

Senate Minutes

**January 23, 2026
CE339**

The Chair, F. Odartey-Wellington, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

1. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair began with the acknowledgement that Cape Breton University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Present:

Harsimran Kaur Antaal, Sahand Ashtab, Tammy Bernasky, Matthias Bierenstiel, Melissa Bishop, Tanya Brann-Barrett, Martin Chandler, Shannon Ezzat, Virginia Gunn, Michael Henick, Angelica Bermudez Herrera, Jenny Kassen, Karen Kennedy, Jaxson MacDonald, Shauna MacDonald, Harkanwal Kaur, Emily MacLeod, Stephanie MacQuarrie, Chris McDonald, John Nadeau, Willena Nemeth, Rod Nicholls, Felix Odartey-Wellington, Marcia Ostashewski, Joe Parish, Andy Parnaby, Kinnon Pitcher, Sergiy Pysarenko, Timothy Rawlings, Karen Rowe, Quinn Rowe, Stefanie Ruel, Nathan Ryan, Nancy Samson, Rebecca Seymore, Nancy Spina, Laurianne Sylvester, Toyin Tade, Destiny Tobin, Karen Tobin, Jamie Tunnicliff, Tom Ue, Kellie White, Bilynda Whiting

Regrets:

Sean Campbell, Linda Cavanaugh, Carolin Kreber, David Dingwall, Enrique Hernandez, Tracy Lillington, Doug Lionais, Ellyn Lyle, Terry MacDonald, Gordon MacInnis, John Mayich, Kathleen Nash, Alex Paul, Ann Sylliboy

2. Consent Agenda:

2.1 New course proposals

- a. EDUC6XXX: Beyond the Classroom: Reimagining Education for People and Planet
- b. EDUC6XXX: The Body: Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
- c. POLS2169: Stigma in Everyday Life
- d. POLS/SOCO/COMM4XXX: Disability in Media

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish, seconded M. Chandler, to approve the Senate Consent Agenda.

Motion Carried.

3. Reports and Items for Information

3.1 President

No Report.

3.2 Vice President Academic and Provost

R. Nicholls reported on the following:

Winter enrollment has stabilized at just under 4,200 students, approximately 600 fewer than last term. This decrease was expected due to the December completion of roughly 430 post-baccalaureate students. Most remaining post-baccalaureate students will finish in April, with about 200 expected to return next year, leading to an estimated 3,600 students for 2026–27.

Updates were provided on new and pending academic programs. The Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Mechanical) program launched this week following MPHEC approval. Three proposed master's programs from the Shannon School of Business remain under MPHEC review, with marketing plans in development and consideration of online delivery in Year 2.

MPHEC now requires an institutional online learning framework. A draft prepared by the Provost's Office, CTL Online Learning, and the Registrar was well received, and consultations with Deans and TLEC are in progress. The framework aims to ensure consistent quality in online offerings without prescribing specific technologies or policies.

An update was provided on the provincial bilateral academic program review, a multi-year process requiring universities to assess all academic programs against standardized KPIs, including enrollment, quality, strategic importance, cost, and labor-market alignment. A validated list of 65 programs has been established, and preliminary categorization work is underway. Introductory meetings with schools have begun, with final reports due to the province in October 2026.

Updates were provided on Creative Campus activities, including upcoming theatre productions, a campus film festival, and CBU Music Society events such as the Lunar New Year Gala.

After the report, discussion included questions regarding the CDI and CDI spaces, with concerns about potential overbuilding given reduced enrollment projections. Senators asked whether classroom configurations, particularly for science, could be adjusted to include smaller rooms. Administration noted that updated campus space-planning results are expected in late January or early February, with reconsideration of CDI design underway, including the possibility of reducing older structures and repurposing space.

Senators also raised concerns about provincial media reports suggesting reduced funding for unfilled residences. Administration noted that this issue is being monitored and will be clarified with the appropriate offices.

Further discussion addressed the lack of plagiarism-detection software following the discontinuation of Turnitin. It was explained that existing tools have significant accuracy, privacy, and legal issues, and no compliant replacement is currently available. Microsoft Word's similarity-checking feature was noted as a limited alternative, though it does not detect content behind paywalls.

Questions were also raised regarding new master's programs and their positioning within the competitive national landscape. Ongoing work to differentiate programs was highlighted, including the integration of Indigenous perspectives and ethics in the AI and Business Analytics program, and the development of targeted strategies for domestic and international student recruitment.

3.3 Unama'ki College

No Report.

3.4 Students' Union

R. Seymour reported the following:

- Week of Welcome: A series of well-attended events were held, including DIY activities with SU centres, a Games Tournament, and a trivia night with appliance prizes.
- Grocery Shuttle: The bi-weekly residence grocery run relaunched on January 11, with 19 students using the first shuttle; participation is trending positively.
- Health Plan Renewal: Following a review of multiple providers, the SU renewed its domestic student health plan with Campus Trust due to pricing, plan quality, and collaborative approach.
- Pride Week: Scheduled for the end of the month, featuring an Indigenous Drag Show, pottery night, Sex Toy Bingo, and Pride Trivia, hosted by the Pride and Ally Centre.
- Healthy Living Week: Planned for early February, beginning with a ski trip to Cape Smokey and including the annual health fair.
- SU Elections: Mid-February nominations will open for President, Vice-President, and Student Representative Council positions, with terms beginning May 2026.

