



Special Meeting of the Board of Governors

April 4, 2025 – Minutes

The Board of Governors of Acadia University acknowledges that we are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

A special meeting of the Board of Governors was held on Friday, April 4, at 9:00 a.m., by virtual means using Microsoft Teams.

Governors present: Henry Demone (Chair), Bert Frizzell (First Vice-Chair), Dr. Jeff Hennessy (President and Vice-Chancellor), Nancy McCain (Chancellor), Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Anna Robbins, Cameron MacKeen, Cathy Simpson, Charles Coll, Christine Luckasavitch, Dan Green, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Dr. Jeff Banks, Judith Tod, Karen Hutt, Mark Adam, Martin Suter, Matt Rios, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy, Pam Mood, Robert McGregor, Shana Lespere, Shelley Fleckenstein, Stan Thomas, Tim Formuziewich, and Tracey McGillivray

Management present: Ashlee Cunsolo, Scott Duguay, Nancy Handrigan, and Sonya Pineo (University Secretary).

Regrets: Allan MacDonald, Clive Anderson, Yash Gahlot, Karen Hutt, Candy O'Connor, Cora Tolliver, Ross Langley, Erin Beaudin

1. Call to Order

H. Demone, Board Chair, called the meeting to order, welcomed meeting participants, and provided a territorial acknowledgment.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

The Agenda was circulated via email and posted to Teams prior to today's meeting.

IT WAS MOVED by S. Lespere / M. Suter

THAT the Meeting Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

3. *Update on Bill 12*

J. Hennessy provided an update on Bill 12 and the Bilateral Agreement:

Bill 12:

- In February, the Board Chair sent a letter to the Minister in support of Bill 12, expressing a willingness to work collaboratively. The letter was well received.
- Bill 12 passed without amendments, despite sector-wide feedback. The government is expected to implement changes through regulations, with governance matters handled on a bilateral basis.
- The institution aims to engage collaboratively, having built a positive relationship with the government. However, the process could still become directive.

Bilateral Agreement:

The two-year bilateral agreement was received, which gives a bit of stability over the next two years but has substantial requirements:

- There is a 2 % grant increase over the next two years.
- Tuition for Nova Scotia students is frozen for two years. With growing NS enrollment but declining international numbers, this is a concern.
- There are holdbacks of up to 1.7 million this year and up to 5.5 million in the second year based on meeting specific criteria.
- A maximum of 5% residence vacancy is required by October 15. Residences cannot be closed to meet this target. Strategies will need to be put into place to ensure we reach 95% occupancy.
- Progress must be shown on the institution's strategic plan that was approved by the government last year. We are in a favorable position for this.
- **Appendix H** is a requirement for program reform.
 - Focused on modernization, revitalization, and rationalization of academic programs.
 - Programs with low demand, high cost, or misalignment with strategic goals may need to be restructured or discontinued. This could hit some programs quite hard but may be an opportunity to innovate and adopt new programs.
 - Institutions are expected to lead this process. Deferring to internal governance constraints, such as Senate and Unions, will not be seen as acceptable.
 - The goal is to present the government with a compelling, high-quality plan that showcases Acadia's strengths, positioning it outside the direct impact of sector-wide reforms. This moment, shaped by Bill 12 and the bilateral agreements, is critical, and the university has one opportunity to get it right.

- The institution currently does not meet all 6 Financial Health Indicators that have been laid out. If this continues, the government may require a formal financial recovery plan. A proactive 5-year financial plan is being developed

This marks a fundamental shift in the university's relationship with government, reflecting a long-term move toward sectoral reform. The strategy is to stay ahead by being proactive, solution-oriented, and collaborative to maintain autonomy and stability.

A conversation took place:

- Strong support for the proactive, front-footed approach.
- The Board needs to support Administration as it navigates difficult internal conversations
- A concern was raised that sector-wide pushback to the legislation is unlikely to ease until there is a clearer direction on governance.
- No clear timeline for decisions on board governance or broader regulations has been provided.
- A concern was raised about institutional independence and whether the legislation encourages a uniform approach across universities. It is believed that the government's intent is differentiation, not uniformity.
- A question was raised as to whether discussions have begun with the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC) regarding their future representation on the Board.
- Discussions with CBAC have not yet taken place but will happen soon.
- A concern was raised about perceived passivity from faculty, how it may appear that we are just rolling over.
- The university will be negotiating in Acadia's best interest. There is nothing to be gained by publicly criticizing the government, and it is hoped that this approach can be effectively communicated.
- Effective communications and change management will be critical, and external support may be considered selectively.
- Governance structure will reduce the number of appointed board members, but the aim is to retain representation from current appointing bodies, including alumni and Baptists.

4. Next Steps

Continued use of the Governance Committee as a sounding board with updates to the full Board via email. Any major decisions will be taken to the full Board for consideration.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned

Henry Demone, Chair

Sonya Pineo, Recording Secretary