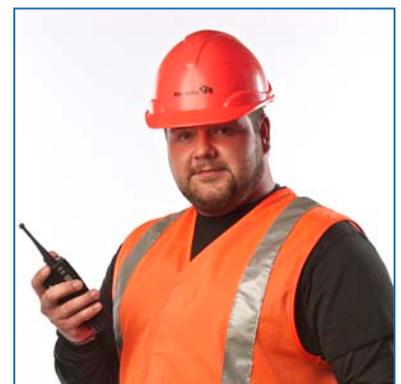


SERVICES FIRST



Commonsense Proposals for the 2013 Manitoba Budget



Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union
Pre-Budget Consultation with Honourable Stan Struthers,
Minister of Finance

February 13, 2013

MGEU

Services First:

Commonsense Proposals for the 2013 Manitoba Budget

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Introduction and Thanks to Minister

Please accept our sincerest thanks for this opportunity to meet face-to-face and review the challenges facing our members and Manitobans in advance of finalizing the 2013 Manitoba Budget. We are well aware of the issues you face and the competing and sometimes contradictory demands from all quarters.

In our submission, we intend to outline some of the issues of concern for our members working day-to-day on behalf of all Manitobans. As well, we offer some observations on general changes we believe will help the government meet its commitments to vital public services, community safety and the continued affordability Manitobans expect, while moving forward to restore balance to public finances in this province.

Who We Are

We represent over 32,000 working Manitobans who provide public services in Manitoba.

We believe we share similar core values with today's provincial government.

In each election voters make a pact with their government for the provision of the public services they depend upon. In no small part, these programs are delivered by members of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union. Our members play key roles on the front lines delivering health care, public safety, university and college education, child protection, parks and natural resource management, transportation and highway maintenance, and services to our most vulnerable citizens.



- We believe healthy workplaces and quality public services are the cornerstones of strong communities across our province.
- We believe a well-trained, well-staffed workforce is the key to effective public services.
- Our work is driven by a commitment to fairness and respect in our workplaces, our governments, and our communities.

Current Budgetary Challenges

Across Canada, provinces are facing the same problems. The effects of the recession at the end of the last decade continue to linger, dampening economic growth, raising unemployment rates and idling businesses. Confronted with rising costs and slow-growing revenues, governments focused on the bottom line are taking a variety of approaches:

1. Holding the line or cutting government programs – this is usually accompanied by some program reductions and / or the elimination of jobs in the public service
2. Wage policy adjustment – Rolling back or holding the line on wages during collective bargaining throughout the public sector
3. Delaying the introduction of new programs
4. Raising revenues through new fines, fees or taxes – or by adjusting the rates on major taxes

“We’re not going to take the Draconian, extreme kind of approach that the Conservatives, either in Ottawa or here in Manitoba, seem to want us to take.” – Stan Struthers (April 12, 2012)

We are quick to acknowledge that here in Manitoba the government has tempered its embrace of the first two options, publicly stating its desire to maintain front line services and avoid layoffs, while continuing to collectively bargain to seek its wage policy goals.

However, we are concerned that as fiscal frustrations mount, this government will find itself following the destructive path of severe cuts, legislated wage reductions and lost jobs in the public service. Also, in practice, some of the fiscal measures this government has chosen have resulted in lost jobs and greater stress on workers.

As Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page has indicated, cutting services and jobs would have a harmful effect on the economy.

“PBO expects that restraint and reductions in government spending on programs in Canada will act as a drag on economic growth and job creation, ...delaying the economic recovery.” (PBO economic update April 24, 2012)

MGEU Public Opinion Research on Budget Priorities – Recently, the MGEU commissioned a public opinion survey asking Manitobans what the Manitoba government’s top priority should be in the upcoming budget.

Protecting health care, roads, justice and other public services was the number one priority for Manitobans, at almost 48%. Just over 20% of respondents felt stimulating the economy and creating jobs was important. Nearly 19% believed that balancing the provincial budget, even if it meant cutting services and laying off workers was a priority, while less than 11% felt reducing taxes was important.

Figure 1: Manitobans' Budget Priorities

Which one of the following summarizes what you believe should be the Manitoba government's top priority as it puts together its budget for the coming year.

Protect health care, roads, justice and other public services.....	47.7%
Reduce taxes.....	10.7%
Balance the provincial budget, even if it means cutting services/ laying off workers.....	18.6%
Stimulate the economy and help create jobs.....	20.4%
Don't know / Refused.....	2.6%

Balanced Budget Legislation – The Manitoba government is further constrained with antiquated balanced budget legislation which, while suspended for a period of economic recovery, still requires a rigid and unforgiving positive balance that must be achieved by 2014/15, without raising any major taxes unless a referendum is held. No other province has willingly placed itself in such a fiscal straight jacket for over 16 years.

