



Manitoba Federation of Labour

Policy Book

Last updated: September, 2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 1.0 TRADE UNIONISM & THE MFL | 4 |
| 2.0 EQUITY, INCLUSION & HUMAN RIGHTS | 6 |
| 2.1 Gender Equity & Women’s Rights | 7 |
| 2.2 Colonialism & Indigenous Rights | 8 |
| 2.3 Combatting Racism & Discrimination | 9 |
| 3.0 LABOUR LAW | 11 |
| 3.1 Labour Relations | 11 |
| 3.2 Employment Standards | 12 |
| 4.0 WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH | 14 |
| 5.0 WORKERS COMPENSATION | 17 |
| 6.0 THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND PRIVATIZATION | 23 |
| 7.0 WAGES AND INCOME POLICY | 26 |
| 7.1 Minimum Wage | 26 |
| 7.2 Construction Industry Wages Act (CIWA) | 26 |
| 7.3 Project Labour Agreements & Community Benefit Agreements | 27 |
| 7.4 Employment Insurance (EI) | 27 |
| 7.5 Pensions & Retirement Security | 28 |
| 8.0 ECONOMIC POLICY | 31 |
| 8.1 Economic Priorities | 31 |
| 8.2 Pay Equity / Closing the Gender Pay Gap | 32 |
| 8.3 Child Care | 33 |
| 8.4 Canada Post | 34 |
| 8.5 Public Transit | 34 |
| 8.6 Arts & Culture | 34 |
| 8.7 Agricultural / Migrant Workers | 35 |
| 9.0 HEALTH CARE | 36 |
| 9.1 The Canada Health Act | 36 |
| 9.2 Strengthening Health Care | 36 |
| 9.3 Long Term Care | 37 |
| 9.4 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) | 38 |

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| 9.5 | Mental Health / Addictions..... | 38 |
| 9.6 | Pharmacare..... | 39 |
| 9.7 | Privatization..... | 40 |
| 9.8 | Abortion Rights..... | 40 |
| 10.0 | EDUCATION | 41 |
| 10.1 | Public Schools | 41 |
| 10.2 | Post-Secondary Education, Training and Apprenticeship | 42 |
| 11.0 | DEMOCRACY..... | 44 |
| 11.1 | Political Action and the NDP | 44 |
| 11.2 | Elections Financing..... | 44 |
| 11.3 | Whistleblower Protection | 45 |
| 11.4 | Peace-Keeping, Not War | 45 |
| 12.0 | ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY | 46 |

INTRODUCTION

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to represent the interests of affiliated unions, and to advance the social and economic welfare of all working people in Manitoba.

Our affiliated unions represent 125,000 unionized workers from the public sector, the private sector, and the building trades, from workplaces as diverse as hospitals, schools, manufacturing plants, retail stores, construction sites, packing plants, arts and cultural facilities, group homes and day programs, mines, hydro-electric projects and many more.

The MFL is structured and run democratically, directed by policy resolutions that are debated and adopted at triennial Conventions attended by elected delegates from our affiliates.

The MFL maintains a record of all policy resolutions passed at every convention, providing a comprehensive record of all adopted policies since the MFL's establishment in 1956. However, we recognize that the extremely large volume of adopted resolutions can make it challenging to search and access individual resolutions.

In order to address this challenge and make our adopted policies more accessible and usable, in 2006 the MFL created a separate "Policy Book," which is updated after every Convention and provides a high-level overview of the MFL's most current and active policy resolutions, organized by topic area (rather than by the Convention year in which they were adopted).

The present document, "MFL Policy Book 2022," has been updated to reflect policy direction arising from the most recent MFL Convention, held virtually (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), May 5-6, 2022.

1.0 TRADE UNIONISM & THE MFL

The strength of the labour movement is built on solidarity and respect among workers. We are committed to the goals of worker democracy, social justice, equality, and peace. We are dedicated to making the lives of workers and their families safe, secure, and healthy.

Every worker is entitled, without discrimination, to a job with decent wages and working conditions, union representation, free collective bargaining, a safe and healthy workplace, and the right to strike.

All human beings are entitled to basic human rights, political freedom, strong public services, good democratic government, a safe and sustainable environment, a just and equitable society, and a peaceful world.

Diversity in our society must be protected, promoted, and celebrated. We believe that every worker is an equal member of the human family and has the right to share in the benefits of union membership, regardless of gender, gender identity, colour, creed, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, or age. We stand for an inclusive society and stand against abuses of human rights in our workplaces, our communities, our country and around the world.

The MFL fiercely speaks out for our affiliates and their members to employers, government, and the public to ensure the rights of workers are protected and expanded.

We defend and promote the principles of democracy and equality and hold true the ideal of human rights for all. In solidarity, we pursue social, economic, and political justice – the goals on which the labour movement was founded.

The purpose and roles of the MFL are to:

1. Support the principles, policies and activities of the Canadian Labour Congress, including working across borders in solidarity.
2. Promote the interests of affiliates and respond to requests from affiliates for help with activities such as union education, organizing and collective bargaining.
3. Work to advance the economic and social welfare of all Manitoba workers, including those who are unemployed or retired.
4. Speak for labour on provincial issues and work for laws that protect and promote union principles, such as free collective bargaining, worker's rights, the right to strike and the security and well-being of all workers.
5. Promote union principles and the benefits of unionization through media, other communications, and education to build greater understanding of the labour movement and the importance of extending union representation to workers not yet in a union.

6. Encourage the sale and use of union-made goods and services through the use of the Union label and other symbols.
7. Provide leadership in political action and encourage greater worker participation in the political process.

Celebrating Workers' Achievements and Struggles:

The Manitoba labour movement has a rich and lengthy tradition of celebrating the accomplishments of workers and their struggles on both Labour Day (a date fixed by Parliament in 1894 as the first Monday in September) and on May Day (May 1st – recognized as an annual event in 1891 by the Second International, an organization of socialist and labour parties formed in Paris on July 14, 1889).

From time to time, Manitoba's labour movement will also band together to mark and celebrate other significant historical milestones, such as it did in 2019 to mark the centennial anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike.

2.0 EQUITY, INCLUSION & HUMAN RIGHTS

The Manitoba labour movement recognizes and is very proud of the diversity of our union membership, and we recognize the need to do more to ensure that all workers are made to feel welcome, included, and safe within their workplaces, their communities and within our union structures. Diversity is vital to the strength of the union movement and a healthy society, and more work is needed to extend the great benefits of union representation to all workers.

Unions have established many different and evolving democratic structures to provide members of equity-seeking groups with forums to raise and work on critical issues and develop strategies to deal with them. These structures play important roles in our movement. They serve to identify critical emerging issues for the union movement and its leadership at large and to provide education for workers and the community. They also provide invaluable advice and strategies on how to ensure that fairness and equity remain foundational to our movement and society.

The MFL has adopted a series of measures intended to empower and support equity-seeking groups within our governance and operating structures:

- The MFL's Executive Council (the MFL's governing body in between Conventions) has constitutionally protected positions for women leaders to serve as Affiliate Vice-Presidents.
- At the MFL's triennial Conventions, ad hoc Caucuses elect representatives to serve as Vice Presidents on the Executive Council representing Workers of Colour, Indigenous Workers, and Solidarity & Pride (2SLGBTQI+ workers).
- An ad hoc Convention caucus elects a representative to the MFL's Executive Council to serve as a VP representing Young Workers.
- The MFL operates an active Women's Committee that works on feminist and gender equity issues.
- The MFL operates an active Equity & Human Rights Committee that works to promote equity and human rights, and combat discrimination in all its forms, including work on anti-colonialism, anti-racism, solidarity and pride, disability rights, and more.
- The MFL provides representation from union retirees on its Executive Council.

The MFL is strongly committed to continuing to work within the labour movement and broader civil society to combat sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination that seek to divide and weaken us. We believe in equity and social justice for all workers and all people. More work needs to be done to make the House of Labour, our workplaces and our society welcoming and supportive for all.

The labour movement in Canada and Manitoba has devoted substantial efforts and resources to promoting human rights. It is our goal to make our workplaces and communities safe places that are free of harassment and discrimination for all workers, no matter what their gender / gender identity, their race or colour, their physical and mental

abilities, their religion, their sexual orientation, their age or any other differences between us. We are committed to defending human rights, trade union rights and equality for all.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and all forms of discrimination are the natural enemy of human rights; they are anti-worker and anti-union.

Historically, one out of every five complaints received by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission contains allegations of harassment in the workplace, underscoring the close inter-dependence between human rights and workplace rights, and the clear need for unions to play a leadership role in the struggle for human rights.

2.1 Gender Equity & Women's Rights

The labour movement has been and continues to be a powerful force for advancing gender equity and feminism, in the workplace and in society more broadly. Unions help to make workplaces safer, and challenge harassment and discrimination. Unions have helped to open doors for women working in trades and technology, and to build women's leadership and political participation. Many challenges remain, especially for women who face additional barriers because of race, disability, Indigenous status, age, sexuality and gender identity and expression, and so we remain committed to eliminating barriers to equity and full participation.

Gender discrimination remains a shameful feature of Canada's workplaces, historically and in the present day. Women are much more likely than men to be lower paid, work part-time rather than full-time jobs, and be self-employed or work in other forms of precarious employment. Women are also far more likely to live in poverty, especially senior women. Women continue to perform the majority of unpaid caregiving work related to raising children, supporting families and caring for aged parents, and are more likely to be supporting a family on their own. Women are also more likely to be disadvantaged as a result of inadequate child care systems.

Gender inequity also impacts workers who identify as gender diverse, non-binary and/or two-spirited. Much work remains to be done, including within the House of Labour, to make spaces inclusive and welcoming for gender diverse people. The MFL has begun a process of updating its Constitution, policies, and publications to use gender neutral or gender inclusive language as an important step in doing the work. The MFL Women's Committee has also been learning about and working on ways to ensure our movement is welcoming and supportive of gender diverse workers.

