

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA Faculty Association

Stand up for PSE in the upcoming provincial budget

January 14, 2020

Welcome back!

I hope you all had a restful holiday and are easily settling into the start of the winter term. As you may know, this year is a bargaining year, and with our salary re-opener fast approaching, we begin the work this term to gather the information needed to develop our bargaining proposals. It must be acknowledged that we, other faculty associations, and other unions increasingly find that the bargaining process and bargaining outcomes are not just determined by the workers and the employer. In both the core public sector, and the “broader public sector”, the political landscape increasingly impacts our work lives.

For example, the Manitoba government has made changes and introduced legislation that impacts not only our compensation, but perhaps other aspects of university life. Manitoba universities now report to the Minister of Economic Development of Training rather than the Minister of Education, the consequences of which are not yet clear. In the worst case, this may be a harbinger of the changes enacted by Ontario’s Ford government to apply short-sighted, narrow metrics (e. g., graduation rates, graduate employment rates) to post-secondary institutions and to tie large portions of operating grants to performance according to those metrics. There are also bills before the current session of the legislature with implications for us such as the Public Service Act, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, and the Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (see <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/42-2/index.php>). Legislation in this and other provinces are often thinly veiled attacks on collective bargaining rights and worker protections.

In addition to legislative changes, the upcoming provincial budget will obviously impact the entire UM community. Reductions or freezes in the operating grant, even if offset by tuition increases, reduce accessibility of education and are used by the Administration to justify meager salary increases, increased hiring of contract academic staff and greater use of term positions, and cuts to faculties that could result in increased class sizes, reduced course offerings, and other cuts that make the lives of all UM workers and students more difficult.

We are fighting back as much as we can. Political activity and outreach are important tasks of the UMFA executive – with both provincial and federal elections in the past year, we met with municipal, provincial and federal politicians. We are part of the Partnership to Defend Public Services, the coalition of workers that is challenging the constitutionality of the Public Services Sustainability Act (the one that gave us the 0, 0, 0.75% and 1% salary scale increases over the past four years). We are part of the Winnipeg Labour Council, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. More importantly, many of our members have influential voices in the political arena, engaging in activities ranging from exercising their civil right to knock on doors during election campaigns and writing op-eds on social and political matters that affect us all, to

performing service for the broader community and producing research that mobilizes public opinion and influences government policy.

Our knowledge and skills are well recognized and respected, and to that end I encourage you all to speak out to shape this political landscape. In addition to university funding, you may wish to comment on the many other funding decisions that impact our lives and the health of our communities. As a source of information and inspiration, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives of Manitoba made the following recommendations in the 2020 pre-budget consultations: <http://policyfix.ca/2019/12/12/2020-manitoba-climate-social-action-budget/>

To present your views, the province has launched a Build a Budget feature at <https://engagemb.ca/Budget-2020> that gives Manitobans the opportunity to create a provincial budget focused on their priorities. They say they welcome suggestions on how government spending and revenue should be prioritized, as well as suggested efficiencies and ideas for innovative ways to save money while ensuring services are available.

If you can, I strongly encourage you to make your opinions known. Written submissions can be emailed to budget2020@gov.mb.ca. Public consultations on the provincial budget are taking place in the next few weeks at the following dates and places, listed below.

Best wishes for the school term! I hope that either I, VP Mike Shaw, our Chief Negotiator Cam Morrill, or other members of the Executive and Bargaining Team run into you in the coming months as we organize constituency meetings and faculty walk arounds.

Janet Morrill
UMFA President

Dates/Times for provincial budget consultations:

- Monday, Jan. 13 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Kikiwak Inn, Highway 10 North, Opaskwayak Cree Nation (near The Pas);
- Monday, Jan. 13 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at Best Western Thompson, 205 Mystery Lake Rd., Thompson;
- Tuesday, Jan. 14 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Flin Flon City Hall, 20 First Ave., Flin Flon;
- Tuesday, Jan. 14 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Westwood Inn (Valley Room), 473 Westwood Rd., Swan River;
- Wednesday, Jan. 15 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Southdale Community Centre, 254 Lakewood Blvd., Winnipeg;
- Wednesday, Jan. 22 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Millennium Exhibition Centre, 227 10th Ave. NW, Altona;
- Thursday, Jan. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Garden City Community Centre, 725 Kingsbury Ave., Winnipeg; and
- Monday, Jan. 27 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at Jake Epp Library, 255 Elmdale St., Steinbach.