This government has shown little interest in freeing itself from this fiscal restraint by eliminating the need for costly, lengthy, and politically dangerous referendums in order to change tax rates. At the same time, each budget brings with it new programs and tax reductions, to be delivered by the same complement of civil servants, who are already pressed to deliver current programs.

“No other province has willingly placed itself in such a fiscal straight jacket for over 16 years.”

We asked Manitobans whether they agreed with the following statement: “Manitoba has some of the most restrictive balanced budget laws in Canada. The government should bring this law into line with those in other provinces, so that economic growth and public services can be protected in difficult economic times.”

In response, 74.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the law should change.

The Harper government in Ottawa is clear that it will not slavishly pursue balanced budgets at the expense of economic growth and jobs.

“Our government is striking the right balance between returning to balanced budgets over the medium term and continuing to invest in the key drivers of economic growth and job creation.” – Jim Flaherty (Nov. 13, 2012)

Here in Manitoba it is now clear that the timetable from three years ago – to reach a balanced budget in 2014/15 – is unrealistic due to the continuing uncertainty of the world and North American economic recovery. We concur with the government's decision to amend its timetable to return to fiscal balance.

However, we also believe it is time to amend the requirements for referendums to increase taxes. When the balanced budget legislation is amended this spring, we think these American-style restrictions, which restrict fiscal flexibility, should be changed.

Federal Transfers – For the last few years, the payments received by Manitoba from the federal government for equalization, health care, and social programs have been effectively frozen. The federal government has tried to cope with Ontario entering the equalization program while mitigating the effect of that event on other equalization provinces like Manitoba. When close to one third of Manitoba's revenues show no growth, there is a problem.

At the same time, Ottawa announced it would be changing its commitments to funding health and social programs. Without question, any attempts by the federal government to move further away from the original 50/50 sharing principles for Medicare is a cause for worry here in Manitoba.

Canadian Institute for Health Information studies have shown that public health costs over the last five years have grown, on average, 5.2% a year. Any new plan to limit growth in the CHT to 4% will only place greater hardship on provinces that are the major providers of health care in Canada.

We believe this is a cause for concern, regardless of political or economic perspective. There is a need for a common front – both within Manitoba and across the country – to lobby Ottawa to preserve and protect these programs. Our members are prepared to do their part to safeguard fair funding from Ottawa for Manitoba's health and social programs.

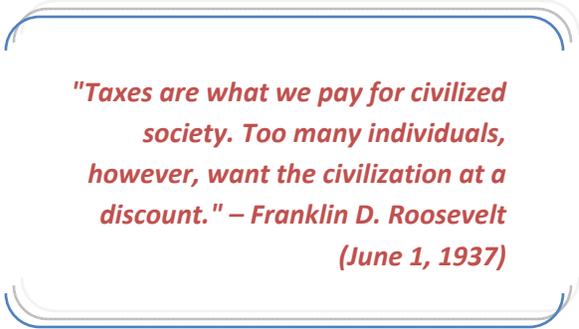
Fair wages – When the provincial government approached the MGEU and other unions shortly after the beginning of the last recession to bargain for two years of zero percent wage increases, we took that request seriously. In the end, members in most of our components agreed to do their part.

During this time, universities and public schools received increases well above zero. In fact, for the last 13 years Manitoba schools have received increases equal to, or better than, the rate of real economic growth in the province. Perhaps real economic growth paired with the need to address chronic skill shortages should be the benchmark for future collective bargaining in the public sector.

Fair taxation – In response to the current fiscal situation, other provinces have raised income taxes and sales taxes in order to ensure services are supported and the budget moves closer to balance. In the United States, new tax brackets were created to ensure the wealthiest pay a fairer share of the tax burden. Even the Business Council of Manitoba says it's time to consider an increase to the PST in order to support infrastructure investments.

It's also important to note that without a referendum, the government was still able to provide over a billion dollars in tax relief to Manitobans.

As we move forward, can we ensure more balanced and fair approaches to raising taxes? These



