

April 6, 2020

Honourable Cameron Friesen  
Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living  
Room 302, Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Friesen,

The Manitoba Federation of Labour represents over a 100,000 workers in Manitoba and believes in working towards fairness for all working people in our province. That is why we are joining our voice to urge the Government of Manitoba to extend health care coverage for those residents in Manitoba who are currently uninsured and do not meet the eligibility criteria for provincial health care coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. As this health crisis continues, we know that the health of our province depends on the health of all Manitobans. When those that are most vulnerable are denied health care, and believe they are unable to access free testing and treatment for COVID-19, it puts our entire community at risk of a more rapid and greater spread of the virus.

Migrant workers, international students, and undocumented migrants who have lost their status, are all at risk of contracting the virus and spreading it without access to easily acceptable free public healthcare. Currently some have some type of insurance, often private emergency service insurance that may not cover COVID-19 assessments, testing or treatment. Others may face the unaffordable barrier of paying up front for services and waiting for insurance companies to reimburse them. And still others have no health insurance at all. These circumstances, along with the fear of possible detention or deportation negatively influence these members of our community to put all of us at risk by not seeking healthcare services.

We know that without free health care coverage many will continue to feel pressured to either hide their symptoms, not ask questions or seek help and continue to go to work and possibly socialize. Making sure these vulnerable groups have access to healthcare and that it is promoted properly in our communities will help protect the health and safety of all Manitobans.

We believe that extending health care that is safe and accessible to all those who need it is critical to protect their health, prevent transmission, and help flatten the curve.

We urge the Government of Manitoba to put this coverage in place swiftly and widely communicate its availability to the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K Rebeck'.

Kevin Rebeck  
President of the Manitoba Federation of Labour