

May 12, 2026

Members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly  
Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

**Subject: Exploring Amendments for Fair & Open Procurement**

Dear Members of the Manitoba Legislature,

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and our more than 5,700 small and medium-sized business members in Manitoba, we are writing to raise growing concerns from Manitoba's construction industry regarding the Manitoba Jobs Agreement (MJA), and to encourage all parties represented in the Legislature to work collaboratively toward amendments that restore fairness, openness, and competitiveness to public infrastructure procurement in Manitoba.

Coinciding with CFIB's ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Labour regarding the impacts of the MJA, we believe there is an opportunity for government, opposition parties, industry stakeholders, and labour representatives to engage in a constructive conversation about how the policy can be improved while still supporting workforce development and high-quality public infrastructure projects.

Recently in British Columbia, significant support emerged for [Bill M 233](#), *the Public Sector Construction Projects Procurement Act*. This Bill sparked an important conversation about the principle that public projects should be awarded based on merit, safety, value for taxpayers, and open competition – rather than being influenced by union affiliation or restrictive hiring requirements.

While Manitoba's circumstances are unique, elements of that broader discussion may provide useful context as Manitoba evaluates the implementation and consequences of the MJA.

As you may have seen, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba (CARM) recently warned that the new southwest Brandon school could cost roughly 20% more to build because of MJA-related requirements. Employers continue to cite increased administrative burdens, mandatory fees, additional labour constraints, and reduced competition as key cost drivers. Some contractors have reportedly declined to bid on public projects altogether because of the complexity and uncertainty associated with the agreement.

These concerns appear particularly significant in rural Manitoba, where the construction industry is overwhelmingly composed of non-unionized employers and workers. Industry representatives estimate roughly 95% of the rural construction workforce falls into the category now being deprioritized for certain

work under the MJA framework. Employers have also expressed concerns about requirements related to sourcing labour through union halls and contributing fees into systems with which they are not affiliated.

Beyond the direct cost implications, there are broader concerns about procurement fairness, worker choice, and maintaining a competitive bidding environment for Manitoba infrastructure projects. In addition to CFIB, organizations including the Winnipeg Construction Association, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, and CARM have all called for a return to “fair and open competition” on public projects and requested further review of the policy’s impacts.

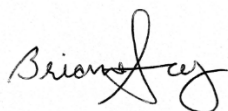
We believe there is value in all parties working together to explore amendments and policy improvements that would:

- Protect merit-based, fair, and open procurement practices in public infrastructure projects;
- Ensure all qualified Manitoba contractors – unionized and non-unionized – can compete on an equal basis for public projects;
- Reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and mandatory fee structures that may discourage participation or increase project costs;
- Increase transparency around the financial and operational impacts of the MJA;
- Ensure workforce development, wage, and safety objectives are met in a way that does not unintentionally restrict fair competition or limit employer flexibility;
- Recognize the unique realities of Manitoba’s construction sector, particularly in rural areas where most employers operate in environments without exclusive union hiring requirements;
- Support broad industry participation to ensure public infrastructure projects are delivered efficiently, competitively, and on budget.

CFIB recognizes the importance of supporting skilled trades, apprenticeship opportunities, safe worksites, and good jobs in Manitoba. However, public procurement policies must also ensure taxpayer value, broad industry participation, and fairness for the many small and medium-sized construction businesses that form the backbone of Manitoba’s economy.

We encourage all parties to engage openly with industry stakeholders and consider practical amendments that address the growing concerns being raised by employers across the province. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and share additional feedback directly from Manitoba’s small business community.

Sincerely,



Brianna Solberg  
Director, Prairies and Northern Canada