



PRESIDENT REBECK HOSTS THIS YEAR'S VIRTUAL DAY OF MOURNING CEREMONY

Sisters, Brothers and Friends, we are living in extraordinary times. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on our work, and on our entire lives. I want to thank Manitoba's unions for the hard work that you are all doing on behalf of your members. All across our province, people are concerned about their economic security and their personal safety. And unions are playing a huge role in making sure workers are informed and that their needs are advocated for to government and employers.

Unfortunately, we have the Pallister government in charge and they are no friend of working families. They continue to make deep cuts that will harm our economic recovery and weaken public services.

## NO PROVINCIAL INCOME SUPPORT FOR MANITOBANS LOSING PAYCHEQUES

Manitoba is the only province in Canada that refused to create any sort of income support program to help workers who have lost jobs or paycheques due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yes, you read that correctly - Manitoba stands alone in all of Canada in its failure to support working people during this crisis. Every other province has introduced some sort of emergency program to complement federal income support programs and help out working families. Manitoba, under Brian Pallister, remains at the back of the pack in the country.

## LABOUR MANAGEMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE SUPPORTS WORKERS

When COVID-19 hit our province, Manitoba's Minister of Finance tasked the Labour Management Review Committee with providing advice on measures the government could take to tailor changes to the Employment Standards Act that would better support working people impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

The LMRC is an advisory committee made up of volunteer representatives from labour and the business community who provide advice to the provincial government on employment and workplace issues as requested. I am pleased to report that the LMRC was unanimous in recommending

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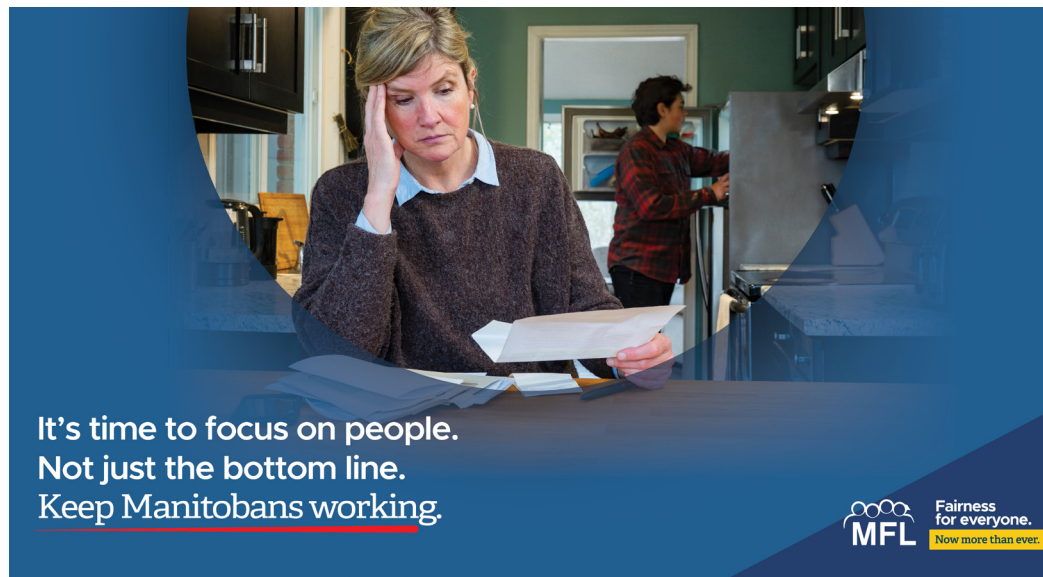
that the Minister make changes to Employment Standards to provide for workers to take job-protected leave for as long as they need to for reasons related to COVID-19. This can include the need to self-isolate or quarantine, medical reasons, to take care of a loved one, or to comply with public health orders. The provincial government is also providing 14 days of paid leave to health care workers who may have been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace. The MFL believes this paid leave should be extended to all essential workers.

### MFL OFFICE OPERATIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

While the MFL office remains closed to the public on account of ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, our MFL staff team is continuing to work hard to support affiliates and advance the interests of working people during this difficult time. Please continue to reach out to us by calling 204-947-1400 or emailing us at Admin@mfl.mb.ca and we will be pleased to assist you in any way we can.

### PALLISTER'S ATTACKS ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Finally, I would like to say how disappointed I am in the Pallister government's decision to attack our public sector and force job losses and income losses for thousands of Manitoba's



It's time to focus on people.  
Not just the bottom line.  
Keep Manitobans working.

MFL Fairness for everyone. Now more than ever.

AN IMAGE FROM THE MFL'S DIGITAL CAMPAIGN TO PUSH BACK AGAINST THE PALLISTER GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC SECTOR JOB CUTS

dedicated public sector workers.

