



PRESIDENT REBECK HONKS HIS SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA FACULTY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS DURING THEIR HONK-A-THON AT THE U OF M FORT GARRY CAMPUS IN OCTOBER.

Sisters, Brothers and Friends, I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one from COVID-19, including workers who have tragically contracted COVID-19 and lost their lives as a result of doing their job. These Manitobans are family members, friends, neighbours, and coworkers.

As we mourn the deaths of hundreds of Manitobans from this virus, it is also important to continue to do what we can to keep each other safe. That means staying home as much as possible, not socializing with people beyond our households, and making sure we are practicing good hand hygiene and wearing a mask in public places.

Manitoba's unions have been stepping up and fighting for their members

throughout this pandemic. And unfortunately the Pallister government causes us to fight even harder for workers and their safety and health.

From distributing long-expired PPE to refusing to give workers the right PPE to failing to hire desperately needed workers in health care, education, and other public services, this government has shown repeatedly in this pandemic that it cares more about money than about the well-being of Manitobans.

The MFL expresses our gratitude to all of Manitoba's incredibly dedicated and hard-working essential workers who continue to work through this unprecedented global pandemic in unbelievably difficult circumstances – all too often putting themselves at risk, sometimes extreme

risk – to serve our collective needs in areas like health care, grocery stores, child care, education, mail delivery, retail, transit, hydro, supply chains, manufacturing, infrastructure and many other vital services.

Now, more than ever, we have to do everything within our power to make sure that workers are safe at work, and we urge the government in the strongest possible terms to prioritize the health and safety of workers during this pandemic, including ensuring the right PPE, supporting workers' right to know about the hazards they may face at work and their right to refuse dangerous work, ensuring adequate staffing levels, and making

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sure that workers are informed and have an equal say in establishing safe work procedures.

NEW LIVING WAGE NUMBERS SHOW JUST HOW FAR BEHIND MANITOBA WORKERS ARE FALLING

No one should work full-time but still live in poverty. But that is exactly what is happening to thousands of Manitoba workers because our minimum wage is far too low to pay the bills.

Recently, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba office released new living wage calculations for certain Manitoba communities. A living wage reflects what income earners in a family need to bring home based on the actual costs of living in a specific community.

The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs - things like food, rent and clothing - once government transfers have been added to the family's income and deductions have been subtracted. It is a way of measuring how much workers need to earn to keep their families out of poverty.

According to the CCPA-MB's calculations, a living wage is now \$16.15/hour in Winnipeg, \$14.19/hour in Brandon and \$14.27/hour in Thompson. And yet the Pallister government has legislated one of



the lowest minimum wages in the country at \$11.90/hour.

The report makes it clear just how far behind low-wage workers are falling in our province, and how much our minimum wage needs to increase to lift thousands of workers out of poverty.

Brian Pallister might think Manitoba workers deserve one of the lowest minimum wages in the country, but I sure don't.

The Manitoba labour movement will continue to fight for a provincial minimum wage that lifts people out of poverty, not one that traps them in it.

UPDATE ON WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION BUS DRIVERS' STRIKE

I want to thank everyone who showed their support for school bus drivers in Winnipeg School Division, who went on strike for a fair contract. These UFCW 832 members were on the picket lines for two full months, and are now back at work as they await a new contract to be settled through binding arbitration.

In Solidarity,

Kevin Rebeck
PRESIDENT OF THE MANITOBA FEDERATION OF LABOUR

Taking care of our mental health at work

Our mental health at work is important, especially now.

Whether working from home or as an essential worker, the COVID-19 pandemic has added new challenges and pressures that may be impacting our mental health and general well-being.

Earlier this month, the MFL hosted a free webinar on 'Work, Mental Health and Resilience During a Pandemic' with Ela Partyka, who is the Program Director for the Canadian Mental Health Association, Winnipeg.

The webinar focused on what mental health is, how work may be affecting our mental health during this pandemic, and how building

our own resiliency can help protect, and maintain positive mental health during this uncertain time.

We were glad that so many participants were able to join us for this important discussion. While we would all prefer to be able to gather in person, offering safety and health webinars is the next best thing.

Thank you to everyone who participated.



Virtual Memorial honours women and girls lost to violence

While we could not gather together in person this year, the MFL Women's Committee organized a Virtual Memorial to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

This day was established as December 6th in order to commemorate the tragic events that took place in Montreal 31 years ago, when 14 women were brutally murdered at L'Ecole Polytechnique in a misogynist attack: to put it clearly and plainly - they were killed because they were women. As union activists, we need to continue to work to eradicate femicide and violence against women and girls.