Following the Report, a question was raised regarding whether students living off-campus are included in the university's grocery shuttle service. It was noted that the current service focuses primarily on residence students, as the shuttle operates between campus residences and local grocery stores. The matter was identified as being within Destiny's portfolio, and she will review the inquiry further

3.5 Board of Governors

No Report.

3.6 Executive Committee

H. Antaal reported the following:

The committee discussed the distribution of meeting agendas, noting the shift to hyperlink-based materials in place of the previous large document package. The committee then reviewed updates from all standing committees. The meeting concluded with a review of the agenda for the current meeting.

4. Approval of the Minutes

➤ Senate – December 19, 2025

Motion:

Moved by C. McDonald, seconded by K. Kennedy, that Senate approve the minutes from the December 19th Senate meeting.

Motion Carried.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes – N/A

6. Report from Senate Committees:

6.1 Academic

J. Parish advised that the committee met once since December. Updates were provided on the decision matrix and the academic integrity policy; both documents have been completed but have not yet been reviewed by the committee due to time constraints at the last meeting. These items will be addressed at the next meeting on January 30, with the intention of bringing them forward to Senate in February.

Work is ongoing on the Appeals to Academic Decisions Policy, which aligns closely with the academic integrity policy. A flow chart is being developed to improve clarity of the process. The committee also continues to review potential updates to the course proposal form, including the need to explicitly indicate whether AI is used in a course and how misuse will be mitigated. Senators were asked to share this information with colleagues as updates progress.

Items for Information:

J. Parish presented two program suspensions for information only. All Relevant documentation is available in the meeting folder.

1. Programme Suspensions:

- a. Bachelor of Science (Nutrition Transfer)
- b. Diploma in Government Management

Recommendations:

J. Parish presented the following recommendations:

1. The Academic Progression Policy has been under consideration for some time and it has reached its final form. This policy reflects the clarity necessary to inform students about the standards, schedules, and processes that surround progression in the B.Ed. Program.

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish that Senate approve the Academic Progression Policy – Bachelor of Education Program.

Discussion:

The section of the policy addressing notification of cohort dismissal was discussed. Senators questioned whether such decisions are appealable by the student, noting that dismissal constitutes a significant academic sanction. It was observed that, in general, academic sanctions at the university are appealable, even when not explicitly stated within individual program documents.

It was acknowledged that professional programs, such as Education and Nursing, may require specialized consideration in appeal processes due to practicum components and the involvement of external professional bodies.

It was also noted that any updates may need to align with existing institutional academic progression policies and consider whether certain appeals—particularly those involving clinical or practicum-based courses—should be adjudicated at the Senate Appeals level.

J. Parish advised of a minor wording correction to clarify that the policy supersedes current practice rather than an existing Senate policy. The conversation also recognized the hierarchy between institutional policies and program-specific procedures and the need for consistency across schools.

Motion Carried.

2. Calendar language changes are necessary to include the Academic Progression Policy – Bachelor of Education Program as well as to make necessary adjustments to the descriptions of programme streams, requirements, and admissions. These have largely been the result of consultation with external bodies at the provincial level and the requirements around specific programmes. It should be noted that the concentrations that have already been suspended are still included in this document but will be removed once the teach-out plan for those has concluded. The language for the 8-month program will also be removed.

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish that Senate approves the changes to calendar language for Bachelor of Education.

Motion Carried.

3. The Masters of Education Critical Curriculum Studies Program has submitted changes to the name of the program and alterations to the list of electives available under this program. The name change reflects more current scholarship shared among the instructors delivering the content of the program. The updates to the electives are the result of broader changes to course offerings due to program suspensions. This also includes the introduction of one of the courses on the consent agenda today.

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish that Senate approve the Major program modifications to Master of Education: Critical Curriculum Studies as follows:

- a. Title change: "Master of Education in Critical Curriculum Studies" changes to "Master of Education: Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning"
- b. New selection of electives

It was noted the calendar descriptions are beyond 300 characters, so the proponents may want to decide what that looks like when it's truncated.

Motion Carried.

AI in course outlines was discussed, it was clarified that AI references in a course proposal reflect the proponent's intent at the time of approval, but do not restrict how future instructors may exercise academic freedom in delivering the course. It was noted that safeguards around AI use are being considered more broadly.

The Registrar reviewed the implications of a proposed program name change. She emphasized that changing a program name also changes the credential name issued to graduates, which constitutes a major change. Because current and future students are admitted under the existing credential name, such changes may require referral to MPHEC to ensure accuracy, consistency, and protection of credential integrity.

6.2 Bylaws and Procedures

No Report.

6.3 Research

M. Ostashewski advised that the Research Centres and Institutes Policy has undergone several stages of review, including consultation with the new directors of research centres and institutes and CBU Legal. Additional time was taken to ensure accuracy and completeness following several years of anticipated revisions. The policy is now in its final stages of preparation and is expected to be brought forward to Senate for approval at the next meeting.

6.4 Planning and Review

No Report.

6.5 Quality Assurance

No Report.

6.6 Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation

No Report.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

**Harsimran Kaur Antaal
Secretary to Senate**