The MFL is committed to developing and supporting campaigns and strategies to tackle inequities faced by women and gender diverse people in the workplace and community, including:

- Ending gender-based violence;
- Supporting victims of violence through networks of well-funded shelters, and accessible paid domestic violence leave;
- Advocating for action on the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG);

- Establishing education and action plans to end sexual harassment in the workplace and society at large, and foster consent culture;
- Campaigning for universal, affordable and high quality child care, including better wages for the sector's predominantly female workforce, and investigating a model of public delivery;
- Eradicating gender pay inequity and supporting strong pay equity legislation for the public and private sectors;
- Achieving concrete employment equity goals in the public and private sectors;
- Championing reproductive health and abortion rights – fully funded, accessible and delivered by the public health care system, including safe buffer zones around abortion providers;
- Fostering the development of women trade union leaders, activists, and staff representatives; and
- Lobbying for a feminist lens to be applied to post-pandemic recovery strategies, recognizing the disproportional impacts felt by women workers.

2.2 Colonialism & Indigenous Rights

The labour movement recognizes that Canada's colonial history, including the shameful experience and legacy of residential schools, has significantly harmed and disrupted First Nations, Métis and Inuit societies and economies. It has led to Indigenous workers having entrenched inequalities, compounded by racism, exploitation, injustice, and systemic discrimination. It is deplorable that Indigenous communities are continuing to struggle to access basic necessities, like clean drinking water, education, health care and social services, and we call for investment in measures to immediately augment public services in Indigenous communities.

We are committed to working in partnership to rebuild relationships with Indigenous communities to better support the struggle for justice. The MFL is committed to supporting strategies that will lead to recognition within the Constitution of the national identity of the Indigenous peoples, of full rights of their language and culture, self-government, and satisfaction of land claims. The MFL supports the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) calls to action, recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and campaigns for child welfare reform, and will continue to stand in solidarity with survivors and families in calling for equity and justice.

We also recognize the underrepresentation of Indigenous workers in the labour force and especially in the unionized labour force. Unions have been a strong voice calling for strategies to eliminate educational, employment and income gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manitobans and Canadians, and to extend the benefits of unionization to Indigenous workers. We are committed to working for education and training, employment opportunities and pay equity strategies to support good jobs and ending racism against Indigenous workers.

We are also committed to ensuring that the House of Labour is safe and welcoming for Indigenous workers. We will work with Indigenous workers to strengthen their voices and presence in the labour movement and within union leadership. The MFL operates an

Equity & Human Rights Committee to help direct its work on anti-colonialism and anti-racism initiatives. We will continue to work with affiliates on inclusion strategies to strengthen the participation of Indigenous workers.

The MFL will continue to work on issues such as:

- Extending representation and the benefits of unionization to more Indigenous workers;
- Combating racism against Indigenous workers and racialized workers, and ending discrimination in hiring, promotion and pay;
- Better access to education / skills training, good jobs, dignity and safe working conditions for Indigenous workers and other equity-seeking workers;
- Respect for Indigenous and Treaty Rights;
- Providing for decent and fair living conditions for Indigenous people on and off reserve, including access to clean drinking water, safe housing, and ending discrimination against Indigenous children in the delivery of child welfare services;
- Advancing the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the recommendation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women; and
- Working with the CLC to strengthen worker education and engagement in the struggle to combat Canada's colonial legacy.

The MFL also supports the call of the national labour movement to have clean water recognized by the United Nations as a human right, guaranteed to all. We call on governments to ensure that clean water is immediately provided to all persons living in Canada, including the many First Nations and Indigenous communities who are currently without.

The MFL will also urge all governments to respect and uphold the provisions of *Jordan's Principle* by guaranteeing the delivery of critical public services to those in need first, and settling inter-governmental jurisdictional disputes later, whether on or off reserve.

2.3 Combatting Racism & Discrimination

Racism, discrimination, and division are not union values. The labour movement will always work with our allies to push for change and to build a better and more equitable world for all. Unions have been at the forefront of the struggle against racism, discrimination against persons with disabilities, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination in our workplaces and in our society at large. The MFL's Equity & Human Rights Committee is mandated to help direct stronger actions to combat racism and discrimination in all its forms.

We will continue to:

- Promote greater involvement of racialized and equity-seeking workers in union roles and positions of leadership;

- Stand against racism, fascism, white supremacy and other forms of right-wing extremism and hate. We recognize the need to advance anti-Islamophobia work in this era of widespread anti-Muslim discrimination;
- Work with the CLC to push for a national anti-racism framework and the establishment of an Anti-Racism Council to coordinate national, provincial, territorial, and municipal anti-racism and human rights policies and legislation;
- Fight for targeted education, training, and job creation programs for groups with high rates of unemployment, including newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities, racialized workers, and Indigenous and northern communities;
- Work for the creation of high quality jobs needed by millions of unemployed, under-employed and precariously employed workers;
- Fight for migrant worker rights, including access to health care, fair wages and benefits, safe working conditions and full immigration status;
- Actively participate in the Pride movement, fight against all forms of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, and oppose organizations that are homophobic or transphobic;
- Endorse full, comprehensive and timely implementation of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*, introduced by former NDP Minister, Sister Jennifer Howard, passed unanimously by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, but stalled under the Pallister/Stefanson government;
- Work with the CLC and disability rights organizations to ensure our governments honour our commitments under United Nations Conventions;
- Advocate for workers who are injured or made sick on the job, resulting in a disability, to be able to access fair workers compensation benefits and retraining opportunities;
- Encourage young workers to get involved with their unions and the broader labour movement, and advance issues that are of high importance to young activists;
- Call for adequate funding for organizations and programs that support diversity, fight discrimination, assist equity-seeking groups, and work with vulnerable members of our society, and champion policies and legislation that promote values of respect, dignity, and fairness for all in an environment that promotes and supports diversity as well as equal attainment of life opportunities for all community members.

The MFL will work with affiliates to promote greater representation of equity-seeking workers in its Committees and activities. The MFL Equity & Human Rights Committee is empowered to help steer the MFL in its anti-racism and anti-discrimination work.

3.0 LABOUR LAW

3.1 Labour Relations

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is firmly committed to ensuring that every worker has the democratic right to join a union, the right to free and fair collective bargaining, and the right to strike. We see these as essential and fundamental rights, and recognize them as rights protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There have been many encroachments on these rights by right-wing governments at the federal and provincial level over the years, which the MFL has actively resisted and opposed. Protecting and championing these fundamental rights will always be core to the MFL's mandate, as the provincial central labour body for Manitoba.

Current law appropriately recognizes these rights as vitally important to the public interest, as explained in the preamble of *The Manitoba Labour Relations Act* (emphasis added):

it is in the public interest of the Province of Manitoba to further harmonious relations between employers and employees by encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining between employers and unions as the freely designated representatives of employees.

The MFL supports a fair, equitable and balanced framework for unions and employers to bargain. This balance should always be maintained within *The Manitoba Labour Relations Act*, including with respect to applications for union certification, as well as to all applications related to bargaining and implementation of collective agreements.

The MFL has always spoken out against measures that tilt the balance of labour relations in favour of employers to the disadvantage of workers and their unions. The Pallister/Stefanson government has already made several major moves to unbalance labour relations in our province. The elimination of card check certification, forced union intermingling representation votes in health care, wage freeze legislation (eventually repealed as a result of labour court action) and the banning of Project Labour Agreements are among the most significant interferences with fair labour relations and collective bargaining instituted by the Pallister/Stefanson government.

The Pallister/Stefanson government also introduced (but did not pass) a bill that would have fundamentally changed the way in which collective bargaining is done to favour employers over workers. Bill 16 would have eliminated Manitoba's effective Automatic Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism, added unnecessary and expensive red tape to union financial accounting, eliminated notice requirements for employers instituting technological changes that affect workers' jobs, and made it easier for employers to fire striking workers, among other changes. Fortunately, strong labour and public opposition to this and other bad bills forced the government to back down, but the government has refused to commit to not reintroducing a similar bill in the future and so labour must remain vigilant and be ready to fight back.

The MFL supports the following democratic provisions for Labour Relations legislation:

- The reinstating of card check certification;
- A democratic, simple majority threshold of 50% + 1 for card check certification;
- A ban on the use of replacement workers during strikes or lockouts (anti-scab); and
- Fair first contract and binding arbitration provisions.

We oppose:

- Interference with free and fair collective bargaining, including legislating wages or any other part of collective agreements;
- Back-to-work legislation;
- Right-to work legislation / interference with the RAND formula;
- Overly aggressive “essential service” provisions that have the effect of weakening labour’s position in bargaining and labour action; and
- Forced union intermingling votes (such as those imposed on health care unions by the Pallister/Stefanson government), which disregard the democratic decisions already made by workers about their union representation.

The MFL is committed to defending workers and their unions against the imposition of anti-worker and anti-union laws and policies in all forms and on all occasions as they arise.

The MFL will continue to lead efforts on behalf of public sector unions through the Partnership to Defend Public Services (PDPS) coalition to challenge and seek redress for the Pallister/Stefanson government’s Public Services Sustainability Act (PSSA). While this Act has now been officially repealed due to labour’s court action, it continues to hurt workers, including the tens of thousands of workers still without settled contracts due to the public sector bargaining mess created by the government.

3.2 Employment Standards

The labour movement has always fought passionately to improve the lives and working conditions of all workers, both unionized and non-unionized. Many of the most basic rights and standards that were first won by unions have now been extended to all workers, like the minimum wage, overtime pay, holiday time, and maternity leave and parental leave. Over time, the labour movement has pushed and shaped *The Employment Standards Code*, setting out basic, minimum standards for work, which all workers are entitled to. It is a core part of the MFL’s work to lobby and campaign for enhancing this framework in line with evolving socially acceptable norms and standards. This work will help counter the real power imbalance that exists between employers and workers in all workplaces, especially workers without a union in their corner.

Precarious work is increasingly becoming the norm, especially for non-unionized workers, characterized by involuntary part-time hours, temporary employment, no job security, self-employment, poor rates of pay, no benefits, sub-standard health and safety standards and heightened vulnerability to threats, harassment, and discrimination. This is especially true for vulnerable workers, including women, young workers, first-time workers, immigrants,

temporary foreign workers, workers of colour, Indigenous workers, and employees of small companies.

The Employment Standards Code should be regularly reviewed, updated, and improved to reflect dynamic changes in the world of work and evolving societal norms of fairness, equality, and work-life balance, which labour must constantly work to shape and influence. *The Code* should apply to all workers, regardless of occupation or circumstance, or union membership. New and special provisions are needed to protect the rights of “Gig Workers,” who are routinely and systematically misclassified as independent contractors and denied basic Employment Standards rights.

