



Brandon University Faculty Association
A. E. McKenzie Building, Room 002-1 270 18th Street
Brandon, Manitoba R7A 6A9

*******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*******

April 21, 2020

On Monday April 20th, members of the Brandon University Faculty Association (BUFA) met with the Brandon University Administration to receive further information on the University's proposed response to the Province's demands for public sector cuts. This was followed by a virtual meeting of the BUFA Executive Committee to consider options in the event that those proposed, or even deeper, cuts are realized.

While some employee groups at BU may experience temporary job cuts, at this point, faculty and non-academic staff members represented by BUFA are more likely to be required to take "voluntary" days without pay, equivalent to the infamous Filmon Fridays. This, however, has yet to be determined. The net effect would be a salary reduction of about 15%, but at least this would allow us to be able to continue offering courses and critical student support services through the spring/summer sessions and upcoming fall term. Cuts approaching the Provincial target of 20-30% would effectively close us down. As we navigate through this process, BUFA's objective is to minimize the impact on our membership and students, while continuing to exist as an option for students seeking a degree program in Brandon without relocating to Winnipeg or beyond. It is BUFA's position that cuts of this scale will have lasting negative impacts on BU employees, students, and the larger community.

BUFA, like other public sector unions in the Province, is skeptical that any savings garnered through the cuts imposed on universities would ever be redirected to support frontline health care initiatives. We fear that the Pallister government is simply using the current crisis to further its assault on public sector unions and deal with an economy that has struggled under their leadership since they took office. While the pandemic will ultimately end at some point, the impact on post-secondary institutions could be devastating. In the short-term, as jobs opportunities become increasingly scarce, students will be looking at post-secondary education as an alternative path; a place to weather the economic storm. In the medium and long-terms, post-secondary institutions will be needed to support the economic recovery of the province. But while governments worldwide are spending their way through this economic crisis in an attempt to shore up the economy and support workers, the Pallister Government is demanding cuts. This is the time that governments should be investing in post-secondary education, not cutting.

It is also worth noting that these cuts will inevitably lead to lost spending in the community. Any household that faces cuts of this scale, will be forced to reduce discretionary spending. Cuts of this nature will directly impact local shops and restaurants when they reopen. Paul Krugman, Nobel laureate in economics noted this “paradox of thrift” with austerity following the financial crisis in 2008, such austerity measures will be bad for our economy as a whole. At the same time, it is in our universities where vaccines are discovered, where doctors and nurses are trained, where social and economic impacts are studied, and where the next generation of scientists are educated to help us care for our citizens and manage the health pandemics of the future.

BUFA represents approximately 250 full-time, part-time, and an ever changing number of sessional employees at Brandon University – including Professor, Librarians, Professional Associates, Lecturers, Instructional Associates, and Administrative Associates.

For further information:

*Contact: Shari Maguire, Member Services Officer
maguires@brandonu.ca
204-727-7347*