

Dear President Bennaroch and the University of Manitoba Administration;

We are a collective of Black, Indigenous, and students of colour (BIPOC) in the Masters of Occupational Therapy Program at the University of Manitoba, located on Treaty 1 territory. We are writing this letter to express our support for our professors, librarians, counsellors and staff represented by the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA), and their demands for a fair deal in the ongoing negotiations.

Our studies have already been disproportionately affected due to the disruption of the pandemic, and now amplified by the strike. Nonetheless, we stand behind UMFA in solidarity in support of equitable labour conditions. We understand that UMFA has been forced to take these extraordinary measures because of the administration's refusal to negotiate honestly and in good faith. You have left them no option by denying them real wage increases to offset the incremental cost of living over the last six years. Your disingenuous offer was already included in the collective agreement, and you've rejected a reasonable offer by UMFA. A meaningful offer would positively impact student conditions, including BIPOC and other equity-seeking students .

Pay attention to student voices. We are the largest stakeholders in the university. Tuition has increased by 9%, and enrollment has increased in the last two years, resulting in a \$94 million surplus last year. Thus, as the primary funders, we are disappointed that our tuition is not being reinvested in student education: faculty recruitment and retention, student services and supports, and curriculum. Rather, you have effectively colluded with the provincial government who have used restrictive bargaining mandates and austerity tactics (distortions of "fiscal sustainability" in Bill 28) to reduce funding for the University.

Therefore, we question the interest of both admin and the provincial government in the quality of our education and the economic development of this province. High quality education cannot be sustained by ever-rising tuition increases due to provincial austerity policy and funding. Our university's ranking of 14 out of 15 for salaries at research-intensive universities is ample proof of this. Moreover, as future health care workers, we are advocating for patients. The quality of our education is tied to the health, well-being and quality of life of people in our province.

We call on you to be true to your word and show the faculty and students that you are invested in education at the University of Manitoba. **Education is a public good - not a corporation!**

Sincerely,

BIPOC Student Occupational Therapy Collective  
University of Manitoba, Treaty One Territory

*Bill 28: Public Services Sustainability Act.* (2017). 41st Legislature, 2nd session. Retrieved from the Legislature of Manitoba website:

[http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/LegislativeSummaries/Bills\\_Is.asp?lang=F&ls=c6&Parl=40&Ses=2&source=library\\_prb](http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/LegislativeSummaries/Bills_Is.asp?lang=F&ls=c6&Parl=40&Ses=2&source=library_prb)