



Manitoba Federation of Labour Submission to the Manitoba Legislative Standing Committee on Bill 26

The Elections Financing Amendment Act

Manitoba Federation of Labour

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Bill 26: *The Elections Financing Amendment Act*

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL), Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers, opposes the government's proposal to increase the power, sway and influence of wealthy donors over our elections process. We believe this represents a major step backwards in terms of the openness and fairness of our democratic process. A more fair and progressive approach would be to re-establish a public financing model, like that recently eliminated by this government, wherein an Independent Allowance Commissioner was responsible for determining the public financing process for political parties.

Bill 26 would amend *The Elections Financing Act* to substantially increase the limit on individual donations to political parties, from \$3,000 to \$5,000 – an increase of 66% – and then rise each year by inflation. This change will do nothing to engage more everyday Manitobans in the political process. Instead, it opens the door for the very wealthy to make even bigger financial donations to their preferred political party, increasing their power and influence over elections.

What's more, Budget 2017 announced government's plan to extend generous tax credits for very large political donations. As a result, not only will wealthy donors be allowed to donate up to \$5,000 every year, they'll now receive even greater subsidies from tax payers to do so, reducing their personal net cost.

Rather than using public dollars to raise political tax credits for wealthy donors, Manitoba should level the playing field for all political parties by re-establishing an open and fair system of public financing. Elections should be about choosing the best candidates and best plans for Manitobans, and every vote should have the same weight. Elections

shouldn't be decided by which party has the backing of the wealthiest donors. Jacking-up the political donation limit opens the door for wealthy donors to exercise more influence on politicians and political parties, and that's just wrong.

Measures like raising the political donations limit, and increasing the tax credit available for very large political donations are not in keeping with the values of Manitobans. Rather than rewarding political donors, we urge the government to focus on fulfilling the promise it made to Manitobans during the election: protecting and improving front line services, and respecting the hard working men and women who provide them.

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