

University of Manitoba Faculty Association highlights crisis in nursing education
Rally at the Legislature puts the spotlight on retention and recruitment issues

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Winnipeg- The University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) is highlighting the ongoing situation for nurses in Manitoba, beginning with the crisis of faculty staffing in the College of Nursing. UMFA members of the College of Nursing, as well as Manitoba Nurses Union President Darlene Jackson, spoke at a rally at the Manitoba Legislature this afternoon emphasizing the need to prioritize retention and recruitment. They called on the provincial government to withdraw the mandate that is preventing the university administration from negotiating an agreement with UMFA that prioritizes retention and recruitment.

“Recruitment and retention issues extend across all faculties at the University of Manitoba, including the College of Nursing,” said UMFA President Orvie Dingwall. “Our new premier has said that she wants to address the nursing shortage in Manitoba, and we simply can’t do that if the PC government doesn’t invest in our professors and instructors in the College of Nursing.”

“Cuts to healthcare funding and programming for nurses in Manitoba impact every single one of us,” said Darlene Jackson, Manitoba Nurses Union President. “Our members depend on training from University of Manitoba faculty. Our province depends on nurses. Without proper investment in recruitment and retention, both at the faculty level and on the frontline, we all suffer.”

Thirty-eight members of the nursing faculty, as well as student leaders from the undergraduate and graduate nursing student associations, have written a letter to Health Minister Audrey Gordon outlining their concerns as over 15% of faculty within the college have left in the past two years. Currently, nursing instructors and assistant professors earn less than general duty nurses, which hampers the ability to attract educators to the profession, which has been depleted by the demands of the pandemic and previous cuts to healthcare.

“We face a crisis in the College of Nursing as we struggle to retain the faculty that we currently have,” said Annette Schultz, a professor in the College of Nursing. “How can the government expect us to train the next generation of nurses when we can’t even attract and retain instructors in our own college?”

Earlier this year, the provincial government requested proposals to expand the nursing enrolment at the College of Nursing by 120 students, or 50% of current enrollment. However, to date, no additional resources have been allocated to the University, and the provincial budget last year cut funding to the Faculty of Health Sciences by 1.75%. These budget cuts, along with continued interference in UMFA’s bargaining, have complicated the University’s ability to make this expansion.

“If the government wants us to expand the number of students we train, we will need to properly resource our faculty,” said Lynda Balneaves, associate professor in the College of Nursing. “This government seems to be focused on good news announcements, but lacks the will to follow through and invest in our faculty and the future of nursing in Manitoba.”

UMFA represents over 1,200 professors, instructors and librarians at the University of Manitoba.