

Public service in tough times ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Project summary

The Public Service in Tough Times research project is documenting opinions, experiences, and perspectives on the impact of provincial government austerity on public services and programs and working conditions for public sector workers and professionals in Manitoba. The project is being done in partnership with a large number of public sector unions, professional associations, and community organizations and networks, with support from the Manitoba Research Alliance.

The study focuses on expenditure and staffing cuts and restraints, as well as privatization and contracting out that has occurred recently in Manitoba. Since 2016, the government of Manitoba has implemented an austerity agenda. This was accomplished by proposing very modest increases in provincial budgets, while significantly underspending each year, with health spending, for example, falling approximately three per cent in inflation adjusted terms between 2016 and 2018. Infrastructure spending was also rapidly curtailed, based on a similar strategy of underspending. Non-profit organizations have also been asked to take on and assigned roles previously delivered by the provincial government. Between 2016 and 2020, the government eliminated approximately 2,500 positions in the civil service, a reduction of 17 percent of the civil service workforce. The research project aims to provide a system-wide summary of how austerity has manifested itself across public services and the impact.

Methodology

The project is a mixed-methods study involving a review of provincial government public accounts data, as well as surveys and interviews with public services workers, including those working at third-party service providers reliant on provincial government funding.

The research aims to be useful and of interest to public sector workers and professionals, and a resource to educate and share knowledge with decision makers and Manitobans more broadly. We are publishing our finding as an edited academic book and a series of one-page “Fast Facts” through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba website and other media. The project is being led by Jesse Hajer (Economics and Labour Studies Program) at the University of Manitoba with Ian Hudson, Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba and Jennifer Keith, PhD candidate at the University of Manitoba, as co-editors.

Topic area, authors and affiliations

Education and Immigration

1. Childcare – Susan Prentice (University of Winnipeg)
2. K-12 Education and Schools – Ee-Seul Yoon (University of Manitoba)
3. Post-Secondary Education – Scott Forbes (University of Winnipeg)
4. Adult Learning and Literacy – Jim Silver (University of Winnipeg)
5. Immigration – Sarah Zell and Ray Silvius (University of Winnipeg)

Healthy Communities and Quality of Life

1. Healthcare – Katherine Burley, Robert Chernomas, and Ian Hudson (University of Manitoba) [Summary]
2. Environment – Mark Hudson (University of Manitoba) [Summary]
3. Justice – Elizabeth Comack (University of Manitoba) and Amelia Curran (University of Winnipeg) [Summary]
4. Income Assistance and Disability Supports – Jim Mulvale (University of Manitoba)
5. Child Welfare – Shauna Mackinnon (University of Winnipeg)
6. Housing – Sarah Cooper (University of Manitoba)
7. Women – Mara Fridell (University of Manitoba)
8. Arts, Culture and Sport – Brenda Austin-Smith (University of Manitoba)

A Prosperous Economy

1. Manitoba Hydro, Public Insurance and Liquor and Lotteries Corporations – Lynne Fernandez and Niall Harney (Canadian Centre for

Policy Alternatives – Manitoba) [Summary]

2. Economic Development and Agriculture – Fletcher Baragar (University of Manitoba)
3. Transportation and Infrastructure – Holly Scotland and Jennifer Keith (University of Manitoba)
4. Labour and Consumer Protection – Julie Guard (University of Manitoba)

Reconciliation, Administration and Municipal Affairs

1. Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations Jennifer Keith and Niigaan Sinclair (University of Manitoba) [Summary]
2. Administrative Departments – Shreya Ghimire (York University), Karine Levasseur and Andrea Rounce (University of Manitoba)
3. Municipalities – Orly Linovski (University of Manitoba)

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Region: Manitoba [4]

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