



# FAIRNESS — AT — WORK

## President's Report

SUMMER 2019  
MANITOBA FEDERATION OF LABOUR



President Rebeck speaks at the Save the Concordia ER rally in May

## EVERYONE DESERVES to be treated FAIRLY AT WORK.

No matter what you do for work, you deserve to be safe and respected on the job.

But Brian Pallister hasn't been treating working people fairly.

Since he's been Premier, he has weakened workplace safety and health laws that protect workers and help them get home safe to their families.

He's made it harder for workers to join a union.

And he's legislated wage freezes for over 120,000 workers – regardless of their seniority or job performance – instead of negotiating contracts.



### This election, ask your local candidates where they stand on:

- Making the health and safety laws that protect you at work stronger, not weaker.
- The right for workers to negotiate fair contracts with their employer.
- Allowing workers to choose to join a union by signing a union card.

Manitoba  
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## Building the Next Century of Solidarity

Sisters, brothers and friends, this spring we reminded Manitobans of the importance of the Winnipeg General Strike, and in so doing we made sure the importance of the labour movement was front and centre. I want to thank everyone who attended the five events that were presented by Manitoba's Unions - the response to these events was overwhelmingly positive.

As much as this year has been about looking to the past to mark the importance of where our movement has come from and the victories that have been won for working people, it is just as important to look ahead to where our movement is going. As I and many others have raised, the labour movement is as vital now as it was 100 years ago: precarious work and the gig economy continue to grow; right wing governments continue to attack the rights of working people and attempt to drive down wages; and the gap between the very rich and the rest of us is widening at an alarming pace.

On the federal front, the Canadian Labour Congress continues to advocate strongly for the creation of a national universal pharmacare program. The Trudeau government's own hand-picked advisory council has recommended a universal, single-payer pharmacare program, yet so far the federal NDP is the only party committed to one. In honour of the Winnipeg General Strike, the CLC held its Canadian Council meetings in Winnipeg this May. It was great to welcome so many labour leaders and share our history with them. And we were glad to see the lifting of the US tariffs on Canadian steel this spring, due in no small part to the advocacy of Canada's unions.



KEVIN REBECK

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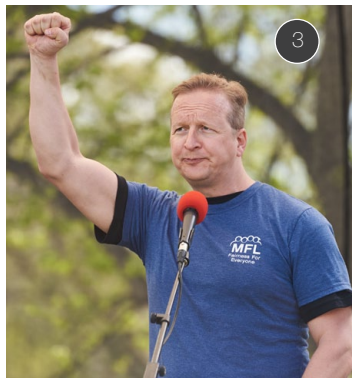
What does Pallister have in mind for your pension? (P. 3)

Winnipeg General Strike Centennial (Pp. 4-5)

Putting workers first this election (P. 6)

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**[1]** President Rebeck with councillors Sherri Rollins, Ross Eadie, Vivian Santos, Brian Mayes, Jason Schreyer, John Orlikow, Devi Sharma, Cindy Gilroy and Matt Allard - these councillors and Mayor Brian Bowman were sponsors for the Winnipeg General Strike Centennial **[2]** Sharon Reilly and President Rebeck speak at Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Gala Dinner **[3]** President Rebeck at Solidarity Forever Community Concert **[4]** President Rebeck with Fight for \$15 & Fairness Manitoba's Emily Leedham to talk about the importance of the labour movement on CBC radio for 100th anniversary of Bloody Saturday **[5]** CLC's Bernie Wood, Brandon and District Labour Council President Kirk Carr, Writer and Director Norman Narowski, and President Rebeck at the performance of Women Strike! in Brandon.

## Century of solidarity, cont'd

Here at home, the MFL continues to grow, as the members of the Manitoba Nurses Union voted to affiliate at their AGM this spring. At a time when we have an anti-worker government on Broadway, standing in solidarity against the cuts and privatization agenda of the Pallister government is more important than ever. Health care is a main priority for Manitoba voters as we head into the early election called by Brian Pallister, and I was proud to speak on behalf of working families at recent rallies to save the Concordia and Seven Oaks ERs.

There is one party that is on the side of working people, and that's the Manitoba NDP. This spring, members of our movement gathered in the Legislature for the introduction of Bill 224 *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Psychological Stressors)* by MLA for Flin Flon and NDP Labour Critic Tom Lindsey. This bill would make it easier for Manitoba workers struggling with mental health to get the supports they need. It would expand coverage of workplace accidents to include supports for workers who experience a stress-induced mental disorder. Unfortunately, due to Brian Pallister's early election call, this bill will have to be reintroduced after the election.

Manitoba's labour movement continues to support the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1505 as they work to get a fair contract with their employer, Winnipeg Transit. ATU Local 1505 has used some innovative tactics to pressure the employer to come to the table to reach a fair deal. In May, transit drivers did not enforce fare collection for a whole day, costing the city \$45,000. In early June, transit operators started to refuse voluntary overtime. At the time of this publication, there has been no resolution for ATU 1505 members. We continue to stand in solidarity with these hardworking Manitobans and support them in their fight for a fair contract and safer working conditions.

