

Dear members,

Following weeks of delay, the Pallister government today announced the terms of the new **'Risk Recognition' Program**. Despite what was announced, it appears that the vast majority of Manitoba's nurses will not be included in the program.

All nursing classifications are listed as eligible, however, the **criteria and income thresholds set by government** exclude the vast majority of nurses. Only a small number of part time LPNs appear to be eligible, and only if they work significantly less than full time. All RNs, RPNs, NPs and all full-time nurses appear to be completely shut out.

**In terms of this program's application to nurses, these criteria are entirely inappropriate. MNU did not endorse this plan.**

After our recommendations were repeatedly ignored, government officials asked MNU and other stakeholders to vote on which groups of workers should be included. We chose not to engage in the voting process. This decision was not made lightly, and it's important that nurses understand the reasons why.

No other province has put the administration of these federal dollars to a vote. Many other provincial governments, including BC, Ontario and Quebec, have offered hourly 'top-ups' to nurses and other health care workers through a separately administered program, and that's exactly what MNU called for, as the fairest and most equitable means of acknowledging the additional challenges nurses are facing. Unfortunately, the Pallister government refused to accept these suggestions. Instead, government determined that they would employ this one-time payment based on the total number of qualified applicants. It's a backwards approach to policymaking that inherently creates unfairness and conflict. Although the government is responsible for administering the program, they repeatedly refused to provide clarity on whether the fund was intended to recognize all frontline workers, or if it was intended to be a wage subsidy for lower-income essential workers.

**We know that nurses deserve recognition. But as caregivers and advocates, I also know nurses would never want to be put in a position of taking away money from lower income frontline workers. We believe all frontline workers are deserving of recognition and respect. Nurses deserve to be recognized for their contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic, but not at the expense of others.**

Unfortunately, the government's voting scheme forced stakeholders to choose between deserving workers, effectively pitting nurses against retail workers, truck drivers, and lower income workers. Taking that approach in the midst of a pandemic is simply wrong. We also objected to the term 'Risk Recognition' which implies nurses can be bought out for taking on added risk, and asked for a simple name change, but again the government refused. That's why we decided that MNU would play not part in it, and why we chose not to vote.

Again, MNU has called for nurses to be recognized and compensated. Nurses in Manitoba have gone without a contract for three years, and a pay raise for four because the Pallister government refused to bargain and froze wages. Nurses were already feeling undervalued, and

now the rollout of this plan will only add insult to injury.

**If the government is serious about recognizing nurses, they have the ability to do it, and it need not come at the expense of other workers. Like other jurisdictions, they could introduce an hourly top-up. Better still, they could come to the table and negotiate a new contract with a fair increase for all nurses.**

Government has made the decision to proceed this way. We recognize that today's announcement will cause significant confusion and frustration for nurses in Manitoba. We have expressed our severe disappointment with this process, and called on government to immediately issue clarification on eligibility for nurses.

MNU will continue to advocate loudly and forcefully for you and your patients, for adequate, appropriate recognition for all nurses, and for a fairly bargained collective agreement.

Thank you for your continued support during this challenging time.

In solidarity,

Darlene Jackson  
President  
Manitoba Nurses Union