The MFL supports:

- Raising the minimum wage to a living wage level, starting with the most recent level calculated by the CCPA of \$18.34/hour (2022 calculation for a 2-adult earner, 2 child family), and reassessed annually to reflect changes in the cost of living, because employment should afford all workers with sufficient income to live above the poverty line, with dignity and the basics of life;
- Reinstatement of the security guard special minimum wage scale, which was legislated by the NDP and cancelled by the Pallister/Stefanson government;
- Enhanced paid employment leave provisions related to domestic violence (a victory of the Manitoba labour movement and a Canadian first) – along with public awareness campaigns to ensure victims are aware of their rights;
- A minimum of 10 paid sick days for all workers in order allow workers to recover and protect public health, without having to lose their paycheque;
- Paid family leave;
- Paid breaks and fair time-off between shifts;
- Predictive scheduling and fairness for workers (i.e., in retail, hospitality, etc.) called upon to work Sundays or holidays;
- Stronger “Just Cause” and “Burden of Proof” protections; and
- Guaranteed employment leaves to allow workers to access improving EI benefits.

4.0 WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

The MFL has always fought for the right of every worker to have a workplace that is safe and healthy. All families have the right to expect their loved ones will return home safely at the end of each shift – no exceptions. The MFL runs a very active Health & Safety Committee and holds health & safety educationals and events on a regular basis, championing and advancing health and safety issues from a worker’s perspective.

Workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities do not have to happen – so-called workplace “accidents” are fully preventable. With the right laws, policies, and investments, we can ensure that all workers stay safe and healthy on the job. The approach taken by our provincial government in terms of injury prevention, the strength of laws and regulations to protect workers, and the commitment to enforcement activities has a big impact on whether or not workers can count on having a safe and healthy workplace.

Working primarily in partnership with NDP governments over the years, the MFL has won important improvements to Manitoba’s health and safety framework, such as:

- Enshrinement in law of the four essential workplace health and safety rights: the right to know, the right to participate, the right to refuse unsafe work, and the right to work and exercise these rights without being subject to discrimination;
- Stricter fines for employers who refuse to comply with health and safety rules;
- Expanded requirements for health and safety programs and health and safety representatives in more workplaces;
- Paid educational leave for joint health & safety committee members, and clearer requirements for employers to respond to committee recommendations;
- Five-year Plans for Workplace Injury and Illness Prevention;
- Creation of a Chief Prevention Officer position (subsequently eliminated by the Pallister/Stefanson government), and a dedicated prevention agency, SAFE Work Manitoba;
- Amendments to *The Highway Traffic Act* to better protect construction and road workers;
- New rules for tackling violence, harassment and bullying in the workplace;
- Stronger rules around the right to refuse unsafe work, increased penalties for employers that discourage injured workers from filing WCB claims (claim suppression), and stiffer rules around employers who take discriminatory action against workers (e.g., reverse onus); and
- Expansion of the ground-breaking Safe Workers of Tomorrow program.

Despite these improvements, there are still far too many cases of worker illness, injury, and deaths on the job. For instance, in 2021, 24,000 Manitobans were injured at work and 26 workers died from occupational injuries or illnesses. These are sobering statistics, which compel us to redouble our efforts.

It is of great concern to the MFL that the Pallister/Stefanson government has been moving backward, rather than forward, on workplace safety & health. Since their election in 2016, they have already:

- Eliminated the Minister’s Advisory Committee on Workplace Safety & Health, a volunteer, expert body;
- Eliminated the position of Chief Prevention Officer;
- Shuttered the Brandon and District Worker Advisory Office, eliminating local assistance with WCB claims and appeals;
- Weakened enforcement by reducing the number of workplace safety and health inspections;
- Created an arbitrary rule that requires government to eliminate two protections, for every new protection added;
- Cut the number of Safety & Health Officers performing workplace inspections; and
- Watered down standards for protecting workers from harmful chemicals by abandoning the practice of “automatic adoption,” which immediately adjusts exposure limits based on the latest science.

Further improvements to our workplace health and safety laws, regulations and policies are needed to keep all workers safe and healthy at work. The MFL is committed to continuing our campaign for:

- More extensive training and access to information for joint health and safety committee members, and worker representatives to perform their important roles;
- Major amendments to *The Workplace Safety & Health Act* to better recognize psychological hazards and prioritize workplace psychological health and safety, including formal recognition of the CSA National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace to assist in identifying hazards and implementing evidence-based approaches to prevent illness and injury;
- Expansion of mental health services for workers and all Manitobans;
- A comprehensive asbestos strategy to combat Canada’s leading cause of occupational death, including training standards for those workers performing the dangerous work of asbestos remediation / disposal;
- Mandatory, timely and prevention-oriented investigative processes for workplace fatalities and critical incidents, with family and union involvement and public reporting;
- Re-establishment of the Minister’s Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health;
- Re-establishment of 1:1 journeyperson-apprentice ratios;
- Safe staffing levels to protect workers and patients/clients;
- Further strengthening of efforts on prevention, including:
 - Ongoing broad public awareness and marketing campaigns;
 - Expansion of the new SAFE Work Certified standard¹ and prevention incentive initiatives, including to more female-dominated workforces;
 - Targeted prevention efforts for vulnerable workers – these should be advanced in partnership with existing labour / community organizations;

¹ It is imperative that the SAFE Work Certified standard continue to include worker interviews as an integral component and contain no link whatsoever to claims experience – certification should be based only on the quality of a workplace’s health and safety program.

- Expanding the ground-breaking SAFE Workers of Tomorrow program to reach ALL high school students in the province; and
- Special efforts on violence prevention (including high risk workplaces such as buses, health care facilities and correctional institutions) and working alone policies to keep workers safe.
- Enforcing the Westray law to ensure criminal prosecutions of negligent employers;
- Strengthening protections for workers working alone;
- Amendments to reflect recognition of domestic violence as a workplace hazard, requiring employers to take precautions to protect workers against domestic violence;
- Ensuring workers – especially those working alone – have access to safety and emergency communication tools, such as radios or cell phone (with good/reliable coverage);
- Addressing hazards associated with fatigue and extended shift work;
- Ending violence, bullying and harassment in the workplace; and
- Strengthening protections for road workers.

The need for strong enforcement activities is as important as having strong laws and regulations in place. A law can only be as strong as the government's commitment to enforcing it. The MFL is greatly concerned by the reduction in the number of workplace health and safety inspections which has taken place under the Pallister/Stefanson Government, as well as creeping "vacancy management" in all areas of government, including Workplace Safety and Health Branch. We will continue to press for the Branch and its staff to be appropriately resourced and supported to carry out strong enforcement activities.

5.0 WORKERS COMPENSATION

Experience Rating and Claim Suppression

The Workers Compensation system was built on five foundational principles, known as the Meredith principles:

- 1) No fault compensation
- 2) Guaranteed benefits
- 3) Exclusive jurisdiction
- 4) Collective liability
- 5) Independent administration

These principles provide the underpinning of the “historic compromise” for workers compensation: workers relinquish their rights to sue an employer if they are hurt on the job, in exchange for no-fault, secure benefits for as long as they’re needed, administered independently, and funded collectively by employers. In practice, however, there are major problems with the system’s incomplete and inconsistent application of these principles.

The adoption of Experience Rating into Manitoba’s WCB assessment model has pushed Manitoba’s WCB system away from the Meredith principles, incentivizing claim suppression and aggressive return to work practices by employers. These practices hurt injured workers and deprive them of the supports that should be available to help them recover and return safely to meaningful work, thereby undermining the fairness, effectiveness, and integrity of the system.

Experience Rating creates a direct financial relationship between a given employer’s claims experience record and that same employer’s individual WCB premium costs. This individual responsibility, rather than collective responsibility, incentivizes some employers to minimize their costs by reducing the number and duration of claims, rather than incentivizing the adoption of effective health and safety programs to protect workers from injuries and illnesses in the first place. Employer interference prevents workers from accessing benefits that should be guaranteed, and the focus becomes “who’s at fault,” and how claims can be “managed” to prevent premium increases.

For as long as Experience Rating has been in place, the MFL has been raising concerns about claim suppression and aggressive return to work practices. We receive frequent reports from affiliate members about claim suppression being perpetrated by employers in different ways, including:

- Discouraging or flat-out preventing injured workers from reporting injuries and filing WCB claims;
- Aggressively fighting and appealing many or all WCB claims made by injured workers, increasingly with the aid of paid third-party “claims management” consultants;
- Filing appeals as a means of gaining access to a worker’s medical information in a “fishing expedition” to try to find “fault” or “cause” to have the claim dismissed;
- Adopting and following policies that require management to appeal any claims over a prescribed value, irrespective of the circumstances;

- Establishing incentives (like financial bonuses, or workplace celebrations) for injured workers not to report injuries or file claims – these often involve group incentives, creating additional peer pressure not to report or file a claim;
- Punishing workers for reporting an injury and filing a claim (e.g., dismissal, re-assignment, shift changes, assignment to meaningless work);
- Pressuring workers to return to their jobs before they're healthy enough to work, or failing to provide appropriate accommodations to make post-injury work safe as well as meaningful; and
- Pressuring workers to accept private insurance benefits, instead of filing a WCB claim, encroaching on what should be WCB's exclusive jurisdiction.

In the end, workers are left questioning the independence of a system (another core Meredith principle), which feels so tilted against them.

Problems with Experience Rating and the seriousness of claim suppression have been well documented in Manitoba. The MFL prepared a comprehensive report into incidences of claim suppression and aggressive return to work practices in 2010. Following this, the provincial government commissioned an independent external review of WCB's rate model in 2012/13 (Paul Petrie report), and from there, the WCB conducted an extensive consultation and commissioned a series of additional reports on the existing rate model (Morneau Shepell, Prism). Together, these investigations have produced a widespread formal recognition of the serious and systemic problem of claim suppression and aggressive return to work practices resulting from the financial incentives associated with Experience Rating.