**Kevin Rebeck**  
President, Manitoba Federation of Labour



## TOO MANY MANITOBANS

can't find affordable, reliable child care when they need it... families deserve better.

Parents are facing unnecessary stress because affordable, high quality child care is so hard to find. This makes it harder for parents - especially women - to get back to paid work, and it hurts our economy.

Brian Pallister's government is failing hard-working families:

- Wait lists for child care are at record highs, and convenient child care options are hard to find
- Child care fees are putting a squeeze on household budgets
- Poor wages and working conditions are making it difficult to recruit and retain early childhood educators

Making affordable, high-quality early learning and child care available to all families will grow our economy, help set children up for success at school, and reduce gender inequality.

**This election, ask your local candidates if they'll commit to doing what's needed to make sure families can access affordable, high-quality child care by:**

- Expanding the number of publicly-funded child care spaces.
- Making parent fees affordable.
- Improving quality with a workforce plan that focuses on training needs and fair wages for early childhood educators.



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## This provincial election, let's vote to make life better for Manitoba workers

As he often does, Brian Pallister has decided that the rules don't apply to him and called an early provincial election, even though by law the next election shouldn't be held until October 2020.

The MFL will be working hard to ensure that issues that matter to working families are top of mind for voters as they head to the polls.

During the election, the MFL will be running a postcard campaign on issues important to workers: issues such as a \$15 minimum wage, the need for an affordable and accessible child care, and fairness in the workplace. These will be mailed out during the campaign, but we wanted to give readers a sneak peak.



### WORKING FULL-TIME SHOULD

be a path out of poverty.

**IT'S TIME FOR A \$15 MINIMUM WAGE.**

Too many Manitobans are falling behind because our minimum wage is not enough to help make ends meet, even with full-time work. It means some families have to choose between paying rent and buying groceries.

Most minimum wage earners are women and adults, many with kids to support.

Brian Pallister is failing families by keeping the minimum wage too low.

**This election, ask your local candidates where they stand on a \$15 minimum wage, one that would help lift families out of poverty and help them make ends meet.**



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## Pallister government keeps its plan for workers' pensions secret until after election

In June, the Pallister government sent out an 11th hour news release announcing that it plans to introduce changes to *The Pension Benefits Act* this fall. This announcement came as a surprise, as it came only a few days before the Pallister government announced that Manitobans would be heading to the polls for an early election on September 10.

In the winter of 2018 the Pallister government released a discussion paper and recommendations from the Pension Commission of Manitoba. The report included a number of deeply concerning proposals, including allowing defined benefit plans to be weakened through conversion to target benefit plans. Due to the strong voice of the labour movement, it appears that the Pallister government will not pursue conversion to target benefit plans at this time.

According to the province's news release: "... the government is listening to Manitobans and has decided to not move forward with the Pension Commission's recommendation to permit a new target benefit/shared risk plan design for single employer and multi-employer plans." Clearly, the fact that labour was able to demonstrate that defined benefit plans are higher performing and yield better returns on investment had an effect.

However, the government has not ruled out a number of other concerning proposals from the Pension Commission Report. Proposals like loosening unlocking provisions and ending the long-established principle of universal participation are still on the table. The government seems committed to opening up Manitoba's pension plan system to "flexibility" instead of the goals of continued stability, predictability and security. We are concerned that they are focused on adding more risk to the retirement plans of Manitoba workers.

It is also troubling that they sent out this new release just before they called an early election. Their refusal to provide any details through the tabling of legislation means that Manitobans will not

get to see the specifics of their plan for pensions before they cast their ballots this fall. This is the same government that said they could be trusted to protect Manitoba's front-line services in the 2016 election. There is no reason to have faith that this government has the best interests of workers in mind when it comes to their retirement security.

All workers deserve to be able to retire from working life with dignity and financial security. Voters should have a clear understanding of the Pallister government's plan for their pensions before they go to the polls.

Manitoba's unions have been strong and united in calling for the provincial government to ensure that any changes to *The Pension Benefits Act* are made with the goal of ensuring stronger retirement security for Manitoba workers. If legislation is introduced this fall, Manitoba's labour movement will need to make a strong stand against the weakening of pension security for working families.



### Early bird registration

Deadline: August 9, 2019  
 Fee: Winnipeg and Southern region – \$225  
 North of 53° – \$150

### Regular registration

Deadline: September 13, 2019  
 Fee: Winnipeg and Southern region – \$275  
 North of 53° – \$175

**Thompson, Manitoba**  
**September 26 - 28, 2019**  
 Visit [mfl.ca](http://mfl.ca) for more information

# Manitoba's Unions mark a Century of Solidarity

In May and June, Manitoba's Unions presented a number of events to mark the Winnipeg General Strike Centennial. The following are photos from the events: The 1919 Social, presented by Myers LLP; the Winnipeg General Strike Centennial Gala Dinner, presented by the Manitoba Building Trades; the Solidarity Forever Parade, presented by UFCW Local 832; the Solidarity Forever Concert, presented by CUPE Manitoba; and the Rise Up 100: Songs for the Next Century Concert, presented by the MGEU. Photo credits: David Lipnowski

