

For immediate release

March 1, 2017

CUPE QUESTIONS PALLISTER'S PC MLA WAGE FREEZE – IT'S NOT GENUINE

Union urges provincial government to turn focus to protecting public services

WINNIPEG – The Canadian Union of Public Employees Manitoba is frustrated with today's Conservative Party update on MLAs' wages, and calls on Premier Pallister to get back to protecting public services.

"Today, Brian Pallister has once again disappointed us," said Kelly Moist, President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Manitoba. "The Premier and his cabinet took 20% salary increases on their first day in office, then froze minimum wage. After taking home an extra \$21,000, Brian Pallister wants us to believe he's taking a wage freeze. This is not genuine."

The large 2016 wage increase for cabinet ministers and the Premier met with opposition. Premier Pallister stated today that PC MLAs are committing to paying back their increase for 2017, but questions remain. If salary scales and benefits continue to increase during the supposed wage freeze, MLAs may end up with a large pay increase after the next election. CUPE points out that such arrangements were not offered to public sector employees when they took a two-year wage freeze in the last round of bargaining.

"A full-time Education Assistant in Portage la Prairie earns annual wages of \$22,000 to \$25,000," continued Moist. "The cost of the Premier's 2016 pay increase would cover an EA's wages in his home town for a year. It's a slap in the face that the Premier is telling workers, unionized or not, to tighten our belts."

Like other Manitobans, CUPE members rely on good public services and expect our government to make reasonable decisions. CUPE believes the Manitoba economy is stable, and that Premier Pallister should be making better choices.

"There is still time before the provincial budget is released to do the right thing. We urge Brian Pallister to protect public services and public service workers like he promised he would. We urge the Premier to meet us at the bargaining table and negotiate fair contracts," said Moist.

"After all, a deal is deal."

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is Canada's largest union representing more than a half-million members. In Manitoba, CUPE represents approximately 26,000 members working in health care facilities, personal care homes, school divisions, municipal services, social services, child care centres, public utilities, libraries and family emergency services.

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