

Liberals challenge government on underfunding MUN

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THE TELEGRAM

Liberal

Leader Yvonne Jones wants to know how the government expects Memorial University to make up a financial shortfall this year of about \$6 million.

Jones put the question to Education Minister Joan Burke in the House of Assembly, Thursday.

On Wednesday, the acting president of MUN, Eddy Campbell, issued a news release saying he has mixed feelings on this year's provincial budget.

Campbell said "while the budget provides a welcome increase in Memorial's operating budget, that increase is less than what the university requires to meet its rising costs."

The release says MUN's operating grant was increased by \$21 million, but says it needed more than that.

" We actually needed and requested closer to \$27 million to meet the core obligations related to faculty and staff salaries and benefits, utilities costs and other fixed costs," Campbell wrote.

In the House, Jones asked why MUN didn't get all the money it requested.

Burke said, like other government departments and agencies, MUN is only given 75 per cent of what it needs each year to cover salary increases to senior employees.

She said that is usually enough because in any given year some positions become vacant, some people go on leave and other more senior people who retire are replaced by junior people who make less money.

" What we've done this year has certainly been no different than how we fund the step increases at 75 per cent," Burke said.

The minister also listed where some of MUN's funding went and said not every request can be met in any given year because there is only so much money to go around.

But Jones said the shortfall may mean layoffs at the university.

"It sounds like the minister was robbing Peter to pay Paul," she said.



Eddy Campbell

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Yvonne Jones

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Joan Burke