



# University of Manitoba STUDENTS' UNION

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

## **To the undergraduate study body at the University of Manitoba,**

In the ongoing labour dispute between the University of Manitoba and the U of M Faculty Association (UMFA), the University of Manitoba Students' Union (UMSU) has been encouraging both parties to come to an amicable agreement in the best interest of the institution's central stakeholder - students.

Today, we write to you, the students, to provide you with context and reiterate that you are supported unequivocally by your union.

Today, UMFA announced that they have legally mandated a strike. After weeks of negotiation, and days of mediation with a third-party arbitrator, no agreement has been made between the University of Manitoba and UMFA. Details on specific bargaining positions will be released after mediation ends at 4PM on Monday afternoon. While the University administration can still accept UMFA's final offer, UMFA's Executive Council has made the decision to call for job action. **As of Tuesday November 2<sup>nd</sup>, UMFA members will be on legal strike.**

The issue of faculty wages is one which began in 2016 and still has not been resolved. Wages have been frozen since 2017 in part due to Provincial mandates that cap the University's ability to raise wages to the extent UMFA wishes – these provincial mandates were found to be unconstitutional but later appealed thus their legality still stands, making negotiations quite difficult. UMFA and the University of Manitoba began negotiations on a collective agreement in August of 2021. On Wednesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, the University of Manitoba and UMFA agreed to enter a process called “mediation”, whereby a neutral third-party helps bring both sides to an agreement. A bargaining deadline was set as 11:59 PM on Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, and a strike deadline set for Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

For the past 18 months, post-secondary students have faced unprecedented challenges. While COVID-19 has continuously complicated day-to-day life, post-secondary education has become less accessible, less affordable, and many students have faced mental health challenges as a product of the context we find ourselves in. The prospect of a strike and further academic disruptions is frightening. In times like these, it is easy to point fingers, you may be inclined to call faculty at the University of Manitoba tone-deaf or uncompromising. However, consider the long and complicated history of this dispute. Faculty is adamant about their stance because they believe their asks guarantee the University's prosperity – if professors do not feel valued, the basis of the institution is undermined.



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Though these times can rightfully appear as turbulent, UMSU members take pride in the ability of academic staff to adapt, evolve, and continue our education amidst unprecedented challenges. They have done so for almost two years, and we are confident in their ability to persevere.

As your student union, we want to present a unified front during this time. We unequivocally believe faculty deserve a wage increase and to have their struggles validated. We recognize the constraining environment, which is in part to blame for this ongoing dispute. What began in 2016 as unlawful interference in the collective bargaining process continues to create impasses in 2021. For that reason, UMSU stands firmly with the faculties' cause: a wage increase is overdue for our university's professors.

On behalf of all UMSU executives and staff members, we want to reiterate that the well-being of undergraduate students at the University of Manitoba is our highest priority. Our vision has always been to provide students with advocacy, supports, and services that positively impact UMSU member's academic experience. UMSU will continue to do everything in its power to advocate for its student body. We sincerely hope that all parties can come to an amicable agreement, without putting the academic careers of Manitoba's best and brightest at risk.

We welcome all questions and strongly encourage all Bison's reach out to our work emails, [Pres@umsu.ca](mailto:Pres@umsu.ca) and [vpa@umsu.ca](mailto:vpa@umsu.ca). To stay engaged in labor relations at the University of Manitoba, please refer to <https://umsu.ca/>, <http://www.umfa.ca/> and <https://umanitoba.ca/bargaining/>.

**Sincerely,**  
**The University of Manitoba Executive Committee**



Brendan Scott,  
UMSU President



Emily Kalo,  
VP Advocacy

VP Student Life



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VP Community Engagement



Brook Rivard  
VP Finance & Operations



Savannah Szocs



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