

Official: STU, province make progress on funding deal

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A senior St. Thomas University staff member says talks with the provincial government about a funding deal are going well - just two days after the two parties squared off in court.

After a months-long impasse that included STU refusing to sign a new memorandum of understanding with the Department of Post-Secondary

Education, Training and Labour, recent negotiations have been ‘productive for both parties,’ said Jeffrey Carleton, associate vice-president of communications at STU. PHOTO: BRUNSWICK NEWS ARCHIVES

Education, Training and Labour, recent negotiations have been “productive for both parties,” said Jeffrey Carleton, associate vice-president of communications at STU.

His comments came after a court hearing on Monday, where STU argued the province hadn’t given it enough information about how much funding other New Brunswick universities receive. The parties are due back in court Nov. 1.

Carleton, however, said progress is being made.

“We had a face-to-face meeting, phone conversation and several meetings back and forth and we made good progress on the financial aspect and the financial aspect did not seem to be an obstacle,” Carleton said.

“We just couldn’t lock down the final language of an agreement with the province, so we made very good progress and St. Thomas can only assume the file will be picked up by [the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour] following the election,” he said.

Carleton declined to go into the specific details of what the university is asking for in its negotiations.

Dawn Russell, STU's president, however has in the past said the university should be receiving \$1.4 million more than the \$14.045 million it already gets from the province annually. In an opinion piece published in the Daily Gleaner in June, Russell said that the university's provincial operating grant is 89 per cent of the provincial average in terms of each weighted full-time enrolment.

Although STU still hasn't signed a new memorandum of understanding with the province, Carleton said the university followed the terms of it in deciding to raise tuition by two per cent for the 2018-19 school year.

Carleton emphasized that the tuition increase this year is not related to the fact that the university has not yet come to an agreement with the province.

Leah Fitzgerald, communications officer with the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, said the department had no comment as negotiations are ongoing.