



**Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations  
Fédération des Associations des Professeurs  
Universitaires du Manitoba**

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Dear Minister Jon Reyes,

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

We first want to welcome you to your new position as Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration. You have assumed this position during a time of great uncertainty for post-secondary education in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations is composed of members at all four of Manitoba's public universities, representing thousands of professors, instructors, librarians, counsellors, coaches, and academic staff. We have voiced concern about proposed changes to post-secondary education in Manitoba, specifically Bill 33. The overwhelming majority of presenters at the committee for Bill 33 urged the previous minister to withdraw the bill, which was introduced without prior consultation.

MOFA has learned that your department intends to consult with students and administrators around the implementation of Bill 33. We were disappointed to learn that your department had scheduled formal consultations with both administrators and students but had neglected to offer the same opportunity to Manitoba's faculty. Students and faculty, together are the core of the university. Failure to consult with faculty suggests that your government does not value our contributions to the social and economic well-being of our province. It also fails to appreciate the bi-cameral system of governance of our universities, where the University Senate – a body with, by design, a majority of faculty and students – is responsible for all academic matters, such as what programs to offer. That feature of governance reflects the central role students and faculty play in university life.

When we spoke with your department regarding the lack of consultation with faculty, we were told that it would violate the laws pertaining to the Fort Whyte by-election. We are unclear as to how a by-election would prevent your department from consulting with faculty, as you have already arranged consultations with other key stakeholders.

Since 2016, a provincial government under former Premier Brian Pallister chose an antagonistic approach to our public university system. We had hoped that the change in leadership would be reflected

in both the policy and constructive practice, including regular consultation with faculty. Government interference instigated two separate strikes at the University of Manitoba, enabled by threats of draconian cuts of up to 30% of to our operating budgets. With Bill 33 and performance-based funding, we see an increasing focus on micromanaging our universities and limiting the freedom of students to choose their programs of study, despite paying more in tuition fees each year.

Faculty find this approach puzzling, as would many other Manitobans. Is the provincial government willing to put at risk the positive universities already produce, where university graduates in Manitoba achieve higher income levels and close to full employment in the market? Has the provincial government identified issues with the performance of our universities that would justify undermining the autonomy that served our province so well, and is enshrined in the legislation governing our universities? Our members find themselves without answers to these questions.

Minister Reyes, you have an opportunity to change the direction of your department and indeed of the Progressive Conservative government under new leadership, from one that continues to neglect faculty to one that collaborates with the Manitobans who bear the primary responsibility for university teaching, research and academic governance. MOFA strongly believes that Bill 33 would take our province backwards and has provided information to the previous minister explaining this position.

Our recommendations to you include the following:

- Recognize the important role that faculty and our members play in Manitoba.
- Review presentations at the committee meeting for Bill 33, which you chaired.
- Allow our universities to bargain fairly and freely without interference.
- Pause the implementation of Bill 33 until proper consultation with faculty and our membership can occur.

We thank you for your time and consideration and hope that the Progressive Conservative government can chart a new course and recognize the contributions of our members in building a stronger Manitoba.

Sincerely,

Scott Forbes

President, Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations