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Manitoba
Government
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Union

WESTMAN LAB

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Dear Member,

We are pleased to inform you that we have made a breakthrough in our longstanding dispute with the provincial government about wage fairness for members at Westman Lab.

As you know, in March 2017, just after the last round of Westman Lab negotiations began, the provincial government introduced legislation imposing wage freezes and wage caps on public sector workers in Manitoba. The timing of this bombshell development had a particularly unfair and negative impact on Westman Lab members.

This legislation, Bill 28 -- The Public Services Sustainability Act, restricts wage and other monetary increases to 0, 0, .75% and 1% over a four year "sustainability period".

Bill 28 was passed into law in early June 2017, just weeks after employer representatives at the Westman Lab bargaining table had made the union a final offer reflecting the wage freezes and wage caps in the legislation, and negotiations were concluded.

Despite significant pressure from the MGEU and members at Westman Lab, the government refused to treat Westman Lab fairly and members reluctantly ratified a collective agreement containing wage increases of 0, 0, .75% and 1%.

This meant that Westman Lab members did not receive the wage increases negotiated by their counterparts in former DSM (now Shared Health) – 1.5%, 1.5%, 2% and 2%. These negotiations had been conducted and concluded several months prior to Westman Lab negotiations and the introduction of bill 28.

At the same time, the MGEU, along with 28 other unions, formed the Partnership to Defend Public Services (PDPS) to launch a Charter challenge of bill 28, asserting that it infringes on the right of workers and their unions to freely and fairly collectively bargain.

In the fall of 2017, the MGEU, as part of PDPS, asked the court to grant an injunction against bill 28, hoping to stop its implementation while the Charter challenge proceeds through the courts. In the injunction application, the MGEU took the opportunity to file an affidavit singling out and describing the Westman Lab negotiations as an example of the unfairness of the legislation and its negative impact. This forced the government to respond, and in documents filed with the court, the government admitted that its move to impose wage restraint legislation had created an "unfairness" at Westman Lab that needed to be addressed. Since that time, the MGEU has relentlessly pressed government to find a way to solve the problem it had finally acknowledged in court.

We are pleased to advise that we have been successful in securing wage adjustments which will bring your wages in line with those of your counterparts across the province. These adjustments are retroactive to April 1, 2014. The employer advises that the increases and retroactive pay will be processed within 120 days.

We know this has been a difficult time for all involved. We appreciate your patience.

In solidarity,
Michelle Gawronsky
MGEU President