

# *An open letter to Premier Selinger regarding University funding*

May 27, 2013

Dear Premier Greg Selinger,

We are deeply disappointed with your government's recent decision to break your previous pledge to increase operating funding to universities by 5% in the first three years of your mandate. Instead, in the recent provincial budget Finance Minister Stan Struthers announced that this year's increase would be half of that amount. In promoting the 5% funding guarantee in campaign literature, the NDP claimed, "A well-trained, well-educated population is the key to keeping Manitoba's economy on track". We couldn't agree more, which is why we believe that this decision is profoundly short-sighted and damaging to the quality of post-secondary education in Manitoba.

Instead of fulfilling its commendable pledge to make post-secondary education a priority, the Manitoba NDP government has chosen to contribute to the wider trend of neglect and underfunding of Universities that is taking place across the country. The result of this surprise decision will be to send University administrations scrambling to make up a sudden and unexpected shortfall in their own budgets. Universities will be compelled to make damaging cuts that will be felt by both workers and students. Quality of education will suffer and University employees will continue to be asked to do more for less, as class sizes and student-faculty ratios increase and services are privatized and contracted out.

In recent years Universities in Manitoba have begun to exhibit the signs of chronic underfunding: Decaying infrastructure, a lack of classroom technology and departments unable to hire enough tenure-track faculty in order to meet student needs. We have seen cash-strapped Universities fill the void by increasingly employing low-paid contingent academic labour with no job security to teach larger and larger classes.

We reject the notion that Universities are a luxury that Manitoba cannot afford to fully fund in times of economic downturn. Rather, we believe that our post-secondary institutions are integral to the creation of a functioning civil society and are absolutely vital in constructing the path to economic recovery. We call upon the Manitoba NDP to re-examine this decision and to live up to the funding commitments it made previously to the post-secondary education sector.

Sincerely,

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