

Opposition weighs in on MUN report

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Yvonne Jones says if the Danny Williams government followed the spirit and intention of the Memorial University Act, there might be no need to change it.

But because of the admission of Education Minister Joan Burke last summer — that she interviewed and rejected two candidates for the MUN presidency — the Liberal leader says her party supports the recommended changes to the act contained in a report on the university's autonomy, publicly released Tuesday.

According to the act, the provincial cabinet must approve the candidate selected by MUN's board of regents after consultation with the university senate.

Historically, cabinet's approval has been a formality.

"I think that government failed to uphold that spirit and intent of the legislation and decided to use a more heavy-handed, powerful, dictatorial approach," Jones says.

She says having the government give final consent to a president for MUN added a bit of extra prestige to the appointment because it came from the highest provincial authority.

However, she says with all that's happened, it makes sense to remove the government from the process. Jones says that's unfortunate. She was also pleased to see an amendment about how board members are removed from their positions.

"In the last year, we've seen government, at a whim, use a heavy hand in removing board members for no reason, or at least no reason they were prepared to give publicly," she says.

Jones says the premature removal of board members has led to some instability at the governance level at MUN.

NDP Leader Lorraine Michael says she would support any bill that would amend the MUN Act as recommended in the report.

"I'm glad to see their recommendations," says Michael.

"If the government were to bring forward these amendments ... I would definitely support them."

Michael pointed out the amendments would put MUN on par with the majority of universities across the country when it comes to how it is governed.

She says the recommendations in the report all deal with the university's autonomy, while the remainder of the MUN Act is about accountability.

The report doesn't recommend changes to any of those parts of the act.



Lorraine Michael

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