



Westman Lab Staff Announce Intent to Strike

For Immediate Release: November 1, 2011

Approximately 120 technical laboratory staff of Diagnostic Services of Manitoba (DSM) at Westman Laboratory in Brandon have officially announced their intent to strike, effective November 14, 2011.

An Essential Services Agreement (ESA) has been agreed upon by DSM and the Manitoba Government Employees Union (MGEU), which represents Westman Lab technical/professional staff. The Essential Services Agreement outlines the level of laboratory services which will be provided at Westman Lab during the strike. During the strike Westman Lab will be staffed to perform any service, duty or function that is necessary to prevent or limit, loss of life; serious harm or damage to, or deterioration of, the mental or physical health of one or more persons; or, serious harm or damage to, or deterioration of, property required in the performance of an essential service. Accordingly, the DSM/MGEU ESA provides for an essential services staffing level of 77% of normal staffing levels. Services will continue to be provided on a twenty-four (24) hour basis.

“Although we had hoped to resolve this without a strike, DSM would like to assure Brandon and area residents that essential laboratory services will be accessible,” said Jim Slater, Chief Executive Officer. “DSM is also reviewing what reasonable measures can be taken to lessen service disruption as much as possible.”

Westman Laboratory technical employees are represented by the Manitoba Government Employees Union (MGEU) and are part of a larger group of health care professionals in the province. Collective Agreements have been concluded with most technical/professional employees in the larger group, who are represented by MGEU and other unions. The same or similar offer, as provided to and ratified by the MGEU technical/professional employees throughout the province, has been made to Westman employees, however, they have rejected that offer. The alternative of arbitration has been offered to Westman employees, which unfortunately they have also rejected.

DSM is a not-for-profit corporation which is responsible for all of Manitoba's public laboratory services and for rural diagnostic imaging services. Westman Lab, housed within the Brandon Regional Health Centre (BRHC), is one of 79 facilities and sites operated by DSM. The Lab is a referral centre serving BRHC in-patients (13% of procedures), out-patients (17%), Brandon medical clinics (11%) and 117 rural health service centres and labs (59%). In 2010/11 Westman Lab processed approximately 2.9 million procedures.

Westman Laboratory is one of the most state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities in Canada, having recently undergone a major redevelopment project which has significantly improved the work environment for staff, both in terms of workflow efficiencies and environmental safety, comfort and ergonomics. New equipment has also increased automation which has allowed the lab to continue to manage a growing workload. The lab was constructed in such a way that it will continue to meet the community's evolving diagnostic needs now and well into the future.

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