In response to these findings, the WCB has elected to respond with a three-pronged approach aimed at creating a hybrid prevention-experience model that includes:

1. Making adjustments to the current rate model to "smooth" experience-based financial incentives and penalties, and thereby reduce (although not eliminate) financial incentives to suppress claims (i.e., making an employer's premiums less sensitive to their individual claims record);
2. Establishing a new "safety certification" standard (*SAFE Work Certified*) to guide and support employers in adopting effective occupational health and safety programs that reduce injuries and illnesses (and claims); and
3. Creating a new "prevention incentive" to financially reward the adoption of *SAFE Work Certified* health and safety programs (providing some counterbalance to the rate model incentive to suppress claims).

It bears repeating that it remains the MFL's strong preference that Experience Rating be eliminated altogether as the most direct way to address claims suppression. We favour a true collective liability, no fault and secure benefit system. However, we are cautiously hopeful that the new blended prevention-experience rate model will deliver better outcomes for injured workers.

We are continuing to lobby for:

- WCB/SAFE Work Manitoba to step-up employer and worker education and public awareness around existing prohibitions against claim suppression and aggressive return to work practices;
- Strengthened enforcement and penalties against claim suppression and aggressive return to work and more rigorous enforcement of prohibitions;
- Mandatory safe return to work plans developed jointly by workers, their doctors, and employers to guide the safe re-start of work after an injury/illness, with the WCB ready to play an “Ombudsman” role when conflicts arise;
- Clear and transparent guidelines for resolving differences of opinions between workers’ own doctors and WCB health care consultants, with deference always paid to workers’ own doctors.

Recent System Improvements and Ongoing Challenges:

In addition to our active campaign against claims suppression and experience rating, the MFL has successfully pushed for a number of positive WCB reforms:

- Elimination of the wage replacement drop down to 80% after two years (wage replacement is now based on 90% for the duration of a claim);
- Eliminating age-based reductions to impairment awards;
- Expanding coverage to organizations using volunteers and work experience programs;
- Allowing benefit levels to be topped-up above 90% (up to 100%) from other sources, including provisions negotiated as part of collective agreements;
- Strengthening prohibitions against claim suppression;
- Ensuring a minimum level of wage loss replacement benefits for low-income workers at no less than 100% of the Manitoba minimum wage;
- Strengthening the onus on workplaces to support injured workers to get back to work;
- Establishment of a consolidated arms-length prevention entity (SAFE Work Manitoba) and a prevention committee of the WCB Board of Directors;
- Introduction of reverse onus for discriminatory/retaliatory action;
- Presumptive coverage for all workers for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- Enabling legislation for the creation of a Scheduled of Presumed Occupational Disease; and
- Removing psychological injuries from the classification of “occupation disease,” and thereby eliminating the application of the “dominant cause test” to psychological injuries.

Despite these many improvements, the MFL still hears regularly from members about difficulties they face navigating the WCB system and accessing compensation services – challenges like:

- Confusion regarding detailed filing requirements and cumbersome steps in the claims adjudication process;
- Employers who block injury reporting, or pressure injured workers to re-start their jobs without safe return to work plans;
- WCB health care consultant decisions that are inconsistent with medical advice received from workers' own doctors and inadequate processes to resolve differences in medical opinions;
- Invasive interference and unjustified appeals by third party "claims management" firms seeking to minimize employer costs;
- Proving the workplace causes of occupational disease (made harder by the WCB's "dominant cause" test of causation); and
- Legislated non-coverage for many psychological injuries.

Workplace injuries and illnesses are not things that any worker wants to endure, and the WCB system can be confusing and additionally frustrating for injured workers, despite the best efforts of many WCB staff to support positive interactions, working within the current system.

The MFL is continuing to press for needed improvements to the system, such as:

- Expanded coverage, so that all workers have the benefit of WCB benefits;
- Strengthened prevention efforts;
- Eliminating "dominant cause" as the burden of proof for compensability of occupational disease, in favour of a "balance of probabilities" test;
- Establishment of robust Schedule for Presumed Occupational Disease;
- Equal treatment of physical and psychological injuries and illnesses, including:
 - Removing current exemptions preventing coverage of stress-based psychological injury or illness; and
 - Enshrining the National Standard for Workplace Psychological Health and Safety as a means to assess the presence of workplace stressors known to cause psychological illness/injury.
- Maintaining a strong funding model in the order of 130% (in the context of government considering a lower ratio that could put the long-term sustainability of the system at risk);
- Expanded benefits, such as massage therapy; and
- Fair and transparent policies for supporting workers with occupational Long COVID.

Discounting / Suppression of Medical Opinions

Over the last number of years, the MFL has been receiving more frequent reports and complaints from injured workers and from health care providers about how medical opinions are being discounted or ignored in determinations regarding their WCB claims. We're hearing about more and more cases where the WCB is making claims decisions that are at odds with the medical opinions of workers' own doctors or other health care providers. This is a very concerning trend.

While workers have the right under the current system to seek medical advice from health care providers of their choosing, it is also commonplace for the WCB to involve additional health care providers on contract with the Board to review and re-assess an injured worker's injury or illness claim. Sometimes this is done without an in-person medical examination, and strictly on the basis of a paper file review – also a concerning practice. It is unclear why and under what circumstances the WCB elects to obtain advice from a second medical source of its own. If there is information missing from a worker's own doctor, the WCB should reach out to that doctor to fill-in any holes, rather than calling in a second opinion, especially without an in-person examination. Injured workers are left feeling that the WCB is looking for medical opinions that minimize claim costs, rather than opinions focused on lasting recovery and safe return to work. It is also unclear how the WCB makes claims decisions when faced with conflicting medical opinions from different sources. On what basis does the WCB concur with a doctor it contracts with directly, over a worker's own doctor?

Sometimes the point of contention centres on diagnosis; it is common for the WCB to insist that a worker's injury or illness stems from a pre-existing condition when the worker's doctor diagnoses an occupational cause. Sometimes the disagreement relates to treatment/rehabilitation plans. For example, when the WCB refuses to approve ongoing prescribed therapy, citing lower "averages" for the type of injury in question. Other times, medical opinions on safe return to work plans are ignored, such as when a worker's doctor prescribes a series of work restrictions, easing over time as a worker recovers, but these are not respected by the employer or enforced by the WCB.

There are supposed to be processes in place to ensure that when a difference of medical opinion does occur, the physicians involved are notified and connected with one another with the aim of resolving any issues. However, these processes do not appear to be working, and consensus is not being reached in many cases, leaving workers confused and anxious about the best path forward to recovery and return to work.

Family doctors, specialists and other community health care providers are growing discouraged with the WCB system when no explanation is provided as to why their advice is not accepted or followed. We are concerned that when medical opinions are being discounted and overruled by the WCB, workers are being sent back to work unsafely, with insufficient time for recovery and /or inadequate work accommodations. While "return to work" is almost always the objective after an injury or illness, safety rather than speed must always be the priority in return to work.

The MFL believes that:

- WCB should adopt procedures to ensure that any needed information about a sick or injured worker's claim is obtained from their own health care provider;
- WCB contracted health care providers should only be used at an injured worker's request or when community health care providers are not available (in which case, the worker should be notified immediately);
- WCB should develop clear and transparent guidelines for resolving any differences of medical opinions that might arise so workers can be sure of the best path forward for recovery and safe return to work – the views of workers' own doctors that know them best should be given priority in decision making; and
- WCB should adopt the practice of having a sick or injured worker's safe return to work plan be developed jointly by the worker, their employer, and the worker's doctor; and where there is disagreement, there should be a quick and easy way to engage the WCB to intervene and build consensus before a worker resumes their activities.

6.0 THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND PRIVATIZATION

The Manitoba and Canada that we know today is very much the product of a "mixed economy," the co-existence of strong and vibrant public and private sectors. Public enterprise has been the tool that many governments have wisely used to achieve nation-building and quality service objectives. The public sector has, in many ways, been a tangible expression of our national character and commitment to caring.

In many cases, public enterprise has been the tool that delivered necessary development that private enterprise refused to undertake because of cost and magnitude. Canada's share of the canals and lock systems that make up the St. Lawrence Seaway; a national railway system; airports; telephone, electrical, water and natural gas utility systems; and the national broadcasting system are all in existence today because of the public's willingness to underwrite their development. In some of these examples, the public sector took over failed private ventures that did not have the skills or determination to do the job.

The public sector is also used to deliver vital services that families count on every day in a way where profit motive does not hamper quality, challenge universality, erode accessibility or undermine affordability, such as Medicare, public education, the Canada Pension Plan, regional economic development programs, public insurance, social security, corrections, and agencies that protect the public safety.

A fair, progressive tax system is essential to support the public sector in building a better, fairer, and more equitable society. Paying our fair share of taxes ensures that government can make the needed investments in the public services we all count on, such as health care, education, infrastructure, income support, economic development, poverty reduction, community development, child care, safety, affordable housing, social services, etc.

Also key to maintaining a high level of quality in public services and infrastructure is the recruitment and retention of skilled and fairly compensated workers in appropriate numbers to deal with workload. What governments are calling "vacancy management" is starving the public sector of needed workers to deliver high quality and accessible public services, which creates major workload, stress, and burnout issues for other employees. It is a misnomer to claim that service quality can be maintained when the workforce is short changed. Whether performing front-line services or back-end support functions, all public sector workers play important roles in ensuring the public services that families count on every day. The MFL urges government to guarantee staffing levels so as to ensure high quality public services as well as fair, reasonable and safe workloads and working conditions for public sector workers. The MFL further calls on government to introduce and implement proactive staff recruitment, and retention programs, including compensation fairness through pay equity legislation.

We also urge public sector compliance with all laws requiring action by employers. It is embarrassing and unacceptable for public sector employers to be laggards in implementing Health & Safety practices, for example. The public sector has been especially slow in implementing injury / illness prevention programming, which will keep

public sector workers safe on the job. Of particular note is how the rates of injury and illness remain extremely high among Manitoba's female-dominated health care workforce.

Balanced Budget legislation has had a negative effect on the quality and accessibility of public services in Manitoba, and the level of respect shown by government for public sector workers. The MFL has consistently opposed Balanced Budget Legislation since it was first introduced by the Filmon PC government in the 1990s as an economically unsound and dangerous fiscal straight jacket, designed to minimize the role of the public sector in our economy and remove government's ability to provide needed cyclical economic stimulus and respond to urgent needs.