Guest speaker Sherri Rollins did a great job to raise awareness about the United Nations Safe Cities Initiative and speak from her experience on what cities can and should be doing to make public spaces safer for women and girls. Rollins is the Winnipeg City Councillor for Fort Rouge - East Fort Garry and she serves as City's Chair of Protection, Community Services and Parks Committee.

As the MFL Women's Committee was unable to host its usual fundraising lunch for women's shelters, this year the committee sold t-shirts to mark the Day of Action and Remembrance, with proceeds going to women's shelters and the vital work they do.



PRESIDENT REBECK AND COUNCILLOR SHERRI ROLLINS IN MFL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE T-SHIRTS.

MFL's Learn About Labour program brings labour education to a new generation of Manitobans

Manitoba's unions have always recognized the importance of providing opportunities for young people to learn about unions, what we fight for, the gains we've made, and the work still left to do.

This year, the MFL was pleased to officially launch its re-named and re-vamped Learn About Labour program (replacing the former Labour Christmas Tree program). Learn About Labour connects Manitoba students with opportunities to learn about labour rights, the history of the labour movement, and how our struggles have helped to shape the world we live in today.

In just our first month, thanks to generous donations from Manitoba's unions, Learn About Labour has already been able to sponsor more than 30 Grade Six classes to participate in the Manitoba Museum's Strike 1919: Divided City virtual tour and

exhibit, teaching students about the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, a seminal moment in our history, when ordinary working people stood up for their rights, for fairness and for dignity for all.

Learn About Labour has been expanded to be available province-wide, and we've been excited to partner with schools from communities all over Manitoba, from Winnipeg to Gillam, from Vita to The Pas, from Swan River to Winnipeg Beach.

If your Union or Local is interested in making a donation so we can continue to grow the Learn About Labour program and engage even more students in the labour movement, please make cheques payable to Learn About Labour, c/o MFL, 303-275 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4M6.

Pallister wants to tip the scales against unions. We are fighting back



Manitobans are the most fair-minded people in the country, and we value the ability to work together and build a stronger province. Unfortunately, we have a Premier who doesn't value fairness and who doesn't treat working people in our province respectfully.

This fall, the Pallister government launched its latest attack on unions and working people by introducing Bill 16, the Labour Relations Amendment Act. If passed, the bill will significantly alter collective bargaining in Manitoba and tilt the scales against unions and workers. Manitobans want a fair and balanced labour relations system, not one that is out of whack.

Prior to introducing this legislation, the government tasked the Labour Management Review Committee (LMRC) with providing advice on some proposed changes to the Labour Relations Act.

The LMRC is a long-standing committee, comprised of labour and employer representatives, and it has served to provide advice to government on labour relations issues for decades. The LMRC was unanimous in recommending against a number of government proposals, which, contrary to the LMRC's advice, have been included in Bill 16, such as:

- Eliminating Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) – binding arbitration after 60 days of a strike or lockout;
- Adding costly, burdensome and unnecessary red tape requirements to public sector unions; and
- Making it easier to fire striking workers.

Proceeding with ideologically-motivated changes that neither employer nor workers want shows that the Pallister government

doesn't listen to anyone, and doesn't care about what's good for jobs, working families, or our province's economy.

There are number of significant elements to this bill, which unions should be aware of.

Making it easier for bad employers to fire striking workers

This bill would make it easier for an employer to fire a worker for strike-related activities.

Currently, an employer only has the right to refuse to reinstate a worker after a strike if the worker is charged and convicted of a criminal offence for misconduct.

Bill 16 would remove the requirement for a criminal conviction, meaning that a worker could be fired solely based on the employer's assessment of "just cause" (the Manitoba Labour Board would also have to be satisfied of the cited "just cause"). This change would leave workers far more vulnerable to bad employers trying to retaliate against strike leaders and union organizers.

Redefining the workforce for a certification vote

When it comes to determining the threshold for union certification votes, Bill 16 would require the Manitoba Labour Board to carry out an assessment of whether or not the number of employees at the time of the application fairly represents the "regular or anticipated" number of employees. If the Board determines that the current number is not representative, it may delay the vote or dismiss the application altogether.

This means that if the Board concludes that the regular or anticipated workforce is greater than at the time of application for certification, a union's application may be dismissed outright, or the union may be required to obtain more union cards before the Board will order a vote, providing more time and opportunity for the employer to interfere and pressure employees to vote against unionizing.

