



*Presentation to the Committee on Social and Economic
Development
Government of Manitoba*

Bill 29: The Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission before this Committee.

Manitoba Building Trades represents thirteen skilled trades and construction unions. Our member unions represent over 7,000 trades and construction professionals in Manitoba. We are part of a national network of over half a million Canadians that build essential infrastructure across the country.

Building and construction trades are different from other union organizations in one important respect. We are don't just represent employees. On behalf of our business partners, we engage, train and deploy skilled workers as and where required. Whereas other employers hire and maintain a dedicated workforce, our contractor partners do not. We are Manitoba's and Canada's largest employment agency for skilled trades and construction professions.

Our relationship with our business partners is perfectly symbiotic. We depend on employers to secure contracts that create employment opportunities for our members. Each needs the other to succeed.

The submission of Manitoba Building Trades is very specific to skilled technicians and trades people who form a very distinct community of interest within healthcare. These are technicians and skilled tradespersons not directly involved in delivery of patient care.

They maintain medical diagnostic equipment used in medical facilities. Equipment that is used by healthcare professionals in other classifications represented by other bargaining units. In addition to maintaining equipment, they maintain essential environmental and mechanical equipment to hospitals warm in winter and cooled in summer. They keep the lights on and the water running at all times.

A Distinct Community of Interest

A key distinction for this segment of the healthcare industry is that while most other classifications in healthcare are exclusively employed by the health industry, these technicians and tradespeople are in demand across the economy. From schools to commercial buildings to malls and factories, virtually every market segment across the economy competes for the services of these professionals.

These factors were acknowledged by the Manitoba Labour Board dating back to the 1970's. The Board recognized that skilled trades people and technicians were a distinct component of the health care system and ought to be recognized as a distinct community of interest. The Board concluded that:

1. *This is the only workforce segment not engaged in direct services to patients. Even food and laundry services workers had a direct connection to patients.*
2. *The classifications within this segment were and remain in high demand across the economy and therefore subject to very different recruitment and retention pressures. These professionals are highly skilled and are in high demand by other industries such heavy construction, commercial construction, home builders, schools and virtually every industrial and commercial operation.*

The Training System

The trades training system is a unique partnership between public institutions, union and private sector employers. Various levels of government fund and support trades training to address current and anticipated skill gaps.

Union training systems are a key component of the skilled trades training infrastructure in Canada. Unions representing the skilled trades are the largest private investors in training delivery in the country. These training investments are subject to normal economies of scale considerations.

Local unions like Operating Engineers Local 987 maintain very large training institutions and invest very significant amounts to deliver training. In 2016, OE 978 invested well over \$750,000 in establishing the first tower crane training center in Manitoba. These investments would not be possible if the bargaining unit size drops below the threshold size to render these investments inefficient.

We assure you that if OE 987 cannot support its training initiatives, no one else will step into the breach. This would be a net loss to Manitoba. The impacts would not only be borne by the health sector, but also spill over to every other industry segment.

We urge the government to avoid collateral damage and unintended consequences by forcing a reconciliation of bargaining units in a manner that fails to take larger systemic considerations into account.

Conclusion

Maintenance and trades workers have distinct qualifications, training and skills than other healthcare workers and are trained in an apprenticeship systems that is unique. They are not part of the healthcare service delivery continuum and do not engage in direct patient care. They are subject to distinctive wage scales, hours of work and working conditions. They are not subject to the direction and control of supervisors and managers engaged in

patient care and their work does not intersect with that of others in healthcare.

These workers are however in high demand in every other industry and satisfying market demand requires the training and apprenticeship system be maintained and sustained to address needs. That requires that government pay attention to the legitimate business needs of the primary investors in the trades training system.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully submit that the government maintain the integrity of this community of common interest as represented the Operating Engineers Local 897.