The Pallister/Stefanson government has broken its promise to protect public services and respect the hardworking public sector workers who deliver them. Government has done so through layoffs, privatization, creating and maintaining staff vacancies, and interference with collective bargaining. Recent moves to privatize important components of our home care system, air ambulance services, provincial parks and liquor sales are extremely concerning and need to be opposed.

It's no surprise that right wing governments favour privatization. Historically, the relatively successful labour relations climate in the public sector has resulted in fairer wages, working conditions and benefits than what generally exist in the private sector. Private sector employers and their advocates view this as increasing pressure from their own workers for similar conditions. They also view the vibrant areas of public sector activity as lost opportunities for private sector profit-making.

The MFL opposes the Pallister/Stefanson government's strategy to expand the use of P3s, including investigating their applicability to public schools early in their mandate. P3s have tended to be cloaked in secrecy and are designed to give private investors high returns, without public input or accountability, while routinely failing to achieve purported objectives related to cost, risk transfer, and timelines at the long-term expense of taxpayers and the public. We condemn the Pallister/Stefanson government's efforts to force a P3 model for Winnipeg's waste water system in blatant opposition to advice from the public service.

The MFL similarly opposes Pallister/Stefanson efforts to extend the dangerous P3 model into the vital area of social services through the introduction of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), which prioritizes private financing, control, and profits over the provision of high quality public and community services for families and vulnerable individuals. Human needs, not private profits, should drive the provision of social services.

The MFL is also concerned about the Pallister/Stefanson government's attempts to weaken and undermine the credibility of our important and valued Crown Corporations. For example, we oppose the breaking-off of energy efficiency programming into a new entity, separate from Manitoba Hydro, and Hydro's growing push to contract out. We are also concerned about the tens of millions of dollars WCB is paying out in employer rebates, rather than investing in prevention and benefit enhancements.

We note as well that the profits of Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries and the revenue generated by Manitoba's public-owned liquor marts go directly towards funding the public

services that we all rely on, such as health care and education. On average, the liquor marts generate \$280 million in profit to help fund these services. Publicly-owned liquor marts also provide superior customer service and help to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors. The MFL is opposed to the Pallister/Stefanson government plan to provide more private liquor options in Manitoba as it will starve our public services of much needed funding, provide inferior service, and provide less protection for minors and communities.

Our Crown Corporations should be protected and developed, and any moves to privatize them should be opposed.

7.0 WAGES AND INCOME POLICY

7.1 Minimum Wage

No one should work full-time and live in poverty, but that is exactly what is happening to thousands of workers right now in Manitoba, because our minimum wage is legislated at a poverty level.

Contrary to the myths, most minimum wage workers are adults, and the majority are women, many of whom have children to support. Most minimum wage workers work for large and very profitable businesses, and a majority have been in the same job for over a year and still work for minimum wage. Every day, thousands of families are forced to make impossible choices between paying the rent and buying groceries, because our minimum wage isn't enough to allow people to make ends meet, even with a full-time job.

We urge the provincial government to make the minimum wage a living wage, which was most recently calculated by the CCPA to be \$18.34 (for a two parent/two earner, two child family in Winnipeg in 2022). Minimum wage should be adjusted every year to reflect the cost of living and ensure that no one working full-time has to live in poverty. Fighting for a living wage for all workers is part of the MFL's commitment to standing up for unorganized workers as 92% of minimum wage workers do not belong to a union. Making the minimum wage a living wage will help lift thousands of low-income workers above the poverty line, helping them to better meet their basic needs.

7.2 Construction Industry Wages Act (CIWA)

The MFL supports the principles of *The Construction Industry Wages Act (CIWA)*, which establishes equity in tendering processes that involve direct competition between unionized contractors and contractors without a unionized workforce. It does so by eliminating variable wages and working conditions in determining the value of a tendered bid.

This means that contractors without a unionized workforce cannot pay sub-standard wages and encourage unsafe working conditions and practices in order to submit the lowest-priced bid. Contractors who pay workers a decent wage and meet workplace health and safety obligations should not be penalized by being undercut by contractors not willing to meet these crucial obligations.

The MFL urges the provincial government to maintain the CIWA wage schedule in legislation and ensure it is regularly updated. We note with serious concern that the Pallister/Stefanson government briefly floated the idea of scrapping CIWA, but backed down amid strong labour opposition. They also delayed implementing labour-management consensus advice on overdue increases/updates to the schedule.

7.3 Project Labour Agreements & Community Benefit Agreements

Project Labour Agreements (PLAs) are based on the simple principle that Manitoba construction projects should benefit Manitobans; they should create jobs, prioritize safety, and be built properly by trained workers so we can all rely on infrastructure that lasts. PLAs have been used by governments of various ideological stripes in Manitoba, dating back to Premier Duff Roblin.

PLAs play a key role in increasing the participation of Manitoba workers on Manitoba projects by establishing common wage, safety and training standards, changing the tendering equation from cost only to “cost plus quality,” and preventing “race to the bottom” bidding.

PLAs have been used on hydro-electric dams, the Floodway expansion project, and the east side road, consistently delivering high value projects with high quality work on time and on budget. They have also been used effectively to increase training and employment opportunities for under-represented workers, including women and Indigenous Manitobans. PLAs also ensure labour peace, providing financial and timing certainty and stability.

The MFL strongly opposes the Pallister/Stefanson government’s legislated ban on PLAs on public infrastructure projects and urges that *The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act* be repealed. The MFL supports the use of PLAs on all major public infrastructure projects. We also support the use of Community Benefit Agreements to ensure that local Manitobans receive skills training, employment, and other benefits from major capital projects.

7.4 Employment Insurance (EI)

The MFL is committed to restoring fairness, equity and effectiveness to the Employment Insurance (EI) program, which has been badly gutted since the early 1990’s. Unemployed workers are being let down by a federal EI system that neither meets their needs when they experience periods of unemployment, nor adequately invests in supporting workers to remain employed or to find work again after job loss. The completely unfair redirection of EI fund surpluses into general revenues, and major changes to program administration have resulted in a system characterized by inadequate benefit levels, unacceptably short cut-off periods, and shockingly low eligibility rates.

The EI system should reflect the realities of working lives and people who pay into the plan should be able to access it. Changes should include:

- Reducing the number of qualifying hours (for regular benefits) to 360 hours, no matter who workers are or where they live and work in Canada;
- Measuring a “week” as 30 hours instead of 35 when calculating benefit levels and duration to reflect the average Canadian work week;
- Increasing the benefits period to 50 weeks;

- Increasing benefits to at least 60% of earnings being replaced, calculated on a worker's best 12 weeks;
- Raising the maximum insurable benefit;
- Establishing a liable individual minimum benefit; and
- Restoring the billions of dollars that have been withdrawn by government from the EI fund and ending the use of EI funds for non-EI purposes.

These reforms are vitally important for women workers, as women are especially disadvantaged by unfair exclusions from EI benefits:

- EI assumes an average work week of 35 hours when the reality for women is more like 30 hours;
- 40% of women hold precarious or part-time “non-standard” jobs, or are self-employed;
- Only 1 in 3 unemployed women qualify for EI benefits;
- Not qualifying for EI means no access to paid maternity, parental, compassionate, or sick leave; and
- Even when women do qualify for EI, lower wages and unstable work patterns result in lower benefits. Only one third of the total amount of regular EI benefits go to women, even though women now make up half the workforce.

Currently, only 3.7% of regular EI recipients receive training support, even while unemployment is high and sectors of the Canadian economy are short of skilled workers. Canada needs targeted programs to help women and workers from other equity-seeking groups to overcome barriers to employment, gain valuable on-the-job experience, and/or acquire training in high-demand occupations and sectors.

Because work-life balance continues to present a significant challenge for women, we must also improve compassionate caregiving benefits and parental leave for the other parent, as well as sickness benefits for workers with disabilities or illnesses lasting longer than 15 weeks.

The MFL also endorses Unemployed Help Centres, such as Manitoba's Community Unemployed Help Centre (CUHC), for providing valuable service to unemployed workers, and significant economic benefit to the province. Governments should provide funding to Unemployed Help Centres where they exist and foster their development where they are needed to ensure that the needs of unemployed workers are met.

7.5 Pensions & Retirement Security

The MFL is committed to the following principles that we consider to be the foundation of a fair, effective and dependable pension framework:

- All Canadians should have access to adequate pension income in retirement, including the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and mandatory workplace pension plans, which are vested, locked-in, portable and subject to full disclosure requirements to plan members;

- The Defined Benefit (DB) Model is the most effective, efficient, and equitable pension plan currently available; and
- Pension funds, including surpluses, are deferred income and are the property of the workers who earned them; they are not the property of the employer and should not be used for any purpose other than retirement income for those entitled to a share in the fund without their knowledge and agreement.

The MFL will continue to campaign:

- To protect existing workplace plans in both the public and private sectors;
- To safeguard defined benefit pension plans and to educate workers, employers and the public about the risks and inadequacies associated with Defined Contribution and newer target-benefit-based models;
- To expand worker representation on pension boards;
- To enhance retirement security by extending strong pension plans to more Manitoba workers; and
- To build an even stronger Canada Pension Plan to strengthen retirement security for all workers.

Recent Provincial Legislative Changes

When the Pallister/Stefanson government floated the idea of converting public sector DB plans into target plans, the MFL and public sector unions spoke out loudly in opposition, forcing the government to back down. We remain concerned that this idea may resurface in the future. We are also concerned with changes that the government decided to proceed with, including blanket weakening of solvency requirements and allowing workers to unlock their retirement savings more easily prior to retirement (including allowing older workers to unlock 100% of their pension funds).

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Improvements

In Canada today, nearly two-thirds of working people don't have a workplace pension plan (some 11 million workers). In just the private sector, 75% of employees are without a workplace pension plan. RRSPs and other private voluntary schemes have proven to be severely inadequate to properly support the vast majority of working families in retirement due to being dependent on the stock markets, eroded by high management fees, and used disproportionately by the highest income earners.