Economics 101 teaches us that you do not add to the unemployment line and cut back on government spending on services during an economic crisis. His decision to layoff thousands of workers with families to support, at a time when local businesses are desperate for customers, is shameful, and it will hurt our economic recovery. These cuts will impact the delivery of public services that working families are counting on, now more than ever.

Labour has been united in standing up against Pallister's austerity, and we will need to continue to push back and remind

Manitobans that when we needed him most, Pallister attacked public services, hurt people and flatlined our chances for recovery.

In Solidarity,

Kevin Rebeck  
PRESIDENT OF THE MANITOBA  
FEDERATION OF LABOUR

## Community Unemployed Help Centre

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to huge job losses and lost income for workers across the country. As a result, a number of new federal support programs have been announced, including changes to the Employment Insurance system.

Thankfully, Manitoba's unions and unemployed workers have an excellent resource to help them navigate federal and provincial programs for workers facing unemployment with the Community Unemployed Help Centre (CUHC), located in the Union Centre.

Services available to unions and unemployed workers through the CUHC include information, assistance, advice, and representation to individuals dealing with the federal government's Employment Insurance program

and Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance program.

Through its public-education work the CUHC informs Manitobans of their rights and obligations in relation to these programs. Please feel free to reach out to CUHC at 204 942-6556, or cuhc@cuhc.mb.ca with any questions or concerns about EI (or about Employment and Income Assistance). All CUHC services are provided free of charge.

Thank you to Executive Director Neil Cohen and all the great staff at CUHC for the important work they're doing for Manitobans in need during this incredibly busy and challenging time.

# MFL-OHC has a new space, and a new face

- By Carly Nicholson, Executive Director of the MFL-OHC

After 30 years at the Union Centre, the MFL Occupational Health Centre is moving. This summer, the MFL-OHC will join Klinik Community Health and the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) at a new community service hub at 167 Sherbrook Street in Winnipeg. The building is undergoing an extensive renovation to accommodate the three community health clinics and will provide ample space for community connection and collaboration.

The MFL-OHC was established in 1983 by Dick Martin, then president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, who saw a gap in the health care system to meet the needs of workers and provide quality, accessible, and comprehensive services on workplace health and safety.

Today, the MFL-OHC is a community health centre specializing in workplace health and safety. A non-profit, charitable organization, MHC-OHC is funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, along with grants from the Workers Compensation Board, the federal government, individual and union contributions. The MFL-OHC helps workers, employers and joint health and safety committees to improve workplace health and safety conditions and eliminate hazards. Services are available free of charge, and include a medical clinic, workplaces services, and education and outreach to workers and workplaces.

The move to 167 Sherbrook, along with Klinik and SERC, will provide the MFL-OHC with more space to assist workers. The MFL-OHC maintains a library on health and safety – one of the largest in Western Canada – and the new space will also encompass a training centre within

the MFL-OHC office, as well as access to several other training sites across the building to support more health and safety workshops in the community. The move will promote cross-agency collaboration and knowledge-sharing and provide opportunities for further partnerships and services to help working people.

The MFL-OHC has been here for workers for over 35 years and we will continue to be the source for worker-centred health and safety training and care. From helping joint health and safety committees, providing individual workers with primary care and helping them navigate the health care system to presenting innovative approaches to psychological



MOCK UP OF THE STREET VIEW OF THE NEW MFL-OHC LOCATION, AT 167 SHERBOOK IN WINNIPEG.

With an exciting new space on the horizon, it was also time to update the look of the centre to carry the MFL-OHC into its next phase. The MFL-OHC's new logo represents the four intersecting service pillars of the organization – medical care; cross-cultural community development; education, training, and outreach; and our resource centre. The logo features prominently on the new facade of 167 Sherbrook, and is the first step in a refreshed face - be on the lookout for a brand new website in the next few months, with several practical health and safety tools and resources for your workplace.

health and safety in the workplace, we will continue to evolve and expand into this next phase.



# COVID-19 and workers' mental health

Throughout our province, workers are facing increased stress and impacts on their mental health from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employers in Manitoba are legally responsible for protecting the health and well-being of their employees, including their psychological health.

Hazards to workers' mental health during the pandemic may include: increased work demands; worry about risks of COVID-19; risk of violence from stressed customers or patients; harassment or bullying due to stigma from being suspected of having COVID-19 or being exposed to someone suspected of having COVID-19; racism, discrimination and xenophobia; feelings of social isolation, especially for those working at home; loss of support without the physical presence of coworkers and supervisors; increased work demands; rapid and poorly planned organizational changes to respond to address the needs and/or effects of COVID-19; and concern about job security and possible layoffs.

To ensure psychological and physical safety, employers and workplaces should take proactive measures to protect workers and limit their exposure to COVID-19. This includes implementing physical barriers between workers and the public, social distancing protocols, increased cleaning in the environment, and supplying adequate hand washing/sanitizing supplies and

facilities. Specialized personal protective equipment may also be required. This includes making sure workers feel comfortable to raise concerns about their safety and make every effort to address these concerns.

