January 14, 2025

Dr. Jennifer Browne
Director of Student Life and Conduct Officer
Memorial University

Via email: jbrowne@mun.ca

Dear Dr. Browne,

Re: Request for Immediate Clarification on the Selective Application of the Student Code of Conduct

I am writing to demand clarification regarding the interpretation and application of section 5a (5) of the Student Code of Conduct or section 7(1) d of the newly implemented Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities, particularly as it relates to what constitutes "personal targeting."

Recently, the Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union (MUNSU) publicly criticized both finalist candidates for the Provost position. Through posts on various social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), MUNSU's Executive Committee, who are also MUN students, stated that they could not endorse or support either candidate. They accused both individuals of supporting policies harmful to the university and failing to show adequate respect for the student body.

MUNSU shared a letter addressed to the Provost Search Committee that contained personal critiques of the candidates, including one aimed at Dr. Lokash, alleging a lack of understanding of the provincial government's funding obligations and accusing her of belittling a Palestinian student. They included the candidates' names and photographs in their public materials.

In stark contrast, in your letter to me dated March 18, 2022, you determined that my use of then-President Dr. Timmons' name on a protest sign was deemed "personal targeting" and a violation of section 5a (5) of the Code. This was despite my explanation that Dr. Timmons, as the face of the university, was an appropriate focus for critique regarding tuition hikes and financial mismanagement.

Given the blatant inconsistency in how the Code appears to be applied, I am left to conclude that the actions of the MUNSU students would similarly violate the Code if your office's interpretation is to be consistent. Therefore, I demand an explanation for why their actions are permitted when my entirely justified protest was deemed a violation.

If the actions of the MUNSU students are not considered a breach of the Code, then I insist on a detailed explanation of the university's rationale for such a glaring double standard. Furthermore, I call upon your office to clarify whether the university's interpretation of "personal targeting" is applied selectively based on the identity of the critic.

This matter goes to the heart of fair treatment, accountability, and the consistent application of university policies. I expect a substantive response addressing these concerns promptly.

Sincerely,

Matt Barter