



Manitoba
Government
and General
Employees'
Union

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ANY QUESTIONS?

Call the Resource Centre:
204-982-MGEU (6438)
1-866-982-MGEU (6438)
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The Pas

10 - 11th Street W
(Box 1859)
The Pas MB R9A 1L6

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322 Main Street S
Dauphin MB R7N 1C6

Brandon

1665 Parker Blvd
Brandon MB R7A 7P7

Portage la Prairie

214 Saskatchewan Ave. E
Portage la Prairie MB
R1N 0K9

Selkirk

413 Main Street
Selkirk MB R1A 1V2

Steinbach

B-98 Brandt Street
Steinbach, MB R5G 0V6

Thompson

19 Elizabeth Drive
Thompson MB R8N 1S7

February 24, 2021

Mayor Brian Bowman
City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9
Email: mayorbowman@winnipeg.ca

Dear Mayor Bowman,

Three weeks ago (Feb. 3, 2021), I requested an urgent meeting to discuss the crisis in the workplace culture of the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS).

Instead of setting up a meeting, you sent me a letter asking me, on behalf of our union, to speak out publicly against systemic racism, the very racism that MGEU had previously and repeatedly spoken out against and filed formal complaints about.

Then, instead of setting up a meeting, one of your staff called me to express surprise at our apparent lack of confidence in the WFPS leadership's commitment to transforming their workplace culture. Your office should not be surprised by this. I pointed out to your staff that the WFPS leadership had already been provided with many years of opportunity to change the situation. And I remind you that three years ago (letters from March, 2018 enclosed), you wrote: "I do agree with you the workplace culture in the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service has to change, and I am certainly looking forward to Chief Lane leading that change."

Your recent statements calling for change in the workplace culture of the WFPS sound eerily similar to the words you wrote three years ago. Yet the workplace culture of the WFPS has not changed. It remains a workplace that tolerates racist and disrespectful behaviour. This crisis is now threatening patient care and requires urgent action by the employer.

Instead of taking such action, you have now proposed a confidential meeting with the elected leaders of the three unions representing workers at the WFPS. This transparent attempt to reframe this crisis in your workplace as a feud among unions is an obvious tactic to avoid your legal responsibility as the employer to ensure a workplace free from discriminatory and disrespectful behaviour. As I told your staff, the City already has the authority and responsibility to address disrespectful and discriminatory behaviour within its workplaces.

I cannot accept the conditions your staff have placed on this proposed meeting. In a phone call late in the day on February 23, your staff informed me that my participation in your proposed meeting was conditional on me committing to keeping it secret from both MGEU members and the news media. I am willing, as I said then, to participate in good faith conversations about what the City needs to do, but I cannot accept your office's unreasonable conditions.

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After too many years without progress, I reiterate our view that change will only come to the WFPS if the highest levels of City leadership get meaningfully involved. On its own, the WFPS leadership has shown it is either unable or unwilling to make the change that is so desperately needed. Mr. Mayor, you need to move beyond stalling and blame-passing tactics. It is your responsibility to use your authority to make sure change actually happens at the WFPS, and to restore public confidence in the leadership of the WFPS. Emergency services are too important to let this situation continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Gawronsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Gawronsky
MGEU President

MG/hm

Att. (2)