Disrespectful behaviour, harassment, bullying and threats of violence should be addressed in accordance with the organization's Respectful Workplace Policy as well as the Violence Prevention and Harassment Prevention policies required by law in all workplaces.

Employers should inform all workplace stakeholders that discrimination on account of illness or perceived illness is a violation of the Human Rights Code. Supervisors should also be regularly checking in with workers about how they are feeling, at least once a week. Many people are experiencing anxiety, fear and stress at this time. Employers should recognize that workers are human beings and prioritize their well-being over the work itself.

For more information about ways to support the psychological health of workers during the pandemic, the Manitoba Federation of Labour-Occupational Health Centre has expertise and a number of resources to help. You can call the MFL-OHC at 204-949-0811 or toll free at 1-888-843-1229. You can also email them at [mflohc@mflohc.mb.ca](mailto:mflohc@mflohc.mb.ca).

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2021 MFL CONVENTION  
MAY 6-8 | BRANDON

# Home is not always safe: COVID-19 and domestic violence

While many of the very serious health and safety hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic have received extensive coverage and attention over the last few months, alarming increases in rates of domestic violence which have accompanied the global health crisis have received considerably less focus and action.

Reports from just about every part of the world indicate that rates of domestic abuse have been climbing starkly in connection with the pandemic. Home isolation, separation from personal support networks, reduced access to social services, and the stresses and pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the risk of violence and opportunities for abusers to exert power and control.

Canada, like so many other countries, was already grappling with a domestic violence crisis before the pandemic began. Research by the Canadian Labour Congress has shown that as many as one in every three Canadian workers, primarily women, will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. And while domestic violence can touch any woman, research confirms that some groups of women are impacted disproportionately: Indigenous women, young women, women with disabilities, and trans women and non-binary folk all experience higher rates of domestic violence. Horribly, in 2019 a woman or girl was killed every three days in this country.

Unions have always played an important role supporting their members in dealing with domestic abuse, and the labour movement as a whole has always been active in the struggle to end domestic violence.

Over the last five years, starting with ground-breaking legislation in Manitoba, the labour movement has successfully fought for and won paid domestic violence leave in most provinces and at the federal level, providing an important new resource for victims of domestic violence to be able to take time to get help, without risking their jobs or losing their income.

But we know there is much, much more to be done to support our members and all victims of violence.

Now, more than ever, it's clear that Canada needs a National Action Plan to combat domestic violence and all forms of violence against women and girls. A plan would help plug the gaps in anti-violence services, set clear targets, and launch proven strategies for reducing violence in all regions and all communities. If your union would like to get involved with the Canadian Labour

Congress (CLC) campaign for a National Action Plan, please visit the [www.donewaiting.ca/plan\\_vaw](http://www.donewaiting.ca/plan_vaw).

In Manitoba, our provincial network of ten women's shelters has continued to operate throughout the pandemic, but chronic underfunding and new resource challenges associated with the pandemic have made their jobs much harder. While the federal government has recently announced special funding of \$50 million dollars to support women's shelters across the country, the Pallister government has been MIA, and Manitoba's shelters have had their funding frozen for many years, not even keeping up with inflation.

Last month, thanks to the fundraising activities of the MFL Women's Committee, the MFL was proud to be able to make a \$10,000 donation to Manitoba's women's shelters to help out in this most difficult of times. Additional donations would be warmly welcomed – you can find information about your local shelter at [maws.mb.ca](http://maws.mb.ca).

The MFL is also continuing our public awareness campaign about the availability of paid domestic violence leave. You can see images from our new informational posters alongside this piece - if you would like copies for your union hall, workplace, or community gathering space, please call or email us: 204-947-1400 or [Admin@mfl.mb.ca](mailto:Admin@mfl.mb.ca).

And if you or someone you know needs help to deal with domestic violence, you can call the provincial toll-free crisis line at 1-877-977-0007 at any time, or if you are in immediate danger, call 911.



# MFL campaign for presumptive WCB coverage for COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are relying on many workers to provide health care services, operate grocery stores and pharmacies, deliver meals, transport essential goods, and maintain vital transit, infrastructure, community and emergency services, as well as other desperately needed services like child care.

We need to make sure that the right type of WCB coverage is in place for them, and that coverage is called presumptive. But so far, the Pallister government has failed to commit to presumptive workers compensation for COVID-19.

Workplaces are currently the largest gatherings of people in the province. Making COVID-19 coverage presumptive means that the WCB would presume the disease was contracted from work unless proven otherwise.

