

FACULTY UNIONS SABOTAGING UNIVERSITIES: FRANK MCKENNA

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Faculty union activism is waging a war on **Canadian** universities, and it's having its biggest impact on schools in the **Atlantic** region, says **Frank McKenna**, the former chair of **St Francis Xavier University**.~

The "reckless and irresponsible activism always seems targeted" at universities in Atlantic Canada, with no less than 12 "debilitating, brand-damaging" strikes in the last 15 years, he said.

McKenna was speaking to a sold-out crowd of 420 people at the **Kehoe Dinner**. At \$125 per ticket, it's one of St. FX's biggest annual alumni fundraising events and was held Saturday at the **Westin Nova Scotian**.



Currently deputy chair of **TD Bank**, McKenna began his keynote address with a tribute to **Sean Riley**, the 18-year president of St. FX who is retiring in June.

His replacement is **New Glasgow** native and former head of **Algonquin College**, **Kent MacDonald** (see 2014-03-21).

The former premier of **New Brunswick** then launched into a 20-minute rant on the importance of university funding and the problem with striking faculty.



St. FX faculty went on strike for three weeks in early 2013 before accepting an 8% wage increase over four years, plus health benefits (see 2013-02-14).

Individual faculty members are hard-working, heroic and caring, but their "union leadership is not," said McKenna.

Some recent demands have bordered on the obscene, he said, and referred specifically to faculty at **University of New Brunswick** who sought a 26% increase over four years.

About 60% of UNB's budget is funded by the taxpayers, and the province recorded the highest deficit in history in this past year, he added.

It's the same "reckless conduct" that drove **Air Canada**, **General Motors** and **Chrysler** to bankruptcy. **Canada Post**, headed by St. FX graduate **Lisa Raitt**, would be bankrupt too, if it wasn't supported by taxpayers, he said.

McKenna said universities need to work together and consider central bargaining, or sharing resources.

He also said governments have to consider legislating faculty members back to work "when the damage becomes too much to bear".

McKenna suggested governments legislate the financial conditions and leave only non-financial conditions for negotiation.

He also had a few words for the recently elected **Nova Scotia** government.

"If you accept that universities are huge economic generators, then you must fund them appropriately," he said.

McKenna said universities have to be viewed as profit centres, not cost centres.

He said it's "wrong headed" government policy to cap tuition. That decision making, which occurred under the former **NDP** government, goes from "stupid to destructive" when the tuition cap is coupled with transfer cuts of around 10% over three years.

Let the market decide tuition and let loans, bursaries and scholarships guarantee access to a university education. Even if space is available, lower tuition doesn't guarantee participation, he said.