



PLEASE POST!

5 The President's -MINUTE UPDATE



Michelle Gawronsky

At the Leg

Bills 28, 29 will impact most MGEU members within next few years

On March 20, the government announced that rather than negotiate an agreement with public sector employees, they would use their majority in the Legislature to push through Bills 28 and 29.

Bill 28 means those working in the Civil Service, Crowns Corps, Regional Health Authorities, Postsecondary Education, Child and Family Services and other government agencies, can expect to see two more years of wage freezes and two years of wage caps below the cost of living.

The MGEU will be working closely with other unions who represent public sector workers and the *Manitoba Federation of Labour* (MFL) to put forward constructive

alternatives to cuts and to make sure members' rights are protected. If necessary, this may well include legal challenges.

I've also publicly made it clear that despite the legislation, our union remains committed to going to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair deal.

Through **Bill 29**, the government will also be radically reducing the number of bargaining units in each health region. This means members of each specific sector will have to vote for which union they want to represent them going forward.

It will be a significant disruption, but we will work hard to ensure our own members and all those striving to deliver the best health care possible continue to have the strong union representation they deserve.

Learn more about these Bills, as well as **Bill 24**, which could undermine environmental regulations aimed at protecting our drinking water, lakes, and rivers, all in the name of "cutting red tape," at mgeu.ca.

Welcome to the April edition!

Here's what's been happening in and around our union in the last month.

If you have any questions, please get a hold of me through our Resource Centre (204-982-6438 or 1-866-982-6438) or e-mail me at president@mgeu.ca.

At the Bargaining Table

HEALTH CARE SUPPORT SERVICES (HCSS) BARGAINING PREP CONTINUES

All members of the HCSS Central Table have now had a chance to put forward their ideas and proposals for a new contract at meetings held throughout the province. The HCSS Bargaining Committee will begin working to pull together these proposals into a bargaining package shortly.

HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION LOCALS SET MORE SPRING BARGAINING DATES

After exchanging proposal packages with the employer and beginning negotiations in March, the **Westman Lab - Local 351** and **Winnipeg Paramedics - Local 911** Bargaining Committees will continue at the table in April. Meanwhile, at the table since mid-January, the **Universite de St. Boniface - Local 148 (Professors)** Bargaining Committee has scheduled two more April dates.

In the Public Eye

MARCH AD CAMPAIGN REMINDED GOVERNMENT WHAT THEY PROMISED

Throughout March, we ran radio ads intended to remind Premier Pallister exactly what he told voters about their public services during the election. To listen to the ad and share the campaign message on social media, visit KeepUsTogether.ca.



MEDIA ROUND-UP

On **March 1**, I spoke to the **CBC**, questioning why the government was pressuring its RHAs to slash their budgets so quickly that service cuts may become the only option.

In another story re: public service wages and MLAs' disingenuous "wage freezes," I pointed out our members had already agreed, at the bargaining table, to two years of wage freezes and needed no lectures on sacrifices to help the province's bottom line.

On **March 7**, I spoke to the **Winnipeg Free Press** re: a Frontier Centre report stating our public sector was "excessive" compared to other provinces. I pointed out that the study only looked at numbers of employees, not demands or levels of service, and lumped together municipal and provincial employees, making any recommendations from the report irrelevant.

On **March 16**, I spoke with the **Winnipeg Free Press** about the government's baffling decision to eliminate the Hospital Home Care Team program despite the fact their own home care review recommended it not only continue, but be expanded to rural areas.

On **March 21**, the **Brandon Sun** ran my letter to the editor questioning why the government would cut Assiniboine Community College's ESL program when waiting lists are so long and demand is so high.

I also spoke to **Global/CTV** about how government changes to the Elections Act run the risk of stifling dissenting opinions.

On **March 28**, in the **Winnipeg Free Press**, I highlighted recommendations of our policy paper: *The Public Advantage - Marijuana Legalization in MB*, which include a safety first system of stores operated by the government.

Many times in March, I also spoke out against the closure of Brandon's blood donor clinic with media outlets throughout the province.

The Big Picture

Bill 8: MB leads the way with job leave to escape domestic violence

It was recently my privilege to speak with delegates of the *United Nations Commission on the Status of Women* about Manitoba's groundbreaking Bill 8, which has been law in our province for a year now.

The first law of its kind in Canada, the

legislation guarantees paid job leave protection for victims of domestic violence who are dealing with the effects of abuse and need to take time off from work.



President Gawronsky spoke of her own experience with domestic violence and how Bill 8 helps victims get themselves and often their children to a place of safety without risking their livelihoods.

In Your Workplace

On March 20, a dozen MGEU members who work for the Canadian Blood Services (CBS) facility in Brandon were told it would be closed and blood donation services in the area now provided by a mobile Winnipeg unit.

Since then, I've spoken publicly, and often, about the benefits of keeping the clinic open, and the potential risks to Westman's blood supply if it closes. I've also made a direct request to CEO Dr. Graham Sher, asking he reconsider the decision and offering MGEU's support in promoting the facility.



President Gawronsky and the MGEU executive gave blood in Brandon in support of MGEU members at the clinic.

Want to get this by e-mail?

Contact us to get this 5-minute monthly update delivered to your inbox.

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