The claims process for this coverage would be easier for workers to navigate, and would get them the supports they need more rapidly. We should not force workers who are exposed to

COVID-19 on the job to go through a longer, more difficult claim process. Unfortunately, we know that 50% of occupational disease claims are disallowed by WCB adjudicators under the current process for occupational disease claims. Creating presumptive coverage would shift this burden of proof to the employer, if an employer believed that the virus was not spread through work.

The MFL and many Manitoba unions have called on the Minister of Finance to commit that workers compensation coverage for exposure to COVID-19 on the job will be provided on a presumptive basis, as it is with post-traumatic stress disorder.

We owe it to the Manitobans who are showing up for us in this pandemic to have the right workers compensation coverage in place for them. The time to act is now. I want to thank all of the unions who have written to the Minister to echo our call. Together, we can win this significant victory for working people. You can learn more about our campaign for presumptive WCB coverage for COVID-19 at [mfl.ca](http://mfl.ca).



**Tell Premier Pallister.** Workers need the right WCB coverage for COVID-19.

Find out more at [mfl.ca](http://mfl.ca)



# Public investments will need to lead our economic recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic is having severe and unprecedented impacts on people, jobs and the economy.

In the interest of public health, entire sectors of our economy have been closed or dramatically scaled-back, and we face the worst unemployment crisis since the Great Depression. In Manitoba, tens of thousands of workers have lost their jobs and seen their hours cut-back, as families struggle with rising household debt and poverty.

Canada's public health care system, supported by dedicated health care professionals, has been there for us throughout the pandemic. But, there are alarming cracks, including inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment, staffing shortages and serious concerns about the state of long-term seniors' care. In Manitoba, workers in health care and the provincial public sector have worked for years under expired contracts and frozen wages, dictated by the Pallister government.

Early progress in flattening the curve mean some businesses are planning for how they might re-open, but conditions will be not go 'back to normal' anytime soon. With reduced incomes and public health concerns lingering, consumer and investor confidence will likely remain flat for some time.

So far, Premier Pallister has responded to the economic crisis with cuts and austerity – an approach widely criticized by economists and other experts from across the political spectrum. Laying off thousands of public sector workers will weaken public services that families are relying on and prolong the recession by cutting incomes and purchasing power further, adding to the downward spiral.

The greatest economic risk we face is not public debt, but sustained economic misery of prolonged unemployment, weak investment and consumer demand, and a double or even multi-dip recession.

Government must lead our recovery through forward-looking plans to protect our economic future, with the overriding goal of maintaining employment and getting thousands of Manitobans back to work in fairly paid, family supporting jobs.

When consumer and business spending are at their lowest, we need major public investments to counter the recession and create an environment for the private sector to rebound.

With long-term interest rates at exceptionally low levels, now is the time to plan for ambitious public investments to build a better, fairer Manitoba. Our public debt burden will be far worse without a strong economy, rising incomes and increased government revenues.

We rely on public services even more during times like these. They meet important needs and provide a floor to support our most vulnerable. The pandemic has revealed concerning gaps in our social safety net that need to be addressed. We need to increase investments in public services and ensure we care for all members of our society.

We also need strategic investments in roads, schools, hospitals, flood protection, colleges and universities, child care centres, public housing, hydro, public transit and building retrofits to kick-start the economy, create jobs and support Manitobans to return to work.

Workplace health and safety must be prioritized, with government setting the proper tone through prevention programs

and inspections. Workers need proper PPE and training and easy-to-access WCB coverage, as well as paid sick leave so they aren't forced to choose between staying home and keeping a paycheque.

Women workers have experienced the majority of job losses as a result of their over-representation in sectors especially hard hit by the pandemic, and our recovery plan will need to ensure they have opportunities to rejoin the labour market and obtain better-paying and more secure employment in the future.

To enable parents, especially women, to return to work while ensuring safe and enriching care for their children, we must rebuild a child care system that is universally accessible and affordable. This will require greater public investment to stabilize and adequately fund centres, open-up more spaces and retain skilled, fairly compensated staff.

The pandemic has highlighted how we all benefit from the hard work of thousands of Manitobans in low-wage sectors, such as grocery store workers, early childhood educators, cleaners, those who work with vulnerable Manitobans and many others earning minimum wage or just above it. Our minimum wage should no longer leave its earners living in poverty, even with full-time work. All workers deserve a living wage that helps them make ends meet.

We will need a truly "all-hands-on deck" plan if we want to get Manitoba back to work. The Pallister government needs to reverse course on cuts and invest instead in our economy to lay the foundation for good, family-supporting jobs in the private and public sectors and help our recovery.



# Health & Safety Conference

## Early bird registration



Deadline: September 25, 2020  
Fee: Winnipeg and Southern region – \$225  
North of 53° – \$150

## Regular registration

Deadline: November 6, 2020  
Fee: Winnipeg and Southern region – \$275  
North of 53° – \$175

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**  
**November 17 - 18, 2020**

Manitoba   
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