This change is expected to cause major problems and delays for union drives in the construction sector, in particular, where employment numbers swing up and down significantly based on project phases and schedules.

Making it easier to decertify a union

Bill 16 would make it easier to decertify a union from representing members in a workplace. The bill would reduce the threshold for triggering a decertification vote from 50 per cent to 40 per cent,

and the threshold for triggering a displacement vote from 45 per cent to 40 per cent.

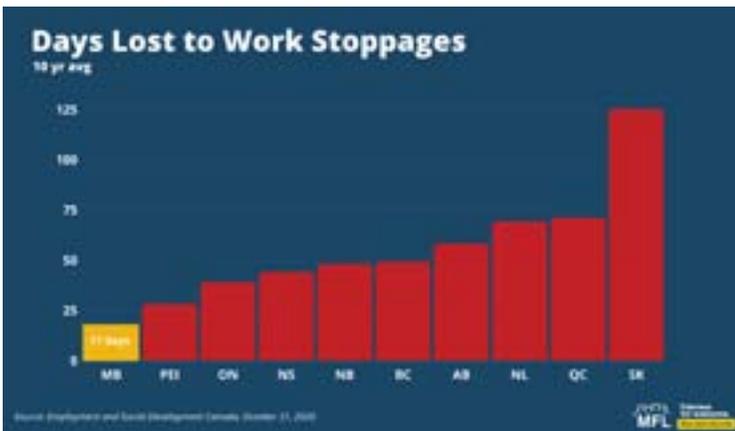
This means that when 40 per cent or more of the employees in a bargaining unit petition for decertification or displacement of a union, the Manitoba Labour Board will then hold a secret ballot vote of all employees, which will be determined on the basis of simple majority (50 per cent + 1).

In its first year in office, the Pallister government made changes to the Labour Relations Act to make it more difficult for workers to join a union by banning card check certification.

As a result, workers and unions are now required to go through a more lengthy, conflictual and difficult two-vote process where employees must vote once by signing union cards, and then vote again through a secret ballot vote, making it easier for employers to interfere and pressure employees to vote against unionizing. Bill 16 continues the Pallister government's campaign against unionization.

Eliminating Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Bill 16 would eliminate Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a made-in-Manitoba approach that has contributed to Manitoba experiencing the fewest days lost to strikes and lockouts over the last decade. Workers want to work and provide for their families, and the ADR tool has allowed our province to avoid the long, bitter and drawn out labour disputes Canadians have seen in other provinces over the last 20 years. When both sides cannot come to an agreement after two months, an arbitrator is brought and they settle a deal.



ADR currently allows either party of a strike or lockout to request binding arbitration to settle a dispute after 60 days. ADR reduces days lost to strikes / lockouts in two main ways: (1) it provides an incentive for parties to be reasonable at the bargaining table and try to reach a deal through negotiations, rather than risking a less favourable outcome imposed by a third-party arbitrator, and (2) it reduces the lengths of strikes and lockouts by allowing either side to trigger binding arbitration to end a strike or lockout after 60 days.

Under Bill 16, binding arbitration would only be available in the case of a first contract, but would no longer be available to labour or employers to deter and shorten strikes and lockouts.

Pallister's finance minister has said the only reason they want to eliminate ADR is because no other province has this tool in place. But given the clear positive results that it has had for Manitoba, Pallister's poor decision to eliminate ADR will only serve to remove a Manitoba advantage that has benefited workers, employers and our province as a whole for two decades.

Burying public sector unions in red tape

Bill 16 would impose new, unnecessary and costly red tape reporting requirements on "public sector unions" - the same group of unions that took the Pallister government to court over the government's wage freeze legislation and won, with the Court of Queen's Bench striking down the law as unconstitutional.

A "public sector union" is defined by Bill 16 as "a union certified to act as the bargaining agent" for employees who work for a list of specified employers, including (but not limited to) the government, government agencies, RHAs/Shared Health, a reporting organization under the Financial Administration Act, a CFS authority or agency, a Manitoba university and MITT, a school district or division and any other employer set out in Regulation.

Unions are already accountable to the people they serve and are funded by: their members. Unlike a lot of businesses, unions do not receive taxpayers' money.

There are already rules in place requiring unions to disclose financial information about their operations to their members, and unions are in full compliance.

We checked with the Manitoba Labour Board and it has not received a complaint about a union's financial disclosure anytime in the last decade, because unions are already open and transparent and following the rules. This new law is solving a problem that doesn't exist. It is a cynical and petty response by Pallister to public sector workers and their unions standing-up for their rights. The MFL will be campaigning strongly against this new attack on working people.