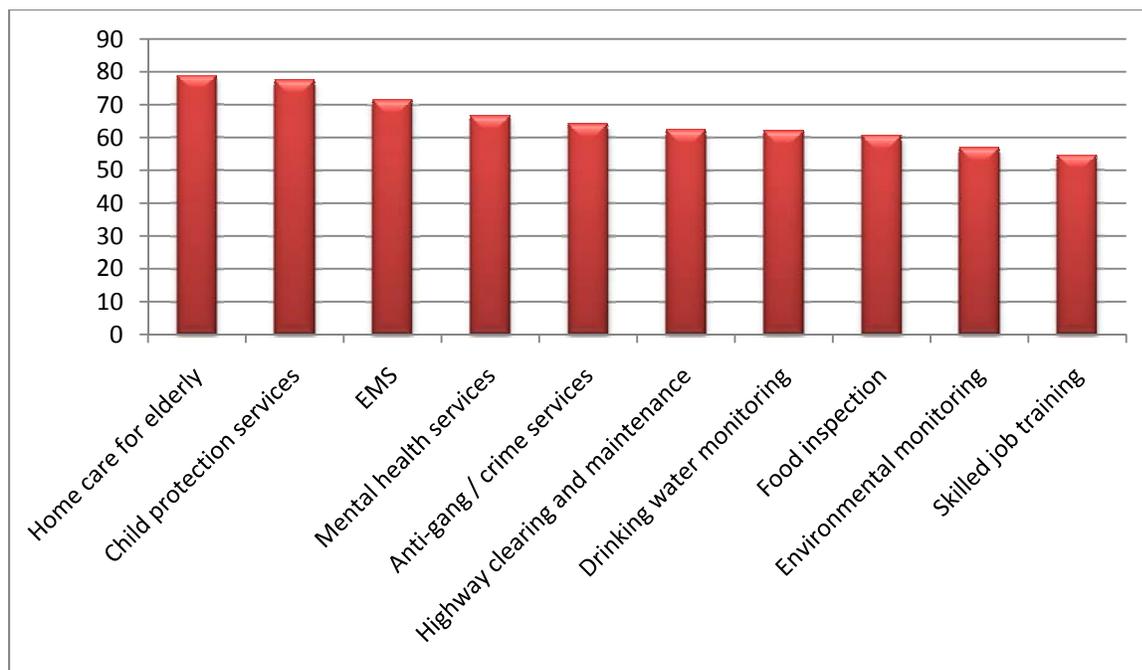
*"Taxes are what we pay for civilized society. Too many individuals, however, want the civilization at a discount." – Franklin D. Roosevelt
(June 1, 1937)*

approaches should respect families' ability to pay, while recognizing the need to support health care, safety, education and other services that Manitobans depend on.

We believe this government should consider all fair revenue increase options, including those items that presently proscribed in the Balanced Budget Legislation.

We asked Manitobans a series of questions about income tax increases. They indicated their preference was to pay a small income tax increase to protect the quality of public services. In particular, between 55% and 79% indicated they would prefer to pay a bit more in income tax to support care for the elderly, protection of children at risk, ambulance and emergency services, community mental health services, services to prevent street gangs and youth from getting involved in crime, highways and snow clearing, monitoring drinking water, inspecting food in restaurants and processing plants, environmental monitoring of lakes and rivers and skilled job training at community colleges.

Figure 2: Percentage of Manitobans Supporting Small Income Tax Increase to Support Select Services



When asked, more than 80% of Manitobans surveyed supported increasing income taxes on large corporations and people living in households with before-tax annual incomes over \$200,000.

We recommend this approach for the coming budget.

Maintaining Quality Services

A robust economic recovery in Manitoba is dependent on jobs and services for all Manitobans.

MGEU members have repeatedly emphasized their dedication to providing vital services to Manitobans, but are continuously being asked to do more with less. Members throughout the civil service identify several worrying trends that negatively impact services.

“Budget 2012 will tackle the challenges ahead of us with a balanced approach and by putting the priorities of families first.” – Stan Struthers (March 9, 2012)

- the announcement of 600 jobs being cut through attrition
- reliance on part-time, casual, or summer students to perform duties that have been provided by full-time permanent staff in the past
- long delays in filling vacant positions
- more stress, growing use of sick time, and staff burnout
- swelling managerial levels while hiring fewer front-line workers

All of these changes directly affect the lives of MGEU members and the services they provide for Manitobans.

Programs that provide services to the most vulnerable are facing mounting budgetary pressures, culminating in a scenario where volumes are increasing, while resources are effectively cut or frozen. At the same time, budget increases do not even match the basic rate of inflation.

When asked whether they agreed that “the Manitoba government should not eliminate 600 jobs because this would jeopardize economic growth and put at risk key health, job training and other services families and communities depend on,” 67% agreed or strongly agreed.

New and Boutique Programs – Every government wants to show the public it is doing more by introducing new programs or adding niche or boutique elements to existing programs. Here in Manitoba, these announcements place more demands on existing staff to deliver these new programs. As we have noted above, civil servants are already under significant stress to deliver the basic programs we have.

In times of fiscal constraint, it makes no sense to put increased stress on workers and focus scarce resources on new programs when existing services do not have adequate resources.

In this regard, we asked Manitobans if they agreed with the statement that since the budget won’t be balanced until 2015, the government should postpone lower taxes for seniors and farmers until the economy has recovered and the budget can be balanced without cutting services. Slightly less than 66% of Manitobans surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with that approach.

