



MANITOBA GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

2020 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

23/01/2020

Good Evening Honorable Members.

My name is Michelle Gawronsky, President of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU).

The MGEU proudly represents over 32,000 Manitobans who live and work throughout Manitoba in a wide variety of workplaces. At least 12,000 are employed directly by the Province of Manitoba providing public services across our province. Lately, these dedicated hard working Manitobans have been struggling to keep up with demands, struggling to keep providing the services their neighbors, friends and family rely on.

The reality for our government workers is that they are drowning in work and their mental health is being impacted by their work environment. Services that Manitobans rely on are suffering and this is a direct product of government cuts and privatization.

There are over 2,000 fewer Manitobans providing government services today compared to when your government took over in 2016. So who are these government workers? Well, I'm talking about highway crews, correctional officers, probation officers, social workers, medical examiners, health inspectors, vehicle inspectors, conservation officers, just to name a few. These Manitobans provide valuable services each and every day, but because of these cuts they are doing more with less- and because of the government cuts; some things aren't getting done. Manitobans are taking a direct hit to the services they rely on, services that they pay for through their taxes. Services aren't being provided. Who is that helping? Is it helping our children in care? Is it helping to make sure the pools we use and restaurants we take our families to are inspected and clean? Is this keeping Manitobans safe when they are out shopping – fueling the economy? Good questions you all should be asking yourselves.

This is a scary reality for a couple of reasons. First, the services suffer which means Manitobans are impacted. Take the cuts in the highways department for example. Our members tell us these cuts are having an impact on how they are able to clear and maintain our roads. There are nearly 70 vacancies in one single job classification in the infrastructure department – the Operator Series. This includes truck plow operators, grader operators and loader operators. (I have a copy of the FIPPA with me should anyone want to review it.) While these positions remain open, the department is contracting out snow clearing.

A recent Auditor General's report on commercial vehicle inspections found that almost half of the heavy truck traffic was missed at 3 weigh scales in the Province. The scale on the Number One Highway at the Ontario border used to be staffed 24/7, but is now only open 8 hours a day. Members tell us there used to be twice as many inspectors keeping our roads safe, and there needs to be again.

Manitoba is a bustling province. We continue to grow. In Winnipeg alone we're nearing a million people. So with a growing population comes a greater need for public services.

Our ask for budget 2020, is that you take a very close look at the public services government workers provide and you talk to those on the front line. Ask them how things are. Ask them where things could be improved. This is where you'll get a clear picture of the mountain these workers are climbing every day. Only until you understand the problems facing these workers will you be able to address and restore our public services.

Budget Submission Comments

Manitobans are smart people. They will figure out who is responsible if they start to lose services they rely on. Services such as health care, education, highways and roads, the ability to shop safely – free of violence. When that is taken away due to cuts and privatization the cost increases because of using privatization. Profit made with our taxes from the people elected to provide the service.