

October 13, 2021

University of Manitoba Faculty Association, Manitoba NDP and Manitoba Liberal Party stand together against government interference in bargaining

Treaty 1 and Dakota Territory, Homeland of the Métis Nation, Winnipeg MB—Today the Manitoba NDP and Manitoba Liberal Party stood with the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) to demand the Progressive Conservative government stop interfering in post-secondary education, withdraw their wage mandate, and allow UMFA and the University of Manitoba to engage in free and fair collective bargaining. Following five years of government interference and salary freezes, the University of Manitoba is facing a serious problem attracting and retaining professors, instructors, and librarians.

“The PC Government has been interfering in UMFA’s bargaining since 2016, which has created a serious problem in recruiting and retaining the most talented faculty members. Our salaries are the lowest amongst comparable universities. Though recruitment and retention are serious issues in almost all faculties, today we are focused on healthcare and innovation, where we can’t afford the University of Manitoba to fall behind because of salaries that aren’t competitive,” said Orvie Dingwall, President of UMFA and a Health Sciences Librarian.

“Manitobans want post-secondary education to be high-quality and affordable, but after 5 years of Pallister’s austerity and interference, the future of our universities is in jeopardy,” said NDP Critic for Advanced Education, Jamie Moses. “Even though Pallister is gone the PCs are sticking to his agenda by undermining the autonomy of post-secondary institutions and mandating wage freezes. We need strong post-secondary institutions to build a better future for everyone in Manitoba – the PCs need to stop interfering today.”

“During the pandemic, it was researchers and medical sciences experts who spoke out, provided guidance and demanded action to force the government to use science and not politics to improve our pandemic response. Researchers here are responsible for providing service and expertise to the community-at-large. Yet because of non-competitive wages, many of those researchers are leaving the province for better salaries and more supportive research environments,” said Dr. Sachin Katyal, a cancer researcher and associate professor in Pharmacology and Therapeutics and an UMFA Executive member. “ We need the provincial government to stop interfering in bargaining, so that the university can use its resources to invest in top health researchers who will bring their innovative work to Manitoba.”

UMFA has called a strike vote because the University has stalled negotiations by making a wage offer that follows the mandate imposed by the PC government and restricts free and fair collective bargaining. This is just the PC’s latest attack on post-secondary education. Their history of interfering in bargaining at the University of Manitoba goes back to 2016, when the PCs told the university to withdraw wage increases for faculty, resulting in a 21-day strike.

“The University of Manitoba has been hamstrung by the PC government. We need to train

nurses, computer science grads, and mental health workers, but the university can't attract or keep faculty to do so because the salaries and research funding are not competitive," said Dougald Lamont, Manitoba Liberal Party Leader and MLA for St. Boniface. "If we can't train young Manitobans for those jobs, they'll go elsewhere and they may not come back."

"We need the government to let us bargain freely with the university. Allowing the University of Manitoba to competitively pay faculty is an investment in the future of the province economically and socially," Dingwall said.