That's why the MFL has strongly supported the CLC's campaign for an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan. The CPP is not just the main way most workers save for retirement out of their employment earnings; it is the only way that millions of Canadian workers put aside a portion of their wages for retirement. While the labour movement is glad that the provinces and federal government were finally able to reach an agreement on a modest but important enhancement, very real inequities exist in the enhanced CPP agreement that will disadvantage parents who take time off to raise children – primarily women – and workers who become severely and chronically disabled.

Prior to its expansion, these two categories of workers could exclude, or “drop out” periods of low and zero earnings from the calculation of their retirement benefit. Inexplicably, these provisions were not rolled over into the recent CPP expansion. Manitoba’s labour movement urges both the provincial and federal governments to take leadership roles within the country to resolve these inequities that will primarily hurt women and disabled workers.

We also continue to call on both levels of government to push for cross-country support to further strengthen the retirement security of all Canadians by doubling CPP benefits, including increasing the CPP income replacement rate further, raising the ceiling on pensionable earnings and further enhancing the portion of employee contributions that are tax-deductible.

8.0 ECONOMIC POLICY

8.1 Economic Priorities

Economic policy should be focused on the needs and well-being of all Manitobans and Canadians, rather than on maximizing private profits for the few. Governments have the ability and responsibility to help create and maintain good jobs and sustainable economic development. The MFL supports an economic vision based on:

- Full employment;
- Improvement and expansion of public services;
- More equitable distribution of wealth;
- Expansion of the manufacturing sector and greater value-added processing of natural resources in Canada;
- Sustainability and just transition; and
- Planned, diversified and fair trade.

We call on governments to focus their economic efforts on:

- Growing the number of good, family-supporting jobs, with safe and healthy working conditions;
- Putting workers at the centre of economic development and giving them a voice in the work they do;
- Creating good jobs for unemployed, underemployed, and precariously employed workers;
- Promoting and upholding the right to collective bargaining;
- Making the minimum wage a living wage, and setting full employment as a primary policy target;
- Committing to long-term funding for high quality, public, universal and affordable child care;
- Adopting strong, proactive pay equity legislation to eliminate gender wage discrimination;
- More worker-focussed rules on hours of work and scheduling;
- Increasing staffing, training and resources for enforcement of provincial labour laws, employment standards and workplace health and safety laws.

The MFL calls for international trade agreements to promote economic equality, encourage the creation of good jobs, support the interests of working people, and ensure ecological sustainability.

We join with the rest of the Canadian labour movement in advocating for a renegotiation of a North American trade agreement that puts the interests of working people and the environment first. We join the CLC in calling for a renegotiated agreement that proposes substantive reforms to protect good paying local jobs and communities, including strengthened labour and environmental agreements, abolishing the NAFTA Chapter 11 investor state dispute mechanism (which grants special rights to foreign investors and corporations), protecting public services, and more strategic and effective use of government procurement to help Canadian workers.

The Government of Manitoba has a responsibility to work with other governments in Canada to promote international and internal trade agreements that protect workers and strengthen labour rights. Unfortunately, more recent free trade agreements reached by Canada with other countries follow many of the same patterns as NAFTA: prioritizing the needs of corporations and the profit motive over the well-being of Canadian workers and communities. Agreements such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), and others hollow out workers' rights, weaken targets for air and water quality, and increase drug costs on working families through concessions to pharmaceutical companies. We will continue to oppose free trade agreements that do not support working families or the industries their livelihoods rely on. At the same time, as part of the broader labour movement, the MFL will continue to propose reasonable solutions that will provide balance and fairness to international trade agreements that put the needs of working families first.

8.2 Pay Equity / Closing the Gender Pay Gap

The MFL strongly supports the right to equal pay for work of equal value, or what the labour movement has coined as “pay equity.” Fair pay demands that the work that women and men do is equally respected and valued, which is not the reality for many workers in Canada where large pay gaps remain between what women and men earn. Thanks to the labour movement, this pay gap is already much less for women with unions², but more needs to be done to achieve full income equality for all working women.

In 2022, the MFL enlisted the CCPA Manitoba to produce a report on the current state of Manitoba's gender pay gap, and to apply an intersectional lens to look at the wages of gender-diverse people, and women of all different backgrounds and abilities.

The MFL urges the provincial and federal governments to introduce and implement proactive pay equity legislation, with lessons learned from provincial legislation in Ontario and Quebec and informed by the 2004 federal Pay Equity Task Force. Jobs must be evaluated on their skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. In this way, very different jobs can be compared for their value in the workplace. Pay equity legislation must also recognize that wage discrimination exists for workers with disabilities, Indigenous workers, and racialized workers. Pay equity legislation is needed not only in the public sector, where it has been used traditionally, but also in the private sector.

The MFL also supports “respect campaigns” seeking to raise awareness and build support for the need to significantly enhance currently poor wages and working conditions in many women-dominated fields, including early learning and child care, child welfare, community living, and other social services.

² In Canada, unionized workers earn \$5.28 / hour more than non-union workers. But for women workers, the “union advantage” is even greater: women with unions earn **\$7.10 / hour more** than women without.

We further call on government to develop a jobs strategy that promotes women's participation in the workforce, improves access to education and training, child care, and other services so women can balance work and family responsibilities.

Making it easier for women to join unions is also a critical part of closing the gender pay gap since women with unions earn more than women without unions. Collective bargaining allows women and their unions to negotiate pay that reflects their skills, education, and responsibilities. The MFL condemns the Pallister/Stefanson government's elimination of card-check certification, which makes it harder to join a union and seeks to reduce union representation. We also condemn the Pallister/Stefanson government trampling on collective bargaining rights through the imposition of wage-freeze legislation.

8.3 Child Care

Working families depend on accessible and affordable child care to be able to make a living, whether it's parents returning to work, taking classes to upgrade their skills, or getting their first job.

Child care costs make up a significant part of household budgets, and worrying about getting a child care space at the right time can be stressful for families. Knowing you can get a licensed child care space when you need one, and at a cost that won't break the bank, allows working parents go to work or school with the peace of mind that their kids are being cared for in a safe, happy and enriching environment.

A strong, publicly-funded child care system is also an important bridge to women's equality. More women are working in the paid workforce than ever before. Child care gives women the chance to pursue their own ambitions and opportunities. Child care is critical for reducing the gender pay and employment gap by allowing women to participate in the paid workforce.

The MFL sees child care as fundamental to women's equality, enriching for child development, and as a means of giving everyone a fair start in life regardless of income or social backgrounds. Unions have demanded and won better maternity and parental leave, vacation time, leave to look after children when they are sick, and have helped to establish some workplace child care centres. However, without a real early education and child care system that ensures access and quality, child care will remain a matter of luck, which isn't fair.

The MFL is committed to the collective right of society to a universal child care and early education program that meets the needs of Canadian women and families. We credit the federal government for its major new investment in child care but remain concerned that Manitoba's government will attempt to use new federal dollars to build the private sector. We will continue to lobby for a child care system that is:

- Universal, publicly planned and equitably available to all families;
- Affordable, publicly supported and not-for-profit;
- High quality, including developmental programming and cultural enrichment;
- Accountable to parents and communities; and

- Provides for well-trained and fairly compensated early child care educators (replacing dependence on poorly remunerated and an almost entirely female workforce). This includes fair pension plans for early childhood educators.

8.4 Canada Post

The MFL sees protecting the future of our public postal service as being critical for maintaining our way of life, for preserving good jobs in our communities, and for a prosperous and growing economy. We oppose the elimination of door-to-door service and call for the federal government to reinstate service for workers and other families who lost it under the Harper Conservative government – for fairness, for reliability, for convenience and for safety – it’s the right thing to do.

We further urge the federal government to work with CUPW on innovative “Delivering Community Power” proposals to sustain and expand services offered through Canada Post, such as a national check-in service for seniors and people with mobility issues, establishing post offices as community hubs for services like postal banking and electric vehicle charging stations, and continual innovation in the public interest.

8.5 Public Transit

The MFL calls for the establishment of a long-term National Transit Strategy which would include dedicated planning and funding for Public Transit Infrastructure Systems, as well as work with manufacturers to ensure more ergonomically and environmentally friendly designs. Access to basic public transportation should be an essential right of Canadians. Public transportation breaks down social-economic barriers. The federal government should make every effort to reduce the cost of public transit for low-income earners. It should not be the sole responsibility of provincial and municipal governments to invest in public transit, nor should low-income subsidy costs be passed onto the fares paid by the general ridership. Instead, the federal government should have a continued interest to offer financial support where it’s needed throughout the country.

The MFL condemns the Pallister/Stefanson government’s elimination of 50-50 cost-sharing for transit, which has resulted in service cuts and fare increases, placing an especially high burden on low-income earners, working families, students, and seniors. We call for this crucial dedicated funding to be restored. Investments in public transit should be viewed through the lens of providing good jobs, building thriving cities, and reducing emissions. Investments are also required to make transit safer for transit workers and the public, and more accessible and affordable to those most in need, such as through low-income bus passes, better routes, and low/no-cost tickets to access health care facilities.

8.6 Arts & Culture

Strong artistic and cultural communities provide a more fulsome life for all. Creative industries also provide employment for thousands of Manitobans. The MFL believes that an important measure of social development is embodied in the state of the arts, and how society treats artists.

We support calls for the creation of Status of the Artist legislation in Manitoba. Similar legislation is already in place at the federal level and in several provinces, and would acknowledge the important contribution made by artists to the cultural and economic well-being of our society. As workers, many artists lack the rights and benefits that other workers have, including statutory holidays, overtime pay, minimum wage, vacation pay, work breaks, and termination pay. In jurisdictions where this legislation exists, it has helped artists secure the benefits of fair collective bargaining and contracts.

We also call for stable funding for arts and cultural institutions.

8.7 Agricultural / Migrant Workers

Rural communities face a wide range of issues, including the erosion of the family farm base, the impact of large increases in input costs, the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board, social services for farm families, and the impact of unfair trade practices on farm commodities.

As a central labour body, the MFL is particularly concerned about the treatment of migrant workers and temporary foreign workers, and we support the work that unions and other allies are doing to ensure that these workers have their labour and human rights protected, including fair compensation, proper health care, and clear and fair paths to full citizenship.

9.0 HEALTH CARE

9.1 The Canada Health Act

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the preservation and enhancement of our universal health care system. We support and defend the five principles of health care contained in the *Canada Health Act*.

