



Honourable James Allum
Minister of Education and Advanced Learning
168 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Allum,

We write today regarding the University of Manitoba's most recent proposal to radically increase graduate student continuing fees. As you are aware, the University proposed to increase these fees from \$703.15 per year to \$3000 per year by September of 2016. According to most recent media reports you, like previous NDP Ministers responsible for Advanced Education, have rejected this proposal. We were very pleased to hear this, and on behalf of the over 2,000 teaching assistants, graders, instructors and librarians represented by CUPE at the University of Manitoba, we want to thank you for your support on this matter.

We oppose all tuition fee increases, as we believe that public education is a public good that ought to be financed through a progressive tax system, so we find this massive tuition hike to be especially abhorrent. The University of Manitoba already pays student academic-workers, most of whom are graduate students, some of the lowest wages in the country – these massive hikes would make a bad situation even worse. In fact, the proposed fee hike alone would be larger than the wages paid on a typical teaching assistant contract.

Graduate students simply cannot afford the type of fee increases that were proposed. If this proposal was implemented, it would result in higher student debt, lower completion rates, and a lengthier time-to completion. In addition, this proposal would be especially difficult on equity seeking groups who are more likely to need to maintain paid employment during their degree, or to have family responsibilities, both of which can play a significant factor in time to completion. Our relatively low continuing fees at the University of Manitoba should be a source of pride, as it allows for a more diverse graduate student body.

In 2012 your government brought into law *The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act*. While CUPE took issue with aspects of this legislation, it is quite clear in preventing the sort of massive tuition hikes which the University of Manitoba proposed for graduate students. Prior to the passage of this law CUPE Manitoba and CUPE Local 3909 had the opportunity to meet with Minister Selby, and we were provided assurances by the Minister that graduate student continuing fees would qualify as tuition fees under the legislation, and therefore be subject to the inflationary caps outlined in the legislation.

While we recognize that you've rejected this particular proposal, we felt it was important to formally inform you of our objections to this proposed massive increase, and any increase that circumvents the language and spirit of *The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act* that the University of Manitoba may propose for students in the future.

Sincerely,

Kelly Moist

President, CUPE Manitoba

Ana Vialard Hart

President, CUPE Local 3909

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