



BRANDON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Local 37 Canadian Federation of Students

November 3, 2011

Honourable Jennifer Howard, Minister of Labour and Immigration
317 Legislative Building
450 Broadway Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Howard,

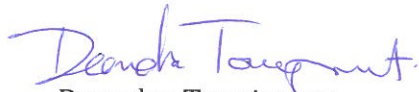
We are writing on behalf of students at Brandon University who are desperate for the Administration and the Brandon University Faculty Association to reach a fair, equitable and expeditious settlement at the bargaining table. While students have been placed in an extremely frustrating situation, not receiving the education we have paid for, we recognize that if both parties cannot reach a settlement through negotiation in this labour dispute, another job action in three years is imminent.

While binding arbitration has been proposed as a quick and easy solution to this labor dispute, we feel strongly that this process will be detrimental to Brandon University and ultimately unfavorable for the students we represent. By allowing a third party to impose a deal on both sides, there is a real risk that neither will truly take ownership for the contents of the agreement. Many of the issues on that table are related to research, course loads, and hiring of faculty, which are complicated and require an extensive knowledge of not only the operation of universities in general but Brandon University in particular. For these reasons, we do not believe that an outsider who lacks this understanding and is not personally invested in the institution is the best bit to make a decision that will affect the students of this university for years to come.

While forced arbitration is not –from our perspective– a viable option for settling the ongoing labor dispute between the BUFA and the BU Administration, we would welcome anything you could do to pressure both sides to come to an equitable agreement at the bargaining table. Unfortunately, we have reason to believe that at least one party (the employer) has not been fully committed to this process.

Since before the strike was implemented on October 12th the employer has insisted on binding arbitration as a means to settle the considerable differences between the two sides. If arbitration is imposed we fear this will set an unfortunate precedence for Brandon University and other public institutions around the country whereby the employer has no incentive to engage in the bargaining process. This will be a significant step towards undermining the collective bargaining process of an institution that is supposed be governed collegially.

Sincerely,



Deandra Tousignant
President



Jonathan Keen
Vice President Internal



Kelsey McDonald
Vice President External