Over the coming months we will be launching a series of ads and educational materials to help union members understand what is at stake with this bill, and we will need your help to get the word out. Right now, you can tell the Premier that he has the wrong plan for Manitoba by going to mfl.ca and signing our petition. You can also find more information about the bill there.



Let's keep fighting for paid sick leave

This fall, Manitoba became the first province to make sure all workers have the right to take paid sick leave through the federal government's new sick leave benefit program, while making sure their jobs are secure.

For months, Dr. Brent Roussin has been telling Manitobans that they should stay home if they are sick to help us deal with the COVID-10 pandemic. As many in the labour movement have pointed out, workers without access to paid sick leave at their jobs are forced to make choices between their paycheques and doing the right thing to protect public health. Far too many Manitobans have no access whatsoever to paid sick leave on the job, especially lower wage workers.

The federal paid sick leave program was introduced by the Trudeau government at the urging of the federal NDP and its leader Jagmeet Singh and the Candian Labour Congress. While Manitobans were able access that program, our employment standards code needed to catch up with Dr. Roussin's advice and give all workers the right to take time off of work when they're sick without worrying about it impacting their jobs.

Studies demonstrate that paid sick leave is an important tool to help reduce COVID-19 transmission. Making sure workers do not have to choose between staying home when sick and their paycheques is the right thing to do to protect public health.

Unfortunately, while the bill had the support of both the Pallister government and the NDP Official Opposition to pass into law

in one day, the Independent Liberal MLAs decided to delay it. We were glad to see this right established by the Legislature eventually.

It will make a real difference for working people in our province. This includes workers with illnesses, like the flu, or an underlying medical condition that makes them more susceptible to contracting COVID-19.

But this just a start, not the end. The federal program will not provide full wage replacement for many workers, and it is temporary (scheduled to end in fall of 2021). More than half of workers in this country have no paid sick days at work, and those rates are even higher for lower wage workers. Canada as a whole ranks among the worst in the world when it comes to employer paid sick days.

Whether we are in a pandemic or not, workers should be able to do the right thing for public health and stay home when they are sick, without worrying about losing the paycheques they use to feed their families and keep a roof over their heads.

All workers deserve to have the economic security of paid sick time at work, now and in the future. That is why we will continue to fight for permanent paid sick leave for all workers in Manitoba.



Stella's restaurant workers take a stand for respect and fairness

In September, the employees of Stella's restaurant on Sherbrook went on strike. These workers are members of UFCW Local 832, and they organized following the 'Not My Stella's' campaign, which highlighted the widespread sexual harassment and terrible working conditions long tolerated and encouraged by the Stella's owners and management.

Stella's workers have made it clear that the strike was about the complete lack of respect shown to them by their employer. UFCW 832 President Jeff Traeger even said Stella's is one of the most disrespectful employers that UFCW 832 has ever dealt with.

As a result of constant attempts at worker intimidation and suppression, UFCW 832 has called for a boycott Stella's of all locations:

- 1. Stella's Sherbrook – 116 Sherbrook St.

- 2. Stella's Catering & Commissary – Unit 16 – 1100 Waverley St.
 - 3. Stella's Bakery – 110 Sherbrook St.
 - 4. Stella's Grant – 195 Grant Ave.
 - 5. Stella's at Plug In – 460 Portage Ave.
 - 6. Stella's au CCFM – 340 Provencher Blvd.
 - 7. Stella's on Pembina – 1463 Pembina Highway
 - 8. Stella's YWG – This location is closed
- The MFL supports this boycott.

Instead of realizing the error of their ways, this employer has continued to dig in and treat workers poorly. Enough is enough, it is time for to show your support for fairness in the workplace and boycott this employer until they start treating workers with respect.

In early November, Stella's put the Sherbrook location up for sale. The

company did not notify UFCW 832 or any of its members at Stella's before closing the restaurant permanently. This was another shameful display by the owners of a company that bases its business on treating workers terribly.

We encourage everyone to stop supporting this employer at any of their businesses.



MFL PRESIDENT KEVIN REBECK AND STAFF JOIN STELLA'S WORKERS ON THE PICKET LINE. NDP MLA FOR WOLSELEY LISA NAYLOR IS ALSO PICTURED.

**Manitoba's labour laws
get the job done.**



**Don't let Pallister
wreck what's working.**

Learn more at  **MFL.ca/StopBill16**