We urge government to slow the introduction of new programs until adequate new funding resources are put in place to support them. In addition, any new programs should create jobs and add to Manitoba's overall tax base. Several program areas are already struggling to maintain the service provisions under the current funding arrangements and should be the focus of future spending.

Corrections – Each and every year the number of adults in Manitoba correctional facilities increases. In 2004/05 there were 1,147 adults in custody. In 2011/12 there were 2,253 – almost a 100% increase. At the same time, the full-time equivalent staffing rose from 1,317 to 1,910 – less than a 50% increase. The result is severe overcrowding and dangerous conditions for correctional officers and inmates alike. Dangerous working conditions in correctional facilities are exacerbated by violent inmates who struggle to cope with mental health issues.



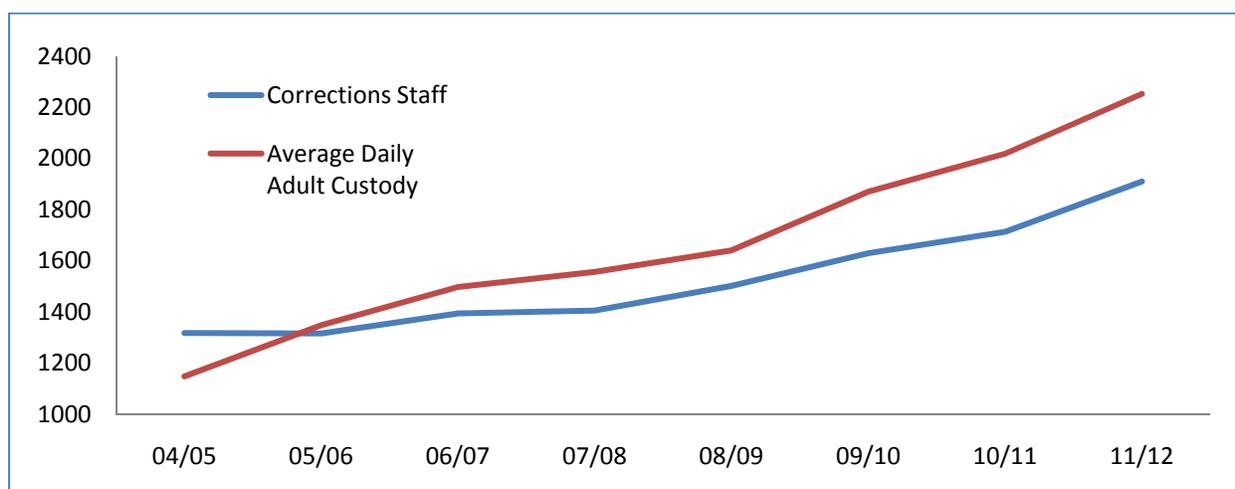
The government is taking some steps to address the issue of capacity within the corrections system, including recent announcements concerning a new Dauphin jail, but in light of the ever increasing pressure and the age of our largest facility, a larger facility solution is required.

In addition, the shortage of staff resources is currently addressed through overtime, which is reflected in annual over expenditures.

Returning to the adult custody to corrections staffing ratio of 2004/05 levels would require an additional 250 correctional officers. As a start, we propose hiring and training 50 additional officers.

We believe programs to train and hire more corrections officers would make for safer working conditions and cost less than the current overtime requirements. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with Manitoba Justice on this matter.

Figure 3: Increase in daily adult custody vs. increase in corrections staffing (2004/05 – 2011/12)



Manitoba’s Family of Crown Corporations – MGEU members work in most Manitoba crown corporations. Like many Manitobans, they were surprised when the government announced, without prior consultation, that it was selling the Property Registry to a private firm.

We are concerned that this will result in fewer Manitobans working at the Property Registry and profits from the operation siphoned out of Manitoba. We also believe this move flies in the face of the government’s commitment not to privatize crown corporations.

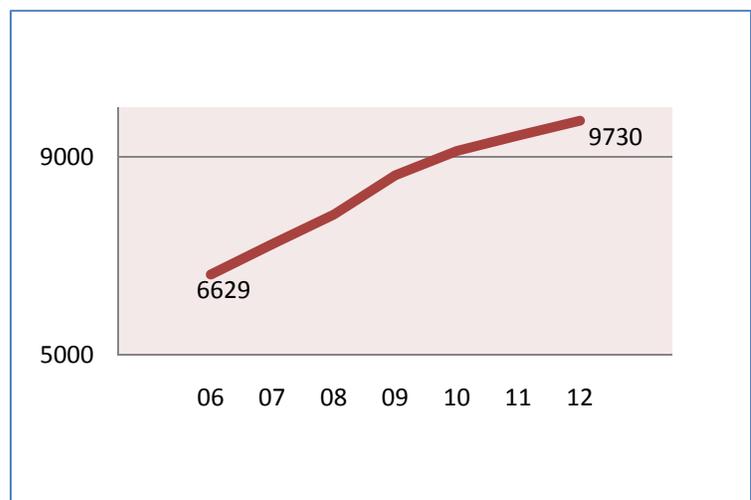
Likewise, the merger of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) and the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation continues to raise concerns about job security and the protection of existing collective agreements. Our members, particularly those at MLCC, feel that the government’s goal to save millions of dollars annually will happen by eliminating front line service providers and not just unnecessary executive positions in the new corporation.



