



April 17, 2020

*via email to [premier@leg.gov.mb.ca](mailto:premier@leg.gov.mb.ca)*

**Manitoba  
Government  
and General  
Employees'  
Union**

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**ANY QUESTIONS?**

Call the Resource Centre:  
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19 Elizabeth Drive  
Thompson MB R8N 1S7

Premier Brian Pallister  
204 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Premier Pallister,

On Tuesday of this week, you had government officials contact public sector unions to discuss the financial and workforce impacts of COVID-19.

At the meeting, your officials talked about fiscal pressures and put a request to unions to consider workforce reduction proposals for so-called "non-essential" workers. Options floated included measures such as work-sharing agreements that would require the support of the federal government and would see work schedules and workers' pay reduced significantly, and voluntary reduced work weeks which would be extended to 35 days (7 weeks). It was asserted that lay-offs would be necessary regardless.

At this meeting, no specific information was provided about which workers would be deemed "non-essential," nor how many workers would be impacted.

The threat of legislation was also made during this meeting.

Yesterday, government officials met with MGEU representatives and requested that the MGEU consider the above options specifically with respect to the Manitoba Civil Service. They asked that MGEU consider lobbying the federal government to include the civil service in the Service Canada work-share program, and they told MGEU that we had until end of business day today to respond.

Government officials were asked again to provide information about which workers would be affected, how many and for how long. No details whatsoever were provided in response.

Please be advised that the MGEU cannot respond to the above requests in the absence of even the most basic information. We cannot engage with our members about significant workforce reduction proposals without knowing which members we would be approaching, what the impact would be, and for how long it might be felt. It is impossible for us to proceed on these requests.

The arbitrary timelines that your government has indicated exacerbate this problem. At the high-level Tuesday meeting, unions were told that they would need to respond within a week. This timeline is clearly unreasonable given the government's inability to provide even the basic information about its proposal.

I would add that this problem has also been seen beyond the civil service, where employers have told us that they cannot provide meaningful details until their proposals have been approved by Treasury Board. It also appears that various public sector employers have different interpretations of what government has asked of them.

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Although our union is willing to listen to and discuss employer proposals with an open mind, and in turn to engage our members on what they are being asked to consider, the lack of information and arbitrary timelines are completely unreasonable.

Mr. Premier, if you are serious about your proposals, it is incumbent upon you and your officials to present the necessary information for a meaningful discussion, and to provide reasonable timelines for our union to consult with our members about proposals that would have significant and far-reaching implications for their lives and the public services they deliver.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gawronsky  
MGEU President

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