



MANITOBA GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

BUDGET 2019 SUBMISSION

December 14, 2018

Available in alternate formats upon request

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Introduction

On behalf of the over 40,000 members in the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, I'm pleased to put forward recommendations to your government as it plans Budget 2018.

MGEU members live and work in communities across Manitoba. We provide services in all areas of the public sector including: government services, crown corporations, health care, emergency services, child welfare, and social service agencies. Our members are dedicated public employees who take pride in providing vital cost-effective public services to their fellow Manitobans.

Our budget submission includes a focus on the services that have been cut or privatized in recent years. We urge the government to reconsider these irresponsible and short-sighted cuts that are hurting Manitoba Families.

Keep Public Services Public

During the last provincial election Manitobans were promised that, if elected, the government would protect public services and those who provide them. However, as announcements of cuts and privatization pile up, this promise has been broken.

MGEU's 2016 Election Questionnaire response from the PC Party stated that "Front line workers' ideas can lead to better service delivery. A new Progressive Conservative government will be a reliable and visionary partner for Manitobans by pledging to protect front line services and the jobs of the workers who deliver those services."

We remind the government of this pledge as significant changes in health care, civil service transformation and heavy-handed legislation was passed without consultation of the people providing vital public services.

Health Care - A dangerous situation

Cuts and privatization in healthcare are concerning to many Manitobans who question the government's commitment to protect public services. Closing emergency rooms, Quick Care Clinics, cutting budgets in long-term care and privatizing crucial services like physiotherapy and occupational therapy will hurt Manitoba families. These closures have left communities feeling vulnerable and without adequate access to services.

The decision to privatize significant Home Care services is of particular concern to Manitobans. Large profitable corporations were given contracts to deliver a service that is already offered cost-effectively by the public home care program. We urge the government to reconsider this irresponsible decision and provide adequate funding to the existing program to provide the services that Manitobans depend on. Privatizing home care was tried and failed in the 90s.

The decision to delay the building of 1200 personal care home beds, as promised in the last election, will have system-wide impacts through the entire health care system.

Cuts to Personal Care Home (PCH) budgets are also having an impact on client care. As budgets are stretched, the quality of services and supplies are the first to suffer. Speech language pathology, rehabilitation services, and recreational programming have been cut back. Seniors deserve to retire with dignity and must be treated with compassion. We are asking the government to reconsider these cuts to ensure quality care is maintained.

Our members continue to express frustration because their voices haven't been heard. We recommend the government consult with the people who provide the services and the people who use public services before making any more cuts.

Health Care Cuts and Privatization

Closed three Emergency Rooms

Closed Quick Care Clinics

Cut Physiotherapy Services

Cut Occupational Therapy Services

Cut Personal Care Home budgets

Privatizing Home Care

Cut Funding for Sleep Apnea Equipment

Cut the Special Drugs Program

Civil Service - Keep Manitoba Running

The Civil Service plays a vital role in delivering public services in the province. In 2016, the Premier agreed, pledging that “ no frontline civil servants will lose their job under a Progressive Conservative Government.”

We would like to remind the Premier of his pledge and the important work these public employees do. Conservation officers keep our parks safe.

Environmental officers ensure we have safe drinking water. Social workers look after some of our most vulnerable kids. Snow plow operators keep our roads cleared and safe. However, since 2016, we’ve seen a dramatic reduction of over 1,200 civil service employees with more cuts on the horizon. Cutting public sector jobs will add additional strain on Manitobans who rely on these services and further put a strain on the economy.

We believe that more needs to be done to support and invest in our public services, but contracting out services, privatizing services and cutting resources is short-sighted and will cost more in the long-term.

Public Education - Good Jobs for the Future

Education and training are the keys to a modern workforce that is prepared to work in fast-changing economy. The MGEU represents instructors and staff at Red River Community College, Assiniboine Community College, Universite de St. Boniface and University College of the North who provide training to the workers of tomorrow.

Last year’s budget cut operating grants to colleges and universities by 0.9% or 6.3 million dollars. Meanwhile, these costs are being offloaded onto students who will have their tuition increased by 6.6%- adding to the debt burden students are faced with and putting post-secondary education out of reach for many students.

We are calling on the government to restore funding to Colleges and Universities and ensure that post-secondary educational opportunities are accessible for all Manitobans.

Civil Service Cuts and Privatization

Contracting Out Road and Bridge Maintenance

Privatizing Water Bombers

Cut French Language Interpreters

Cut the Crown Lands Property Agency

Unfilled and deleted positions across government

Community-Based Agencies - Front-Line Services

Child and Family Services, programs for youth at-risk, community mental health services and other supports to families are all facing mounting pressures to expand services while their budgets are frozen or cut.

Manitoba is experiencing an addictions and mental health crisis that is affecting all of us whether we have been victims of crime, a family member is suffering or work with clients who experience substance abuse. Many MGEU members are on the front-line of this crisis and have been asking for more treatment options to combat the growing crisis.

Manitobans reaching out for support from community agencies will realize that services are suffering because these agencies haven't seen a funding increase for years.

The provincial government is the only entity positioned to bring together a broad coalition of service providers and experts to put together a comprehensive plan to help Manitobans heal. Today, we are calling on the Government of Manitoba to take action and invest in a healthy Manitoba and make concrete investment to address the meth crisis and restore adequate funding to social service agencies on the front-lines.

Keeping Crowns and Agencies Public

Manitoba's family of crown corporations and agencies provide affordable services and keep jobs in Manitoba. The sale of the Pineland Forest Nursery, contracting out services at the Crown Lands Agency and the privatization of the liquor store in Churchill are all short-sighted decisions that will impact local economies and services. We remind the Premier of the affordability advantage of MPI providing low cost auto insurance and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries earning revenues that support public services. A stable economy depends on reliable services at an affordable price- keep our services public.

Social Service Cuts and Privatization

Cuts to Rent Assist

Cutting Addictions Foundation
Manitoba Funding

Privatizing Manitoba Housing and
Renewal Corporation

Privatizing Social Services

Freezing Community-Based Agency
Budgets

Contracting out Manitoba Housing
Units

A Balanced Approach

We recommend the government stick to their 8-year plan to balance the budget. By gradually returning to balance, we can ensure public services are there when Manitobans need them. We must maintain strong public services and strengthen our economy where our families are able to grow and thrive. One way to do this is by delaying unaffordable tax cuts that disproportionately benefit wealthy Manitobans while causing deep cuts to public services. We also know that Manitobans agree that large profitable corporations and those who have done well in the economy should contribute their fair share. Manitoba will be truly healthy when we all contribute our fair share and ensure that the most vulnerable among us have access to the services they need.

We are calling on the Government to immediately cease hiring costly management consultants to guide the mounting cuts to public services and ask the real experts, the people who provide public services, how to improve service delivery in Manitoba. The government has spent more than 16 million dollars for outside consultants to propose cuts and privatization of Manitoba's shared services and assets.

Conclusion

Budget 2019 provides an opportunity for the government to change their direction and focus on people first. We believe that prioritizing only the bottom line leaves many Manitobans without support when they need it most. Our approach takes the health and wellness of Manitobans into account while ensuring that our economy continues to perform well. Our budget priorities include a call to stop the privatization of our shared assets and services and to restore crucial public services in all areas including: health care, education, social services, crown corporations and the civil service.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss our proposals and hope to see them reflected in the 2019 budget.