

Media Release: UMFA stages 9 AM sit-in at Stefanson's Constituency Office to demand end to government mandate

November 8, 2021

Winnipeg - University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) members and students will stage a sit-in at Premier Heather Stefanson's constituency office at 9 AM on Monday, November 8th. Members are prepared to wait in Stefanson's office until she meets with UMFA faculty members or rescinds the government mandate constraining free and fair bargaining between the University of Manitoba administration and UMFA.

"Students Supporting UMFA (SSUMFA) is participating in today's action because we represent the thousands of students that are being kept away from their classes at this moment". Says a SSUMFA spokesperson. "Premier Stefanson has the power to end this strike; all she needs to do is allow our educators to bargain with their employer freely and fairly. The voices of students matter. SSUMFA is making it our mission to let Premier Stefanson know that education is our top priority, whether or not it is hers."

Stefanson has publicly stated that she will meet with stakeholders to listen to them and evaluate PC policies. For months, UMFA members who are constituents in Stefanson's Tuxedo riding have requested a meeting by email, phone, and letter. UMFA has also sent formal requests for a meeting to Stefanson's campaign office and the office of the Premier, and has received no response.

"As a constituent and an UMFA member, I am angry that Stefanson has refused to meet with me and my UMFA neighbours," said Lyle Ford, a librarian at the University of Manitoba. "We're sitting in Premier Heather Stefanson's constituency office today until we get a meeting to ask her to lift the funding mandate on the University of Manitoba, so that we can get a fair deal, and end the strike."

Students are joining in the demand for Stefanson to stop the strike by pulling the mandate. Jaron Rykiss, a 3rd year student in Philosophy and Political Studies and Tuxedo constituent, said, "I am sitting in because I want to get back in the classroom. I want my school to be filled with passionate and skilled educators!"

UMFA members have extended meeting invitations to all of the MLAs where they have constituent members, and have met with NDP and Manitoba Liberal MLAs to discuss the negative effect of the government mandate at the University of Manitoba, including on faculty recruitment and retention. While 2 PC MLAs have been willing to meet, the remaining PC MLAs have refused to meet with their constituents or have not replied to the dozens of emails and phone calls.

UMFA members have been on strike since November 2. Last week, the University of Manitoba Administration rejected an offer from UMFA that would have addressed recruitment and retention issues by making compensation more competitive. The administration continues to refuse to move in this area, citing the mandate they have been given. Currently, UMFA salaries rank second-lowest among Canadian research universities.

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