When asked if they supported selling off public services to help lower the deficit, nearly 58% of Manitobans were opposed or strongly opposed.

Caring for Children – Since 2006, the number of Manitoba children in care has increased from 6,629 to 9,730 in 2012. In too many cases, the result is unmanageable workloads, which increase the likelihood of a child or family not getting the care they need.

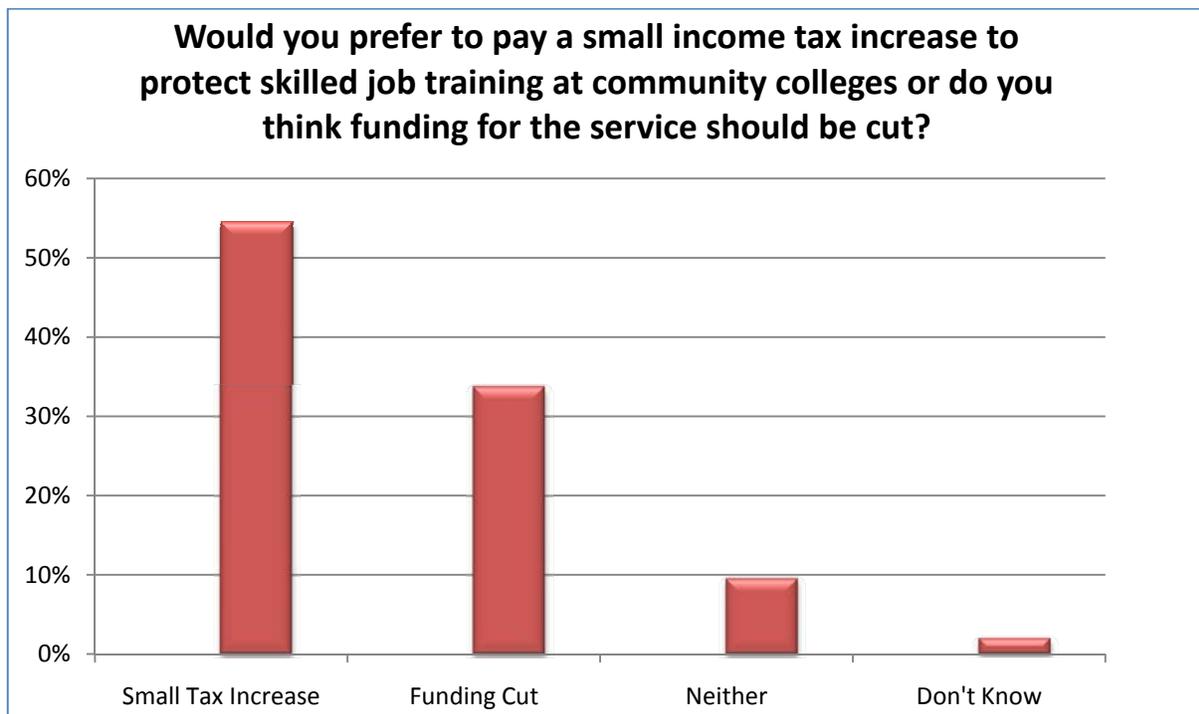
Figure 4: Number of Manitoba Children in Care (2006 – 2012)



Just over a decade ago, Manitoba embarked on a new system for managing child welfare. The child welfare system in Manitoba needs more resources to do its job properly. We believe that adding more social workers will address workload issues in the system and achieve a better resource balance in favour of front line care, while reducing stress for caseworkers and improving care for children.

