

Bill 32 The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act (Government Advertising)

April 14, 2021



Bill 32: The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act (Government Advertising)

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, made up of 30 affiliated unions and representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers in our province. We play a lead role in advocating for the rights and interests of working families, including workplace safety and health, good jobs, and strong public services.

I am here tonight to speak in favour of this bill, as it will provide needed clarity to government officials, Crown corporations and agencies, and the public about what types of information can be communicated during the lead up to elections in Manitoba, known commonly as the advertising blackout.

While the principle of limiting government advertising to lessen a governing party's ability to leverage its resources prior to an election is a sound and democratic one, the MFL has had trouble in the past with receiving vital information around workplace safety and health and other areas due to confusion about what is allowed under the current government advertising blackout rules.

This bill's proposed changes would provide greater clarity around what kind of information can be shared with the public during the pre-election period. We think the government is taking the right step in explicitly clarifying that communications such as advertising or publishing information about public health or safety matters, requests for proposals or tenders and government employment are allowed to continue. Eliminating the need to demonstrate that this information is required to be disclosed will ensure a smoother process for accessing government information, and it will also make things easier for the staff who are responsible for preparing and delivering these communications.

We also support exempting advertising and publicizing ongoing programs from the blackout rules, as members of the public should still be able to access necessary program information regardless of where our province is in the election cycle.

As Section 2(5) of the bill sets out that government will develop and issue guidelines to assist departments and agencies in determining if information is subject to restrictions under the Act, I would like to offer that the MFL would be happy to work with government on determining the information that would be relevant to exempt from the restrictions dealing with workplace safety and health and services that workers would require unimpeded access to.

The changes proposed in this bill will be good for the public for and stakeholder organizations as they will ensure better access to important information and programs in the lead up to an election. We appreciate the government bringing this bill forward.

AT.USW9074