

UMFA, students march through Tuxedo to demand end to government interference

UMFA members will walk through the streets of Tuxedo, calling on Premier Stefanson to rescind the mandate

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Winnipeg -- University of Manitoba Faculty Association members, students, and supporters will march through Premier Heather Stefanson's Tuxedo constituency today at 5:30pm to demand that she lift the wage mandate that restricts the university administration's ability to bargain with UMFA. The march will wind through the riding and draw attention to Stefanson's continued interference in UMFA negotiations, as she follows Brian Pallister's failed wage-freeze policy. UMFA wrote to Stefanson on October 31st, asking her to meet and to prevent a strike, and did not receive a response.

"Our members are taking our fight to Stefanson's riding, to make sure her voters know that she has refused to use her power to stop the strike. Her refusal is putting the competitiveness of the university at risk and prolonging our job action," said Orvie Dingwall, UMFA President. "Premier Stefanson said that her door was open and that she was ready to listen to all Manitobans. She could end her silence and get students back into classrooms by immediately dropping the restrictive Pallister wage mandate imposed on the university's administration. This continued interference leads to faculty recruitment and retention issues and decreased opportunities for students and puts the future of our university at risk."

Marchers will bang pots and pans, make noise, and hold a "search party" to look for Stefanson, who has rarely spoken publicly since becoming Premier.

"We will march through Tuxedo looking for Stefanson and searching for some real leadership to end this strike," said Mark Libin, a professor of English and an UMFA member. "All we're asking is for her to allow the university to bargain in good faith and allow us to return to our classrooms".

"Our educators have been on the picket lines and students have been out of classes for two weeks, and Premier Stefanson has not made herself available to discuss this with any of us," said Olivia Macdonald Mager, an organizer with Students Supporting UMFA. "The premier can play a major part in ending this strike, yet she is missing in action.

The march will begin at 5:30pm at Assiniboine Park's main gate at Corydon and Park Blvd N.

Last week, the university's administration rejected an offer from UMFA that would have addressed recruitment and retention issues by making compensation more competitive. Currently, UMFA salaries rank second-lowest among the 15 largest Canadian research universities. UMFA represents over 1,200 professors, instructors, and librarians at the University of Manitoba.