Universality: the health care insurance plan of a province must entitle all of the insured persons of the province to the health services provided by the plan.

Accessibility: the health care insurance plan of a province must provide for insured health services on uniform terms and conditions and on a basis that does not impede or preclude, either directly or indirectly, whether by charges made to insured persons or otherwise, reasonable access to those services by insured persons. Equally important, those providing the services must receive "reasonable compensation".

Public Administration: the health care insurance plan of a province must be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority appointed or designated by the government of the province.

Comprehensiveness: the health care insurance plan of a province must insure all medically necessary health services provided by hospitals, medical practitioners or dentists, and, where the law of the province so permits, similar or additional services rendered by other health care practitioners.

Portability: the health care insurance plan of a province must not impose any minimum period of residence in the province, or waiting period, in excess of three months before residents of the province are eligible for and entitled to insured health services. And it must provide for the payment of the cost of insured health services provided to insured persons while temporarily absent from the province.

These principles are the building blocks of a Medicare system that is a cornerstone of a just society and which delivers high quality care to Canadians.

We honour the leadership of Tommy Douglas and the CCF / NDP in establishing Canada's Medicare system, one of the best health care systems in the world.

9.2 Strengthening Health Care

While we will always fight to protect a comprehensive, universal public health care system, we also believe that improvements can be made to the system to ensure greater access and promotion of healthier outcomes for Manitobans and Canadians, such as:

- A renegotiated Canada Health Accord with enhanced and stable federal funding to address health care worker shortages and improve access to care;

- Stricter enforcement of the Canada Health Act and closing gaps in monitoring and reporting;
- Greater investment in health care professionals and the vitally important and demanding work they do to care for patients and families – this includes proper remuneration, education and retention strategies, and investing in wellness and in injury and illness prevention for health care workers;
- Getting profits out of long-term care and establishing national care standards (more below);
- Implementing a national, universal Pharmacare program (more below);
- Investing in mental health care (more below);
- More diagnostic equipment, such as MRIs, to help reduce wait times and counter growth in for-profit MRI clinics and queue jumping for those who can pay;
- Bans on user fees, extra billing, special health care premiums and medical savings accounts; and
- Greater emphasis on illness/disease prevention and keeping people healthy.

The MFL condemns the actions taken by the Pallister/Stefanson government to weaken Manitoba’s health care system, including closing emergency rooms, urgent care centres, EMS stations and Quick Care Clinics, failing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and throwing health care bargaining into chaos. Attacks on front-line health care services have had seriously detrimental impacts on patients, families and health care workers alike. Despite this, the government continues to massively under-invest, choosing to spend more money on education tax rebates rather than fixing the enormous backlog of surgeries and diagnostic tests. The MFL stands in solidarity with Manitoba’s health care unions and activists in opposing Pallister/Stefanson’s health care cuts and disruptions, and demanding better consultation with health care providers on solutions.

9.3 Long Term Care

Among the many areas of our health care system requiring greater focus and resources is long-term care. This was never more obvious than during the COVID-19 pandemic when far too many of our most vulnerable seniors lost their lives, living in private for-profit care homes that were absolutely ill-equipped to keep them safe and cared for. This can never be allowed to happen again.

Many working families are struggling to find quality long-term care for family members and the demand for beds is projected to outstrip supply well into the future. That's why the MFL is calling for an increase in the number of long-term care beds, national standards to ensure safe and appropriate staffing levels, and fundamental system restructuring to take “profit” out of long-term care. We are also calling for increases in the homecare hours afforded to patients to get the hands-on care they need to live at home.

Our health care system needs increased investments to better meet the demands of an aging population and ensure equitable health care access across all regions of the province. As Manitoba’s population ages, the provincial government needs to invest in more public personal care home spaces to ensure that our loved ones are able to live out their years in high quality, affordable living situations staffed by well-trained and dedicated

staff. At the same time, many low-income seniors rely on subsidized housing programs, allowing them to live in dignity in retirement. We believe that the provincial and federal governments need to ensure stable funding for these essential programs.

9.4 Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The MFL believes that robust EMS services should be available to Manitobans no matter where they live in the province, and that Manitobans need the provincial government to ensure adequate staffing levels, proper equipment for safety and comfort (such as power stretchers), and funding for quality, equitable access to EMS services throughout the province. The implementation of a community paramedicine program to serve rural Manitoba would help to increase health care access for rural Manitobans.

9.5 Mental Health / Addictions

Too many families in Manitoba are suffering the pain of addictions and mental health crises. Working families face the impacts of poor mental health and of addictions at work and at home throughout our province. The funding for, and access to, public mental health and addictions care needs to be far more robust to help our loved ones and coworkers receive the treatment they need. In addition to providing greater supports to those who need these public services, stronger mental health and addictions care will help create safer workplaces for workers who come into contact with people facing mental health and addictions crises, including those who work in health care, education, public transit, social services, security, and many other sectors of our economy.

Coupled with this is a need to focus more on mental health and addictions, the two major underlying factors in the overall health of our population. We recognize that a variety of public care options serve our province best, and sincerely hope that the Government of Manitoba will take seriously the need for greater investments and support in these and other areas to ensure greater quality of care to these vulnerable populations.

Mounting evidence shows that harm reduction approaches, rather than abstinence-based ones, work for a variety of people facing serious addictions and trauma. Recognizing that addictions are a result of physical, spiritual, emotional, and socially inflicted pain and trauma, harm reduction approaches seek to provide avenues for healing and recovery to those for whom abstinence-based approaches do not work. The continuum of harm reduction strategies should include safe use sites and managed alcohol programs, and better province-wide access to opiate replacement therapy programs.

The Pallister/Stefanson government has shown a disturbing tendency to fund private sector and out-of-province providers for this type of care rather than invest in strengthening our public mental health and addictions services. Government should be investing public dollars into the public system, and providing more support to the dedicated Manitobans who deliver services within it.

Enabling Manitobans to get the supports they need to help them with mental health and addictions treatment is an important part of creating a healthier Manitoba. Part of this

support has to include more investments in supportive second stage housing, as many people experience uncertain and transient housing situations. Stable, secure housing is a fundamental element in supporting people facing addictions and mental health challenges in getting better.

9.6 Pharmacare

The MFL continues to support the CLC and NDP led campaign to establish a national, universal Pharmacare program, which we believe to be foundational for a healthy, engaged and economically vibrant society.

The labour movement has won prescription drug coverage and other healthcare benefits for millions of Canadian workers and their families. We've seen the difference this makes in the lives of our members and believe everyone in Canada deserves the same.

Presently, over 3 million Canadians don't take their medications as prescribed because they can't afford them, and over 8 million working Canadians do not have prescription drug coverage. This results in escalating inequities and poor health outcomes. Women and young workers are less likely to have prescription drug coverage, in part because more women work part-time and young workers are more likely to be stuck in low-wage, precarious jobs.

A national, universal pharmacare program would change this.

Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal health care program that doesn't include a universal pharmacare program. A national, universal pharmacare program would improve access and affordability through bulk purchase and negotiating pricing with drug manufacturers, and it would eliminate duplication and cost shifting amongst existing payers while promoting integration amongst the current patchwork of provincial-territorial programs. Recent studies show that a national, universal drug program could be financed with potentially no increase to government costs and save Canadians billions of dollars annually. Even the federal Parliamentary Budget Office estimates minimum savings of at least \$4 billion annually, based on the most comprehensive drug coverage.

Jagmeet Singh and Canada's NDP have negotiated a supply and confidence agreement with the federal Liberal government to provide stability in the current minority government for three years in exchange for the Liberals agreeing to take action on things that will make a difference in the lives of working families, such as movement on establishing a national pharmacare program. However, the Liberal Party has been talking about moving on a national pharmacare for two decades, and there is a need to continue to put pressure on the federal Liberal government to create a fully national and affordable pharmacare system.

9.7 Privatization

The MFL opposes the privatization, in whole or in part, of any health care services. For-profit services create a two-tiered health care system where an individual's personal wealth determines their access to care. Recent examples of initiatives by the Pallister/Stefanson government to privatize health services include moves to privatize home care, air ambulance services, the large increase in the use of private agency nurses, and the provision of big contracts to private, out-of-province mental health service providers rather than invest in our public system here at home. We will continue to work with health care unions and public health advocates to oppose these dangerous moves that strip away public services and turn them into for-profit ventures that weaken access and equity in the delivery of health care that everyone counts on.

9.8 Abortion Rights

Abortion is health care. The MFL supports the right of everyone who can become pregnant to make their own decisions about their bodies and reproductive health. The MFL calls for expanding free, publicly-funded abortion services to all Manitobans in all parts of the province. The high barriers to abortion access that exist through rural and northern Manitoba, and especially in isolated First Nation communities, must be dismantled.

Abortion accessibility must include access to mifegymiso (the “abortion pill”) at no cost to patients.

The MFL supports “no protest, safe zones” around abortion clinics and other reproductive health providers to keep women and others accessing abortion services safe and free of harassment, bullying and violence from anti-choice activists. We condemn the Pallister/Stefanson government for voting down numerous safe zone bills introduced by the Official Opposition NDP.

10.0 EDUCATION

The MFL is committed to promoting strong public investment in our public schools and in our post-secondary education system, including universities, colleges, apprenticeships, adult learning and union training centres.

Quality public education and post-secondary opportunities support Manitobans in being good citizens, getting good jobs, supporting their families and providing for a stable and secure future. Education supports greater equality, empowerment, participation in our society and overall economic prosperity.

Unions play important roles representing public sector workers in our schools, universities and colleges, directly delivering programming through union education and training centres, and lobbying governments and employers to make education and training a top priority.

10.1 Public Schools

Nothing is more important for children's development than a good education, and the MFL advocates for strong and predictable public funding for our schools to support teachers, educational assistants, resource and support workers and school administrators in their work to give children opportunities to reach their full potential.

Education can also be a great equalizer, so it's imperative that we ensure that all children, including those living in poverty, children learning new languages, refugee children, and children coming from difficult family/living situations have the proper supports to succeed in school. All schools should have equitable access to supports for children.

The MFL supports calls for the establishment of a universal meal program for all school-age children, provided at no cost to the student/family in recognition of the fact that Manitoba has among the highest childhood poverty rates in the country and we know that children whose basic needs are met are much more likely to be successful in school.