Education – Well-educated and trained workers are the key to a productive workforce. Community Colleges provide the environment where individuals prepare for the future. These institutions are being forced to close revenue gaps on their own, instead of focusing on providing quality education. A plan to move forward with comprehensive funding would ensure students are prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

Figure 1 : Manitobans support skilled job training at Community Colleges

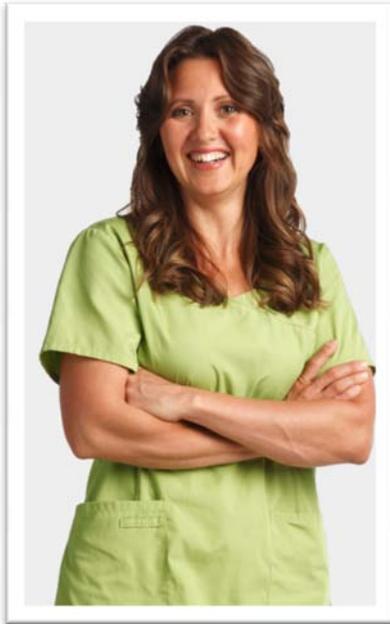


Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC) – As the Province continues its policy of placing Manitobans who formerly would have resided in the MDC into the community, serious challenges are left regarding the MDC campus in Portage la Prairie.

Currently there are 527 (full-time equivalent) employees at MDC. They play a significant role in the community and economic life of the Portage community. For some time, the MGEU has supported two fronts trying to work on a new future for the MDC campus – with a community-based group and with a government and stakeholder group set up by former Minister Mackintosh.

We believe both of those groups have done some serious work that the government can build on to secure the future of the MDC. It will take action to modernize the role of the MDC campus to protect jobs and update the purpose of the facilities.

Health Care – Our members work in facilities and communities across this province providing crucial services to those who have fallen ill and elderly in need of support. The recent RHA amalgamation was



intended to achieve savings, primarily by eliminating administrative duplication. We share that desire but remain concerned that RHAs intend to achieve savings by putting further pressure on front line services.

Home Care workers have been patient during the transition from casual employment to more secure employment, through the creation of more full-time equivalent positions. This has the potential to provide stable jobs and both parties have been working hard to achieve the goals of the process. However, the process has been difficult on members in some areas and has not always delivered what was promised. We would appreciate the continued support and resources dedicated to the process as it continues to be rolled out across the province.

Emergency medical services (EMS) are strained with extended offload times in Winnipeg and short rest periods between shifts in rural areas. We are pleased with the WRHA's recent announcement to address offload times in Winnipeg and look forward to additional announcements regarding challenges facing rural EMS staff.

Other provinces have established a modern model of community paramedicine in rural areas through a broadened scope of practice for paramedics. We urge the government to pilot a similar program in rural areas to extend quality services to all Manitobans.

Community Agencies – Many social services are being provided by community agencies. When government support does not keep pace with inflation, these agencies are often left scrambling without stable and predictable funding.

Many of these agencies have to apply to multiple funders on a year-to-year basis with no guarantee of funding to run their programs. Because of the current funding model, it is difficult to hire or retain qualified staff, plan for program enhancement, as well as provide any consistency to the many clients who benefit from the programs.

Extending grant terms to multi-year funding would allow social service agencies to reduce these yearly administration costs, provide consistent programming, stable staffing, and create a stronger foundation for providing ongoing services.

Finding Efficiencies

Internal Services – Years ago, the Manitoba government established the Materials Distribution Agency to oversee and coordinate common purchases by departments, agencies, and other public authorities.

Our members report that, far too often, departments are bypassing this agency and making purchases directly. In our view, this is an inefficient and costly practice. We believe government should take steps to strengthen and streamline central purchasing powers within government and seek improved

efficiencies by including RHAs and crown agencies where feasible.



Infrastructure renewal is a focus of governments at every level. Provincially, we see several departments that are active in planning for infrastructure needs:

Advanced Education, Education, Infrastructure and Transportation, Health, Conservation and Justice. Some of these functions are handled centrally by Manitoba Government Services, but significant work is carried out in separate planning silos.

We would recommend that government give consideration to consolidate infrastructure planning processes to achieve administrative savings and to better coordinate the scheduling of the construction timing for large public projects.

Modern communications options should mean it is no longer necessary for government employees to require both a smart phone and a desk phone. We believe that Government Services should embark on a government-wide review to determine where the use of a smart phone only could be implemented without reducing services to the public.

Manitoba Pension Plans – There are four pension plans in the province that cover most public sector employees: CSSP, TRAF, MEBP and HEPP.

As baby boomers prepare for retirement, we need to make sure that the same devotion to administrative efficiency government has brought to its review of RHAs, school divisions, municipalities, and crown corporations is also applied to the administration of our public sector pension plans.

We urge the government to review the operations of public sector plans to determine if consolidating the investment arms of these plans would result in administrative efficiencies and strengthen the financial returns for current and future retirees.

15 Commonsense Proposals for the 2013 Budget

General

1. Commit to maintaining front line services, even if it means a longer time frame to balance the budget. No wholesale reduction of public sector services, wages and employees as seen elsewhere in Canada. Manitoba must honour its “no lay-off” pledge in spirit and in practice.
2. Real economic growth paired with the need to address chronic skill shortages should be the benchmark for future collective bargaining in the public sector – fair wages mean increased provincial tax revenues.

