters.

Examples of topics that have raised questions about Academic Freedom include:

- Criticism of government policy
- Criticism of university administration or institutional decisions
- Research or commentary on sensitive social or political issues
- Public statements on international conflicts or human rights concerns
- Work that challenges prevailing economic, cultural, or religious views
- Expression of personal opinions on social media unrelated to one's academic work.

The MUNFA Executive would like to remind all ASMs of their Academic Freedom rights and protections as outlined in [Article 2](#) of the [MUNFA Collective Agreement](#). The language in the Collective Agreement emphasizes the importance of Academic Freedom and makes it clear that the defence of Academic Freedom is an obligation for all members of the University community, including the University Administration. Academic Freedom rights enshrined in Article 2 are supported and upheld by The Canadian Association of University Teachers' (CAUT) [Policy Statement on Academic Freedom](#).

While universities have an important duty to ensure environments free from harassment and discrimination, faculty associations across Canada have cautioned against efforts to codify "civility" or "respectful workplace" standards that extend beyond those legal obligations. When such policies rely on vague or subjective definitions of "disrespectful behaviour," "decorum," or "appropriate conduct," they risk narrowing legitimate academic debate. As the [CAUT Advisory on Respectful Workplace Policies](#) warns, moving from the encouragement of collegiality to the regulation of civility can endanger the core values of Academic Freedom and freedom of expression. Overly broad expectations around "civility" can also have a chilling effect, leading individuals to self-censor or avoid expressing solidarity on sensitive issues.

Promoting respectful dialogue is important, but respect cannot be enforced through regulation without compromising the very conditions that make universities sites of critical thought and debate. Universities serve the public interest best when they protect the freedom to question, critique, and explore, even when that discourse is uncomfortable or controversial.

Protecting Academic Freedom is a core value of faculty associations, and MUNFA's Academic Freedom and Grievance (AF&G) Committees exist to uphold this principle. These committees ensure that any concerns or issues related to Academic Freedom brought forward by members are taken seriously, addressed, and investigated when necessary.

If you have concerns about your Academic Freedom rights or feel there has been a violation of those rights, please contact MUNFA at munfa@mun.ca.