School curriculum should address not only core subjects, like math and reading, but also broader topics critical for personal and social development, like anti-racism and truth and reconciliation, human rights, consent culture, the role and history of the labour movement and political action. We support collaborative engagement with Elders and community members, as well as educational stakeholders, in curriculum development.

We are strongly critical of the Pallister/Stefanson government for reducing funding to public schools below the rate of inflation. Underfunding education short changes children and undermines our collective social and economic future. The government's misunderstanding of education priorities was clearly reflected in their failed Bill 64, which was soundly defeated by education workers and community opposition.

The MFL also condemns the long-standing federal practice of funding education on First Nation reserves at levels far less than provincial schools. Education is a treaty right and a human right that must be respected.

10.2 Post-Secondary Education, Training and Apprenticeship

The MFL believes that high quality post-secondary education (PSE) should be publicly funded and accessible to all, requiring strong multi-year funding commitments and targeted strategies to eliminate barriers to participation for Indigenous students and other equity seeking groups.

Current and future workers desire education and training opportunities to continuously expand their knowledge, be more informed and engaged citizens, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and prepare for new employment opportunities. Workers must also perpetually keep up with changing needs in the workplace related to factors, such as technological change, globalization, economic restructuring, resource and environmental constraints, and shifting demographics.

In the long term, the MFL favours a model of free tuition (full adequate public funding), but until tuition can be phased out altogether, we advocate for policies that lessen the financial burden on individual students and families, such as caps on tuition and fees, and no-interest student loans. Along with our student union allies, we are deeply critical of the Pallister/Stefanson government's amendment to *The Advanced Education Administration Act*, which erases long standing protections for students against spiralling tuition costs.

We believe that tuition rebate programs can be effective tools for retaining graduates, but they are not an effective model for making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible.

The MFL supports the principle of academic freedom, and we oppose any moves to privatize portions of our PSE system and the increased dependence on "casual" workers over full-time tenured positions. We are also concerned about recent moves by the government to shift toward so-called "performance-based funding," which threatens to increase political interference, erode quality, and undermine institutional autonomy.

We are committed to working with our student union allies to support one another and advance areas of mutual interest.

We support greater cross-recognition of credits between post-secondary institutions so that learners can more easily move between programs without losing credit for past learning.

The MFL supports strong multi-year public funding commitments for universities and colleges. The Pallister/Stefanson government's decision to scrap multi-year funding for universities, and limit public investment in universities and colleges is putting serious strain on our post-secondary system, making education and training less affordable and accessible for students, and limiting course and program options. This is extremely short-sighted policy.

The MFL supports strong public investment to make post-secondary education and training more accessible to students, including many workers looking to upgrade or change jobs, and especially students from currently under-represented groups, such as Indigenous learners. ACCESS programs, essential skills upgrading, language learning supports are key for accessibility, as are affordable student housing, child care, and transit. So too is active

outreach to high school and junior high students about the full range of PSE options, including apprenticeship opportunities.

The MFL supports further strengthening of Manitoba's apprenticeship system, which is critical for addressing current and emerging skill shortages. Of particular priority is the recruitment of women apprentices, Indigenous apprentices and apprentices of colour, who continue to be seriously under-represented in the trades. We applaud the efforts of many trade unions that are actively advancing diversity hiring strategies.

We urge the government to restore a 1:1 journeyperson-apprentice ratio, which is essential for training integrity as well as workplace health and safety. The Pallister/Stefanson government's decision to eliminate this ratio places apprentices at greater risk of a workplace injury and undermines the quality of their training.

We also encourage the provincial government to establish new apprenticeship opportunities within the civil service to help recruit and retain skilled trades people.

The labour movement believes that off-site labour market training should be delivered primarily through unionized public education and training institutions. However, union training centres also play an important role in the field, and we urge government to look to public and union institutions over private training delivery.

We also call for employers to prioritize life-long learning for their employees, and to involve workers and their unions in setting training plans and goals.

11.0 DEMOCRACY

11.1 Political Action and the NDP

As specified in our Constitution, one of the primary reasons that the MFL exists is to “provide leadership in political action and encourage greater worker participation in the political process.” Quite simply, labour can’t leave politics alone, because politics won’t leave labour alone.

The MFL is a proud affiliate and supporter of the Manitoba New Democratic Party, while recognizing and respecting that some affiliated unions are non-partisan.

As a party formed by a formal agreement between the Canadian Labour Congress and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the NDP is labour’s party and stands as the only political party in Manitoba that truly works cooperatively with labour and puts the needs of working families first. The Party’s Constitution provides for specific involvement and participation of labour in all party processes and activities.

Organized labour has a tradition of supporting the NDP, both in Manitoba and across Canada. This has resulted in some of the most important aspects of our national social safety net, including our universal health care system, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. Here in Manitoba, NDP governments have created our affordable Autopac system and our universal public home care system. They’ve also made historic investments in our public hydro utility and public infrastructure, created one of the strongest drug programs in the country and legislated some of the strongest labour relations and workplace safety and health laws in the country, among many other accomplishments.

Political action by workers and their unions is a democratic right. It is also a democratic responsibility – one that keeps democracy healthy. The MFL encourages unions to be politically engaged, to affiliate to the Party and encourage their members to actively participate in its activities at the constituency level by taking out personal memberships.

11.2 Elections Financing

The MFL supported the ban on corporate and union contributions to political parties (introduced in 2000) premised on a robust public financing model for political parties, wherein an Independent Allowance Commissioner is responsible for determining the public financing process. We condemn the Pallister/Stefanson government’s elimination of public financing, a move that makes elections financing less fair and equitable. We also oppose Pallister/Stefanson’s raising of the individual donation limit by 66% to \$5,000, tilting the scales further to the benefit of the wealthiest Manitobans to have greater influence over the political process.

Rather than using public dollars through generous tax credits to benefit 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 path forward for Manitobans, and every vote should have the same weight. Our democracy should not be about who has the backing of the wealthiest donors.

We are also very concerned that the government has made it harder for some of the most vulnerable Manitobans to vote. Manitobans who do not appear on the voters list and who already face a number of barriers to obtaining government issued identification (ID) have been disempowered through recent provincial election ID rules. Access to ID is a substantial problem for many Manitobans, and it overwhelmingly impacts people who live in poverty, the working poor, the elderly, those living with disabilities, and those without a fixed address, including young people, students and those experiencing homelessness. All Manitobans have the right to vote. Making it harder for some people to exercise that right is undemocratic, plain and simple.

11.3 Whistleblower Protection

The MFL urges the provincial government to strengthen protections for whistleblowers in both the public sector and private sector in the public interest.

11.4 Peace-Keeping, Not War

All people have a right to live and work in peace.

“Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice.”
(ILO Constitution, Preamble).

Peace is an essential pre-requisite to building a better world and a fairer, more equitable economy.

The MFL will continue to work with our political and social justice allies to support the peace movement by encouraging Canada to commit its international and military focus to peace-building, development and humanitarian efforts, and recognizing the devastating impacts that western military involvement has had on so many parts of the world throughout history.

12.0 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The labour movement recognizes the need to take immediate and forceful action to address the climate emergency, and has been calling for significant investments in a Just Transition process to move toward more renewable energy sectors and a low carbon economy, based on a skilled workforce and good, family-supporting green jobs.

Climate change is already having significant negative impacts on workers and their communities, locally, nationally and internationally. Heat waves, droughts, floods, rising sea levels, and biodiversity loss are causing the displacement of workers and Indigenous peoples worldwide.

Workers live with the realities of climate change and know what's at stake. Involving workers and their communities in environmental policy is essential if we are to reverse the threat of climate change, create good jobs, and a stronger, more sustainable and inclusive economy.

We call on governments to make skill building and green job investments in clean energy, public transit, and home/building retrofits in collaboration with workers and communities.

Manitoba is fortunate to have an almost entirely green electricity supply, fueled primarily by renewable hydro-electric power. We believe that continued strong investments in Manitoba Hydro projects are a key way to provide good paying jobs, ensure stable economic growth, and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We also echo the call of the CLC to identify regions of the country and specific sectors requiring dedicated transition plans to assist workers displaced or otherwise impacted by climate action, to ensure they have access to retraining and good, sustained employment.

At every step of the process, we must meaningfully engage affected workers and communities. Not doing so risks division and alienation from the process, which puts our climate work in jeopardy. To succeed, workers' input must be central to our vision of a better future for our environment and our economy.

Climate change is simultaneously the greatest threat of our time, and the greatest opportunity of our era for economic growth and job creation. We support strategies to grow mass public transit, employ skilled labour to retrofit buildings, and create apprenticeships in new green energy technologies. We reject the notion that there is a fundamental conflict between the economy and jobs and environmental sustainability.

Full employment can and must be a centrepiece of ecological transition; workers and their communities will be far better placed to succeed in this transition in the context of full employment, income support, and strong labour-market adjustment programs. Conversely, workers and their families will be reluctant to support transitional measures that offer them nothing more than job loss and falling incomes.

We believe that our society and economy must do a far better job of safeguarding our natural resources, one of the most critical being water. Canada's water belongs to all citizens and must be protected now and for future generations. We believe that access to clean water is a right of all Canadians. The MFL is opposed to the privatization of water or sale of Canadian water to any foreign country. The federal government must prioritize the provision of clean drinking water on all First Nations reserves in Manitoba. Too many Manitobans live under boil water advisories simply because they live in Indigenous communities.

Also of particular concern in Manitoba is the state of Lake Winnipeg, which continues to suffer from nutrient loading and the onset of invasive species like zebra mussels. Analysis shows that phosphorous levels in the lake are now worse than they were in Lake Erie when people were describing that lake as dead. Effective action needs to be taken, including greater investments in water quality testing and more City of Winnipeg staff to monitor water quality. We urge the provincial government to take strong measures to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg by encouraging the reduction of phosphate levels. Increased phosphorous levels are entering the lake from livestock farming, pollution from cities and through wetland loss, and all these sources need to be addressed.

The MFL is also concerned that industry has made certain electronic products difficult or impossible to repair, forcing working people to purchase new models at great expense. The MFL supports the principle of "right to repair" to minimize environmental impact and consumer costs.

The MFL supports banning one-time use plastic bags and straws.

EM.cope342