I Worry for Memorial and Our Province

A response to MUN's restructuring report and why everyone needs to get involved

I read the 58-page Faculty and School Structure Review Report. It took 20 committee members plus 5 additional staff roughly 5 months to produce, and it is the groundwork for restructuring our university.

If you care about Memorial or this province, get involved! Talk to your MHA or union representative.

Here is my one-person response, followed by a breakdown of the awful section that is Appendix G.

1. **The inclusion of students feels like an afterthought.**
   Only 102 students participated, ~0.6% of MUN's student population.
   None were members of the committee. None of the student unions were involved (GCSU, GSU, MISU, MUNSU). Students only participated in Phase 2.
   There was a session for Labrador and one Marine Institute, but none for Grenfell.

   The report has many passages where they specifically brag about student participation or how it will improve the student experience. Nowhere do they include their thoughts, summaries or quotes. They do not differentiate undergraduate vs graduate vs diploma.
   They do not perform thematic analysis on their responses, unlike the staff/faculty.

   Page 30 incorrectly lists students participating in a staff/faculty town hall July 28th.
   The student engagement table on page 38 does not list any dates under the dates column.

2. **Community impact is not addressed.**
   The report fails to address the impact on the province and the cities Memorial serves. The Board of Regents directed the university to "Review the faculty and school structure at Memorial University with an aim to identify opportunities for consolidation and expense reduction, while preserving and enhancing academic and research excellence and delivering on Memorial's obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador" but there is no analysis of jobs, local spending or impact on communities.

   On page 8 it discusses the changes at UAlberta, and the "Key takeaway" given was that change is challenging and governing bodies should be engaged. This case study was most akin to the Pan-Memorial Model they want to further investigate.
   The report fails to mention the magnitude of job loss: +1000 fulltime jobs cut; many were support staff. In 2021, they laid off 60+ custodial staff and outsourced to contractors.

   If restructuring means cutting jobs, the impact will be felt in Newfoundland, especially in Corner Brook and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

   If restructuring means programs are cut, then the people who might have studied here will go elsewhere. Only 48% of Newfoundlanders who study university elsewhere are back in the

province a year after graduating, compared with 82% of those who study at home..
Fewer students means less spending in our communities.

3. **The public is left out entirely.**
   Again, the Board directed the university to "Review the faculty and school structure at Memorial University … delivering on Memorial's obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador." The report does not document any public consultation.

   The engagement table on page 10 has a column literally labelled "Stakeholder Group".
   Every group listed is internal. They are all staff, faculty or students.

   But what about the provincial government that funds this university?
   What about the communities of St. John's, Corner Brook and Happy Valley-Goose Bay?
   What about the Indigenous governments and organizations, especially those that work with the School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies which would be affected?
   What about the alumni, donors, and local industry?

   This is our province's only university. The administration was told to deliver on Memorial's obligation to the people of the province, and this is not documented.

4. **No financial evidence.**
   The board asked for "consolidation and expense reduction".
   The participants asked for the financial numbers repeatedly.
   And then they presented to the Senate and asked for feedback on models that present no financial evidence and no financial savings. Not a single estimate is presented.

   The recommendations are to analyse one Pan-Memorial cluster, one Nesting pairing, and the schools. The report never explains why it chose these over the Integrated model, which the report says received "slightly more positive" feedback.

   Also, the report never accounts for its own expenses.
   How much time and money was spent on this?
   There were 25 people involved, which include 20 committee members (13 of which are senior administrators), 2 graduate assistants, a manager, and two communications staff.
   Over a period of 5 months, at minimum they met 2 hours biweekly, plus a 2-day retreat.
   There were 9 subgroups with meetings of their own, and dozens of engagement sessions.
   [See MUN's Compensation Disclosure for salaries.]

5. **The committee membership is lacking representation.**
   One of the committee's guiding principles is "ensuring robust consultation that respects collegial governance". Yet senior administrators represent 65% of the committee's membership (13/20).
   There are no members representing: Engineering, Education, Nursing, Social Work, HKR, Grenfell Science, Grenfell Fine Arts. There are no student members.

6. **The Pan-Memorial model splits Grenfell and sets Group 3 up to fail.**

Health & Allied Sciences	Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Human Kinetics & Recreation, Social Work
Science, Technology, Enterprise & Engineering	Science, Engineering, Business, Grenfell Science & the Environment, all Marine Institute's three schools
Arts, Education, Society & Culture	HSS, Education, Music, Grenfell Fine Arts, Grenfell Arts & Social Science, Labrador's Arctic & Subarctic Studies

The Pan-Memorial Model is one of the four illustrative models presented, one of the two the report recommends studying further, with no justification. It proposes 3 large groupings.

