

BERNADETTE SMITH

Member of the Legislative Assembly for Point Douglas



November 8, 2021

The Hon. Wayne Ewasko
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration
Room 156, Legislative Building
405 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0V8

Dear Minister,

These past years have been hard enough on students with unpredictable changes to the learning environment. U of M Professors have done their best to connect through online learning, but the interference in UMFA's bargaining by the PC government is unnecessarily making life harder for students and faculty.

UMFA has fair bargaining requests. Considering the large surplus that the University of Manitoba posted, bringing U of M faculty pay in line with comparable Canadian institutions should and probably would have been accomplished during free and fair bargaining. The former Premier Brian Pallister's policy of mandating an unreasonably low cap on wages has made free and fair bargaining impossible.

Put yourself in the position of a talented recent postgraduate with offers of employment from multiple institutions. Would you prefer to be paid at least the average in your sector, and be guaranteed stability and enough funding to perform your research? Or would you choose an institution that is mandated to offer less pay than its competitors, and has recently been subject to illegal government interference in its bargaining process, as well as two strikes?

It's an obvious choice for anyone. The government's current policy is hurting Manitoba's future to save a few thousand dollars in salaries. We're still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to be training new nurses, not preventing them from studying.

Students don't want the strike. UMFA members don't want this strike. Their highest priorities are to continue their important work and provide students with an excellent education, that's why students stand in solidarity. The shameful decision to shut down the student learning website shows these priorities are not shared by all.

Remove the wage mandate and allow the bargaining process to continue without interference so UMFA can bargain for the fair wages and working conditions that their members deserve, and faculty can get back to educating Manitoba's future leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernadette Smith". The script is cursive and elegant.

Bernadette Smith, MLA for Point Douglas

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