Revenue

3. Forge a common front with governments, regions, businesses, community groups and workers to lobby Ottawa on the importance of a fair deal for Manitoba and other provinces when federal transfer programs that support health, education and other vital programs Manitobans depend on are renewed.
4. Modernize current balanced budget legislation and do away with rigid requirements which put key services at risk during a severe economic downturn while eliminating American-style referendums for tax changes.
5. Increase income taxes on large corporations and people living in households with before-tax annual incomes over \$200,000.

Maintaining Services

6. To address workloads for social workers in the child welfare system, add additional positions to achieve a better resource balance in favour of front line care.
7. Take action to modernize the role of the MDC campus to protect jobs and update the purpose of its facilities.
8. Train and hire more corrections officers to improve safety in our jails and bring down staggering overtime costs.
9. Grant multi-year funding to social services agencies and community colleges allowing them to provide greater consistency, stable staffing and stronger programs.
10. Pilot community paramedicine in select rural areas to extend vital services to rural Manitobans.

Savings

11. Announce a pause on the introduction of new programs until adequate new funding resources are put in place to support them. In addition, any new programs should create jobs and add to Manitoba’s overall tax base.
12. Use the streamlining approach applied to RHAs and Crown Corporations to consolidate the investment arms of Manitoba’s major pension funds to achieve administrative efficiencies and strengthen the financial returns for current and future retirees.

13. Coordinate large capital and infrastructure projects to better synchronize timing, tendering, and granting of contracts.
14. Strengthen the central materials purchasing process to ensure government departments, crown organizations and RHAs use the Materials Distribution Agency.
15. Use new technologies to eliminate duplication by moving to smart phones from desk phones in areas where desk phones are redundant.

Conclusion

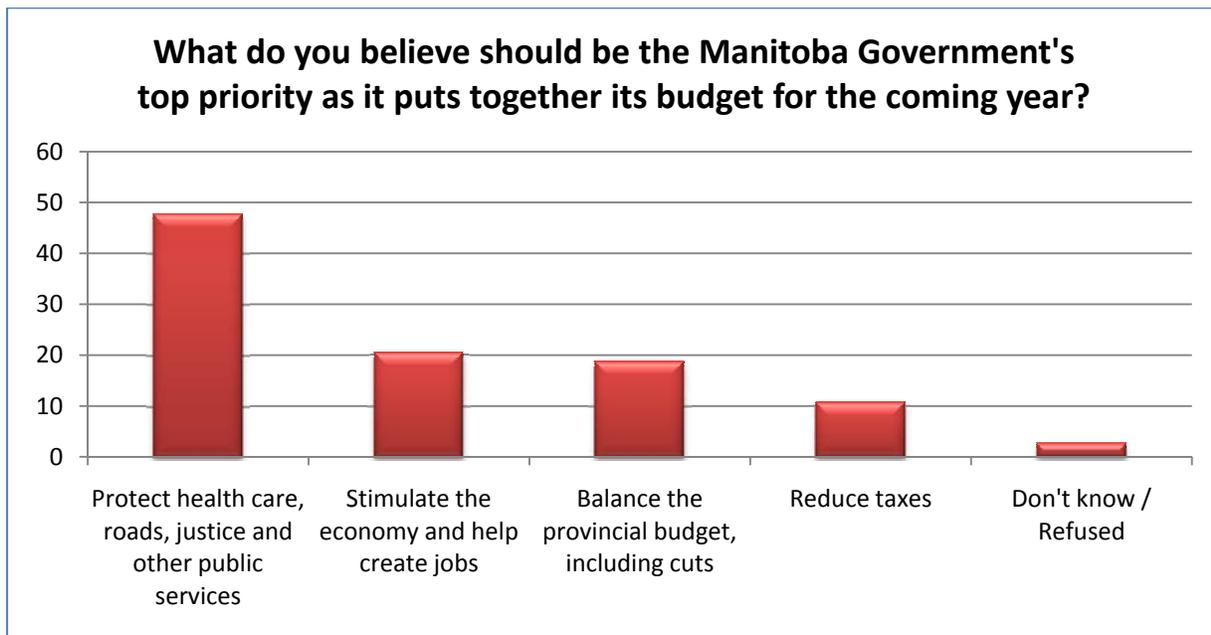
Budgeting is about priorities and priorities reflect values. Our members, like many Manitobans, share many of the same values with today's government. Our proposals were developed with the priorities of our membership and the general public in mind.