Under this model, Grenfell would answer to two different groups, which I imagine would run out of St. John's main campus. Also Grenfell has a Business Administration program, which falls under the Grenfell Arts & Social Science school, but would be in a different group from Memorial's Faculty of Business Administration. Similar for psychology.

Group 2 is enormous with ~8000 students. It is roughly twice that of Group 3 and more than twice Group 1. Grants and tuition revenue heavily favours Group 2 (grants ~75million). Meanwhile Group 3 has high costs for music and fine arts programs, and low grants (<10million). This is important to consider when moving to a budget model that allocates money based on the revenue each unit generates. It sets Group 2 for success and Group 3 for failure. MUN's own program update lists programs paused, suspended or cut – over 75% from Group 3.

The participants asked for the rationale for this model during the engagement phases.
One of the committee's guiding principles is "Making evidence-based recommendations that support phased implementation". The rational and evidence it not given in this report.

7. **Counting faculties is not a good comparison.**
The comparisons of the faculties at other universities has issues (Appendix D).
    a. It is never stated why these universities were chosen.
    b. Lacks nuance that MUN is the only university in a province. Ignores UPEI.
    c. Lacks nuance of multiple campuses. Why compare a university with only one campus to MUN? Distinct campuses can lead to more administrative heads.
    Makes more sense to compare to universities with multiple campuses.
    d. Some of the counts are just incorrect.
    For instance, UNB has 14 faculties – the Faculty of Arts is not one faculty as listed in this report. There are two, one for each campus: Saint John and Fredericton.
    Similar with Science.
    They have 14 faculties and have ~60% of MUN's student population.

e. Lacks investigation of hidden layers of administrators under large faculties.
Look at Carleton University, which is listed with 5 faculties and 30,000 students.

Faculty (link)	Deans	Associate Deans	Heads of Depts, Schools, Institutes	Total
Arts & Social Sciences	1	5	16	22
Engineering & Design	1	6	7	14
Public & Global Affairs	1	5	11	17
Science	1	6	12	19
Business	1	3	0	4
Totals	**5**	**25**	**46**	**76**

While Memorial is still administrative heavy in comparison, this table tells a more accurate story than just 5 faculties. However, Carleton has only one campus.

8. **The report is full of mistakes yet was "verified" by the working group.**
It is sloppy, at best. I won't nitpick over all the mistakes.
Some things are silly like Ken Jacobsen is listed as Ken Jacobson (page 26).

Appendix E states 896 faculty, staff, and students participated in the second round, but when you tally up the tables it results in 1021. No explanation for the discrepancy.

Appendix G is abysmal, where only 18 of the 218 citations are acceptable.
The report says everything was "created, authored, and verified" by the working group.
This section was not verified. There are too many mistakes to go unnoticed.
<10% of the report's 218 citations takes the reader to the specific document it cites.
Take a look yourself.

a. 1 in 5 of the citations were copied from ChatGPT.
If you hover your mouse over some of the links in the web browser,
you will see **?utm_source=chatgpt.com** at the end of the link.
On its own, this is not necessarily a problem. Alongside the rest of the errors in Appendix G, it suggests the members did not do their due diligence.

b. >50% of the citations have links that are generic, examples that go to homepages:
CTV News. (2020–2025). *Coverage of Alberta university restructuring, Laurentian University, and postsecondary funding reforms.* Official source: https://www.ctvnews.ca

Pinheiro, R., Geschwind, L., & Aarrevaara, T. (2016). *Mergers in higher education: The Nordic experience.* Recommended source: https://link.springer.com

c. >25% have missing links or broken links or incorrect DOI, examples:
Williams, J. (2017). *Collaboration, alliance and merger among higher education institutions* (OECD Education Working Paper No. 160). OECD Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1787/0e7b3f1d-en
The real DOI is 10.1787/cf14d4b5-en

A wrong DOI usually means it was never actually looked up.

Laurentian University. (2021). *Laurentian University Commences Proceedings Under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.* https://laurentian.ca/news/laurentian-university-commences-proceedings-under-the-companies-creditors-arrangement-act
A broken link that is not archived in the Wayback Machine.
Here is a working link I found: https://laurentian.ca/about/news/ccaa-lu-2021

And my personal favourite,
Muhonen, A., Nygrén, U., & Saarti, J. (2011). Bringing order out of chaos: Benchmarking tools used in merging university libraries in Finland. *Advances in Librarianship, 34*, 183–205. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830(2011)0000034010
which links to "The Best Things in Life Are Free (Or Pretty Cheap): Three Mobile Initiatives That Can Be Done Now"

d. >30% are repeated references, for example:
The reference by Williams with the bad DOI listed in the item above appears 5 times in Appendix G. Each time with the same bad DOI.
They used AI, by their own admission, but not software for organizing references.
The repetition inflates the references ~4 pages.

