



MGEU

MANITOBA GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

PRE BUDGET REMARKS

(DETAILED WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO FOLLOW)

10/17/2016

Good evening,

My name is Michelle Gawronsky, President of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU). I want to thank Minister Friesen, on behalf of all MGEU members, for the invitation to be here.

The MGEU represents over 42,000 Manitobans who live and work throughout Manitoba in a wide variety of workplaces — roughly 14,000 are employed directly by the Province of Manitoba and others work in crown corporations, universities and colleges, health care facilities, social service agencies as well as arts and cultural organizations to list a few.

1. The Government's Commitment to Protect and Improve Public Services and Keep Public Services Public.

Each and every day our dedicated members deliver valuable public services that families like yours and mine depend on. We are proud of the work we do and know the importance of these services on the everyday lives of Manitobans.

During the recent election campaign, the new Manitoba government ran on a commitment to protect in public services **and to keep them public**. Premier Pallister reconfirmed this commitment on September 16th, stating, *"I remain steadfast in my belief that front line services Manitobans need, need people to provide them. And I'll continue to stick up for front-line workers."*

We agree with the Premier- public services are only as strong as those delivering them. We all know that when you make cuts you'll notice the impact on the quality of service that Manitobans rely on.

2. Current Pressures on Public Services

MGEU members continue to report that they are doing more with less, often working the jobs of two or three people, as budgets are further constrained. Meanwhile, there is a growing demand for services. A need Manitobans feel every day, and our members, your employees want to protect those services.

New figures from Statistics Canada released in June show that our population is growing at a record rate. Our members feel the stress in the child welfare system where there are over 10,000 children in care, the justice system where correctional facilities are bursting at the seams and we all know about the growing need for more care for seniors. These are just a few examples of the growing demand for public services.

We strongly urge the government to be mindful of these pressures and ensure services are provided first, before rushing to balance the budget by an arbitrary deadline.

Manitobans are not willing to balance the budget if it costs them their public services.

3. Cuts and Privatization

When governments face mounting fiscal pressures they often turn to short-sighted and reckless measures like cutting or privatizing services.

Privatization comes at a cost: low-quality services, higher costs and a loss of accountability and transparency. We advise the government to resist the temptation to break its commitment to Manitobans by selling off our shared resources.

4. Alternatives to Cuts and Privatization

Manitobans have shown overwhelming support for other ways to address fiscal challenges without cutting public services. Our polling supports this with 74% of Manitobans indicating that they oppose cutting public services to reduce the deficit.

We believe stable revenue sources are needed to pay for services. However, we propose a more progressive tax system that asks those who have done well in the economy to contribute a little more to help return to budget balance.

Manitobans overwhelmingly support asking large profitable corporations and high income earners to pay a little more- ensuring stable revenues and services are there for all Manitobans.

The government should also give careful consideration in delaying or pulling back from unaffordable tax cuts. After the previous government cut over a billion dollars in taxes, Manitoba just can't afford tax cuts right now. Tax cuts cost services.

5. A Balanced Approach to Manitoba's Challenges

I'm pleased that this government has committed to taking time to return to balance rather than rushing this process. Balance is not just about the bottom line, it's about people, and ensuring that we are providing the services to keep our province moving forward.

Manitobans value and count on public services being there for their families. This budget needs to ensure that investments that strengthen our public services are in place.

Thank you for the opportunity to present on behalf of MGEU's members this evening.