In our submission, we outline five proposals that help government achieve expenditure savings or reduce cost pressures; three proposals that help ensure that government has the funds it needs to support the key programs it provides; five proposals that will add needed resources to ensure community safety and modernize antiquated infrastructure; and two general recommendations to maintain front line services, honour the commitment to no layoffs in both spirit and practice, and provide fair wage guidelines for collective bargaining.

Of course, there are many new program proposals that could benefit Manitobans, but when resources are constrained our first priority must be to protect the vital programs and services we have while we return to a balanced position. We do not believe that budgets must be balanced immediately but they should return to balance in a planned and responsible way that protects all Manitobans – especially our most vulnerable.

We believe that all revenue options should be on the table but that the implementations of any changes must not widen the gap between the rich and poor in our province. Finally, we would like to report on our survey's findings on the priorities of Manitobans regarding services.

Figure (: Manitobans' Budget Priorities



We hope you share these priorities and that we will see them reflected in the upcoming spring budget.

Thank you.

Polling Questions Referenced in this Brief

The following questions were part of a survey of 805 Manitobans conducted by telephone on behalf of the MGEU by Viewpoints Research between January 22 and 31, 2013. The results are considered accurate +/- 3.2% 19 times out of 20.

Top Budget Priority

Which one of the following summarizes what you believe should be the Manitoba government's top priority as it puts together its budget for the coming year.

Protect health care, roads, justice and other public services.....	47.7%
Reduce taxes	10.7%
Balance the provincial budget, even if it means cutting services and laying off workers	18.6%
Stimulate the economy and help create jobs.....	20.4%
Don't know / Refused	2.6%

Tax Increases vs. Service Cuts

Would you be willing to pay a small income tax increase to protect the quality of public services, or do you believe these services should be cut in order to balance the provincial budget?

Prefer a small tax increase	48.8%
Prefer to see services cut	29.1%
Both / neither	12.1%
Don't know / Refused	10.0%

Tax Increase to support vs. Funding Cut – Select Services

Now I'm going to read you a list of some specific public services that are provided by the provincial government. For each service please tell me whether you would prefer to pay a small income tax increase to protect the service **OR** if you think funding for the service should be cut back in order to help balance the provincial budget.

	Small tax increase	Funding cut	Neither /Both	Don't Know/ Refused
Home care for the elderly.	78.7%	12.2%	6.5%	2.7%
Services to protect children at risk.	77.4%	13.4%	6.2%	2.9%
Ambulance and emergency services.	71.4%	16.6%	9.5%	2.5%
Community mental health services.	66.5%	21.6%	7.7%	4.2%
Services to help prevent street gangs and youth from getting involved in crime.	64.0%	24.5%	7.1%	4.4%
Highway snow clearing and maintenance.	62.2%	22.6%	12.1%	3.1%
Monitoring drinking water quality.	61.8%	25.0%	10.6%	2.6%
Inspecting food in restaurants and processing plants to protect the health of Manitobans.	60.6%	28.1%	8.9%	2.4%
Environmental monitoring of Manitoba's lakes and rivers.	56.9%	32.5%	7.5%	3.2%
Skilled job training at community colleges.	54.5%	33.8%	9.6%	2.1%

Future Budget Decisions

Now I am going to read you some statements which others have made about future decisions the Manitoba government could make. For each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Don't Know/ Refused
It is more important to protect services that families rely on, like care for the elderly, highway safety, justice services and safe water than it is to balance the provincial budget by a specific, arbitrary date.	77.3%	18.5%	4.3%
It is more important to keep criminals off the street and our communities safe than it is to balance the provincial budget by an arbitrary date.	75.4%	21.1%	3.6%
Manitoba has the most restrictive balanced budget laws in Canada. The government should bring this law into line with those in other provinces so that economic growth and public services can be protected in difficult economic times.	74.1%	18.2%	7.7%
In the last election the NDP promised to lower taxes for seniors and farmers. Given that the budget won't be balanced until 2015 they should postpone these tax cuts until the economy has recovered and the budget can be balanced without cutting services.	65.9%	30.1%	4.0%
The Manitoba government should not eliminate 600 jobs because this would jeopardize economic growth and put at risk key health, job training and other services families and communities depend on.	66.6%	27.6%	5.9%

Increasing Income Taxes

Please tell me whether you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose introducing the following tax change to ensure that public services like health care, roads, home care, child protection and justice services are protected and improved.

	Strongly Support / Support	Strongly Oppose / Oppose	Don't Know/ Refused
Increasing income taxes on large corporations and people living in households with before-tax annual incomes over \$200,000.	80.2%	18.3%	1.5%

Sale of Public Services

Do you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose the Manitoba government selling off public services to help lower the deficit?

Strongly Support / Support	32.2%
Strongly Oppose / Oppose	57.8%
Don't know / Refused	10.0%



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