



March 26, 2020

**Manitoba  
Government  
and General  
Employees'  
Union**

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**ANY QUESTIONS?**

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

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

Dear Premier Pallister,

Manitobans can always be counted on to provide support for each other in tough times. That commitment and resiliency has never been more apparent than right now as we navigate the worst pandemic in a century. These challenges have seen people lose their jobs and incomes, and put the future for many families in serious peril. It is the role of governments, in times like these, to provide support and relief for people.

As I said in my letter of March 18, 2020, we believe more must be done to support those who have been laid off or who cannot work as a result of the pandemic. The federal government has put in place backstops for workers and families that are facing hardships and lost income at this time. These include (1) expanding eligibility for Employment Insurance and waiving the waiting period for benefits; and (2) the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). **I am writing once again to urge your government to partner with the federal government to top up these benefits to help working families impacted by the pandemic pay their bills, and to help our economy weather the storm unleashed by the public health restrictions that have been required.**

Since I wrote you, many voices have joined the call to top up incomes for workers impacted by the pandemic. On the weekend, Canada's leading business organizations, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Business Council of Canada, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, joined together in this call to action:

"We call on governments to provide more direct funding for employees. Other countries have recognized this need and are offering to cover as much as 80 percent of the incomes of workers who are laid off as a result of the health emergency. We encourage the government to backstop the economy by implementing income supports at similar levels as Denmark and the United Kingdom."

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have also endorsed this statement. While we would hope for a provincial top-up to 95% of regular earnings, as the federal program allows for, the fact remains that both private and public sector leaders are united in the belief that significant top-up of the federal program is in the best interest of Manitobans.

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It is also worth noting that since I wrote last week, every other province in Canada has announced some form of income support measure to complement those implemented by the federal government. Like other Canadians, Manitobans need their provincial government to have their backs. And our economy needs provincial support to get through the pandemic

I would be remiss if I also didn't take this opportunity to note the continued dedication of our members who continue to work on the front lines through the pandemic. This includes health care workers, correctional officers, social workers, liquor store workers, and many, many more. Many private sector leaders have chosen to acknowledge the extra stress and burden borne by their employees who are working through the pandemic by providing some form of stress/hero/danger/hazard pay. These employers have shown they appreciate and respect the additional challenges faced by those who must work while dealing with the extra challenges posed by closed-daycares and schools and by increased safety risks. I urge you to consider paying similar respect to public sector employees who remain on the front lines.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation for the telephone call I received this morning from your Minister of Finance to discuss what needs to be done to guide Manitoba through the pandemic. I hope that your government and our union can continue to share ideas and collaborate as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gawronsky  
MGEU President

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