

UManitoba mediation reaches tentative agreement; University administration refuses to negotiate salary due to government interference

For Immediate Release

Winnipeg, November 16, 2020 - The University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) has reached a tentative agreement with The University of Manitoba administration. The agreement includes a COVID stipend paid to members to recognize their work since the pandemic began and reasserts the union's rights to court-ordered remedies regarding the PSSA. The tentative agreement means that there will be no UMFA strike on Tuesday.

"Premier Pallister and his government continue to interfere in collective bargaining," said UMFA President Michael Shaw. "Rather than investing in post-secondary education as enrollments increase and Manitobans look for opportunities for re-skilling, Pallister is using the pandemic as an excuse to undermine public education and public sector unions."

The Pallister government's attacks on post-secondary education come amidst continued scandal and widespread failure to effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The government's attacks on wages and work conditions on campus are not unique among public sector workers. Healthcare workers, K-12 teachers, bus drivers, and other public sector workers face similar shameful under-resourcing, despite increased need, workload, and risk.

The university also refused to negotiate on COVID-related relief for dependent care, despite member pleas for support.

"UMFA will continue to fight for post-secondary education and for investment in public services in the months that come," Shaw said.

The results of mediation this weekend show continued intervention by the government. The University refused to budge from a government mandated 0% salary increase, despite President Benarroch's commitments in a recent letter to the university community which pledged to bring faculty wages in line with comparable Canadian universities. The University also refused to allow a neutral third party to arbitrate the issues.

In Summer 2020, the Pallister government's PSSA was ruled unconstitutional, and the court found the government guilty of illegally intervening in free and fair bargaining. In August, the Pallister government sent a letter to the university announcing their continued intervention in UMFA's bargaining process.

The ratification vote will be held later this week. More details about the tentative agreement and the mediation process will be available for members at the ratification meeting.

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