Twenty members, majority from senior administration, put their names on the report, called it verified, and then presented it to us. If this is the groundwork, imagine what will be built on it.

The students, faculty, staff and the province deserve a well thought-out plan, with real numbers, consultation, and a report that has actually been checked.

I strongly urge the community to get engaged with the changes this administration is pushing.

And I strongly urge the Board of Regents to make sure every check and balance is in place, and that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the fair process they deserve.

This is our university.

Original Source, as of Nov 13th, 2026:
https://www.mun.ca/evolve/media/production/memorial/administrative/office-of-the-provost-and-vice-president-academic/Faculty-and-School-Structure-Review-October-2026-Report.pdf

Appendix G - Breakdown

Good Citations (18 unique)

#occurrences	citation info	link
2	Australian Government Department of Education. (2024). Australian Universities Accord Final Report. Australian Government. Official source:	https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord
1	Cayouette, J. (2022, February 1). A look back at the first 365 days of Laurentian University's restructuring. University Affairs. Official source:	https://universityaffairs.ca/news/a-look-back-at-the-first-365-days-of-laurentian-universitys-restructuring/
1	Cayouette, J. (2022, November 7). Light at the end of the tunnel for Laurentian University. University Affairs. Official source:	https://universityaffairs.ca/news/light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel-for-laurentian-university/
1	Cayouette, J. (2022, September 7). Departures and new proposed plan make waves at Laurentian University. University Affairs. Official source:	https://universityaffairs.ca/news/departures-and-new-proposed-plan-make-waves-at-laurentian-university/
1	Global News. (2022, October 5). Ontario court approves Laurentian University's restructuring plan. Global News.Official source:	https://globalnews.ca/news/9178381/ontario-court-approves-laurentian-university-restructuring-plan/
1	Government of Alberta. (2020). Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs. Advanced Education.	https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-2030-building-skills-for-jobs
1	Government of Ontario. (2020). 2020–2025 Strategic Mandate Agreement: Laurentian University. Ministry of Colleges and Universities.	https://www.ontario.ca/page/2020-2025-strategic-mandate-agreement-laurentian-university
1	Jongbloed, B. (2003). Marketisation in higher education, Clark’s triangle and the essential ingredients of markets. Higher Education Quarterly, 57(2), 110–135.	https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2273.00238
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1	MacDonald, M. (2025, September 10). Ontario: The new pragmatism. University Affairs. Official source:	https://universityaffairs.ca/features/ontario-the-new-pragmatism/
1	McGinn, S. (2024, August 7). Ontario faculty associations welcome Bill C-59. University Affairs. Official source:	https://universityaffairs.ca/news/ontario-institutions-welcome-bill-c-59/
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1	Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. (2022, July 18). Laurentian faculty, staff, and provincial association demand accountability and transparency to rebuild after CCAA. OCUFA. Official source:	https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/laurentian-faculty-staff-and-provincial-association-demand-accountability-and-transparency-to-rebuild-after-ccaa/
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1	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). Commercialising public research: New trends and strategies. OECD Publishing.	https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264193321-en
2	Tienari, J., Aula, H. M., & Aarrevaara, T. (2016). Built to be excellent? The Aalto University merger in Finland. European Journal of Higher Education, 6(1), 25–40.	https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2015.1099454
1	Van Vught, F. (2008). Mission diversity and reputation in higher education. Higher Education Policy, 21, 151–174.	https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.5

Generic Links (85 unique)

#occurrences	citation info	link
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2	Australian National University. (Various years). Renew ANU Programme. Official source:	https://www.anu.edu.au
2	Canadian Association of University Business Officers. (Various years). Higher education financial reporting and benchmarking. Official source:	https://www.caubo.ca
2	Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2021). CAUT Statement on Laurentian University.	https://www.caut.ca
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3	Canadian Association of University Teachers. (Various years). Briefs, policy statements, and research reports on postsecondary education funding and governance. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Official source:	https://www.caut.ca/publications
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1	CBC News. (Various articles). Coverage of Ontario university funding and financial sustainability. Recommended source:	https://www.cbc.ca/news
2	Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA). (2020–2022). Statements on University Restructuring.	https://cafa-ab.ca
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Missing Links (18 unique)

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