



ASSOCIATION OF EMPLOYEES SUPPORTING EDUCATION SERVICES

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Proud Member of the Confederation of Canadian Unions

April 17, 2020

Dr. Annette Trimbee
President
The University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 2E9

Dear Dr. Trimbee:

It is with deep concern that I write this letter to you in response to the Provincial Government's directive to identify salary savings, which will ultimately undermine our members' hard fought financial negotiations bargained over many decades.

Should the salary reductions that are proposed occur, the University will likely be permanently changed insofar as its operations are concerned, even with a small reduction in the 3% to 5% range. Proposing cost controls beyond this degree is unprecedented and will result in a decline in the University's ability to provide the basic student programming that is currently being offered. This government initiative is opportunistic and is a reprehensible attempt to permanently reduce their costs towards post-secondary education in Manitoba.

Of major concern to AESES is the fact that our members routinely provide work in excess of their normal 35 hours per week obligation. Any reduction in work hours will create a massive workload problem for our members without there being a corresponding reduction to the work expectations and/or services provided at the University. Every position that is either reduced or eliminated lowers the ability to deliver quality programming to students and the community.

Furthermore, it is irresponsible for the Provincial Government to expect these concessions in a very short window of time given this pandemic is an unprecedented modern event for our country. Unions want to be part of the solution. However, given the existing constraints on our members' wages already in place for a 4-year sustainability period, these further cuts are untenable. If reductions are necessary, they need to be done carefully and not in haste.

Now is not the time for austerity measures that will have negative consequences for the overall economy in Manitoba. AESES is calling on the senior leadership of the University to refuse to participate in any substantive cost reductions ordered by this Government. In fact, this should be done by all of the post-secondary institutions in the province. The Pallister Government was not given a second mandate in order to decimate the civil service and institutions like our Universities. Failing to stop this attack on education and its workforce will likely result in a permanent loss of quality programming.

We recognize that government does not understand the unique role of Universities, nor appreciate that a directive of this magnitude cannot be implemented without serious long-term repercussions. However, in

light of these concerns, AESES is suggesting some possible alternatives to the current approach outlined by the province that either in whole, or in part, may be able to achieve the same goals.

- Request that the cost of these reductions be absorbed over an extended timeline of 5-7 years.
- Request deficit spending flexibility for the next two budget cycles with the intent to normalize spending in year three.
- Request information on federal assistance for the COVID 19 costs to the healthcare system. This is not represented in any financial analysis considered by the province. It is our expectation that, similar to previous emergencies, a substantial portion of costs may well be underwritten by the federal government.

While we understand that the University may feel they have no choice but to participate in this exercise of identifying salary savings, we hope you will give serious consideration to our comments and recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Laurie R. Morris
President
AESES

Cc: Ms. Roberta Marsh
Ms. Shelley Mangiacotti
Ms. Lisa McKendry
Mr. Lorne Hilton