

Bill 4 The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act

October 26, 2020



Bill 4: THE RETAIL BUSINESS HOURS OF OPERATION ACT (VARIOUS ACTS AMENDED OR REPEALED)

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers. Working families are finding it harder and harder to achieve work life balance. With the added pressures of jobs, school, extracurricular activities, and the near constant presence of phones, families are finding it harder to ensure they can spend quality family time and rest at the end of the working day. The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act, which is being repealed with this bill, was an attempt to provide some basic, consistent, time off for retail workers – many of whom work their busiest times when the nine-to-five workers are done their shifts or on their weekends.

Working people are busier than ever before. Between work, child care, children's activities, and our phones, it's harder and harder for families to get quality time together. Everyone deserves the chance to have at least some amount of time to get together and share a meal with family, especially around holidays. Manitobans want a system that is fair when it comes to balancing the needs of consumers with the ability for retail workers to have some work life balance.

The system we have now isn't perfect, and Manitoba's labour movement is open to working with business on making improvements that make sense for working families. This proposal would get rid of any time off on holidays like Good Friday, Thanksgiving, and even Christmas Day. I must say, I am not sure who is asking for more shopping options on Christmas Day in our province.

Last year, just days before the Premier called a snap election over a year before the election scheduled in law, the then-Minister wrote the Labour Management Review Committee seeking input on the committee's proposals on how to move forward with

holiday retail shopping here in Manitoba. Unfortunately, just two weeks later, prior to the opportunity for the LMRC to review the matter and provide feedback, the Premier jumped the gun on the consultation process and said they would repeal the legislation outright.

While we were disappointed that an election commitment would be made without this government receiving the advice it had asked us for, the LMRC nevertheless provided feedback on the matter, seeking to balance the needs of business with the needs of retail workers.

While we would strongly prefer that The Act not be repealed and that government, business, and labour come up with constructive solutions to accommodate consumer preferences and work-life balance, we are glad to see that the right to refuse Sunday work has been maintained for retail workers with this new legislation. This is an important right for these workers, who are often doing shift work and appreciate the opportunity to have predictable time off to spend with their loved ones. We encourage this government to look at more ways to improve work-life balance for Manitobans through measures in the Employment Standards Act.

To the members of this government, I would like to emphasize that labour is willing to work constructively on achieving work-life balance solutions that make sense for workers, consumers, and business owners. We do not have to see these things as a zero-sum game. As I mentioned, we are encouraged to see that this government listened to labour's view that the right to refuse Sunday work for retail workers should be maintained.

We will continue to push for more common-sense solutions that benefit working families and their ability to spend quality time together. We know that increasing work-life balance plays a role in reducing stress, preventing burnout, and keeping workers healthy.

It also has benefits for business too, with a recent study by Microsoft finding that reducing the workweek for employees led to a jump in productivity of 40 per cent.

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