



Consent Form

Public Service in Tough Times: Working Under Austerity in Manitoba

CONSENT FORM – ONLINE SURVEY

This consent form, a copy of which can be downloaded for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Name of Researchers:

- Jesse Hajer, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Labour Studies Program, University of Manitoba
- Ian Hudson, Professor of Economics, University of Manitoba
- Jennifer Keith, PhD candidate, Department of Indigenous Studies, University of Manitoba

Title of Project:

Public Service in Tough Times: Working Under Austerity in Manitoba.

Specific Activities to be Completed by Project Participant and Time Frame:

Online Survey. Expected time: 20-30 minutes.

Description of Research Project:

From 2016 to 2020, the government of Manitoba prioritized balancing the budget through expenditure reductions. To achieve this, the government undertook a number of

measures that could be considered part of an “austerity” agenda, including but not limited to:

- Eliminating approximately 17% of the civil service workforce;
- Directing the broader public sector to cut 15% of management staffing;
- Reduction and/or elimination of funding to external organizations for public and social services delivered by non-profit organizations and municipalities;
- Implementing a public sector wage freeze directive; and
- Privatizing or contracting out services to the private sector.

In 2019, the auditor general declared that the province was successful in this goal and had eliminated the budget deficit. During the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the government sought further reductions in expenditures in non-health public service areas, to reallocate to COVID-19 related spending. Both prior and throughout the pandemic the government has under-spent budgeted expenditures.

Through surveys and interviews with public service workers, we seek to document the opinions, experiences, and perspectives on the impact of provincial government austerity during this period including:

- the impact of austerity on public services and programs, with special attention paid to the impact on lower-income households;
- what efficiencies have been achieved with or without privatization;
- the effect on value for money for provincial government funds spent in different areas; and
- the impact of the changes on working conditions and job quality for front-line workers.

Benefits

This research provides you the opportunity to share your perspective on the impact of austerity on public services and public sector working conditions, and see those perspectives reflected in our publication. Our research aims to be useful and of interest to public sector workers, and as a resource to educate and share knowledge with decision makers and Manitobans more broadly. We hope this research will shape public

policy going forward.

Summary of the research findings is expected to be available by September 2023 and will be posted on the following website: <https://mra-mb.ca/austerity-in-manitoba/>

Risk

The risk of participating in the survey for this project is no greater than risks encountered in everyday life. One potential risk is a breach of confidentiality: that information may be shared in ways that enable you to be identified. To minimize the risk of this occurring, the following procedures will be undertaken.

Confidentiality

The data collected through the survey is anonymous such that your responses are not linked to your email address the survey is sent to. If you enter such information in the survey comments, this information will be linked to your survey responses and will be confidential. This means that participants' names or any other personal or identifiable information will not be included in presentations or reports arising from the study.

Use of Data, Secure Storage and Destruction of Research Data

Information collected from participants will be used as part of the "Public Service in Tough Times: Working Under Austerity in Manitoba" research project and subsequent edited collection. It may be used for conference presentations and/or publication in newspapers, journals and other academic and professional resources, including the University of Manitoba's MSpace (<https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca>) institutional repository. All information will be treated as confidential and stored in a private and secure place (Qualtrics and University of Manitoba's SharePoint servers), and subsequently destroyed 6 months after research is published, no later than December 2024. The principal investigator, Jesse Hajer, is responsible for destroying the data. Copies of consent will be securely kept on file by the researchers for information purposes only for two years and then destroyed, in accordance with university ethics policies.

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information by the University

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of The University of

Manitoba Act. The information you provide will be used by the University for the purpose of this research project. If you agree to an interview, your email address and/or phone number may be used to contact you. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). If you have any questions about the collection of your personal information, contact the Access & Privacy Office (tel. 204-474-9462), 233 Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

There will be an option to submit contact information, to be contacted to participate in the interview portion of this research. Please be aware that any personal information you enter in the survey may be stored on Qualtrics (the software used to host the survey) servers. The University of Manitoba cannot and does not guarantee protection against the possible disclosure of your data including, without limitation, against possible disclosures of data in accordance with the laws of a foreign jurisdiction.

By clicking "Yes"/ "agree" and "submit" (once you have completed the survey) you are indicating that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project, agree to participate as a subject, and have given consent to the dissemination of material provided to the researchers for use in their Research Project.

I understand that the information I provide will be incorporated in a presentation, report and academic publications. I understand also that all research data will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed at the end of the project by the researchers.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the survey at any time during the survey, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. **Since the survey is anonymous, withdrawal from the survey is not possible after submission.** To obtain a copy of this consent form for you to keep for your records and reference please click here: [consent form Austerity MB project.pdf](#)

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research

is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- Jesse Hajer, Assistant Professor Department of Economics and Labour Studies Program, University of Manitoba, Telephone: 204-474-9057 e-mail: jesse.hajer@umanitoba.ca
- Ian Hudson, Professor Department of Economics, Telephone: 204-474-9274 e-mail: ian.hudson@umanitoba.ca
- Jennifer Keith, PhD Candidate Department of Indigenous Studies University of Manitoba Telephone: 204-330-5611 e-mail: keithj3@myumanitoba.ca

Thank you for participating in this project. Your cooperation and insights are valuable and are greatly appreciated!

To be included in this study, you must be:

- 18 years of age or older, and
- have worked for the Manitoba government, a Manitoba municipality, Manitoba crown corporation or other third-party organization or service provider (school, hospital, municipality, non-profit organization, etc.) that delivered public services **funded (at least partially) by the Province of Manitoba**, anytime between 2015 and 2022.

I confirm that I meet this criteria (If uncertain please contact jesse.hajer@umanitoba.ca requesting further clarification):

Yes

If we quote the comments you provided in this survey, how can we refer to you? Please select your preference:

- A public sector employee in the following department, area, branch or government entity:
- A public sector employee (generic)
- An employee with a non-profit organization that [please briefly describe type of services provided and/or target population]:
- An employee with a non-profit organization (generic)
- A contractor providing publicly funded services in following sector:
- Other:
- None of the above – do not reference my place of employment in relation to my comments and refer to me as a generic “worker delivering public services”

I give permission for my comments to be referenced back to my occupation or job title:

- Yes. My occupation or job title is:
- No, do not reference my occupation or job title.

*Note: If fewer than 4 workers from any particular department, area, branch or government entity participate in the study (including both survey and interviews), place of employment will not be referenced when reporting comments from survey and/or interviews.

I agree to participate in this study:

- Yes

Part A: Workplace Characteristics

Please note: In addition to completing the survey, you must click “submit” at the end of the survey to finalize your submission. If you do not click “submit” your data will not be

recorded.

Reminder: You may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Part A: Workplace Characteristics

Please select your current or last public sector employer:

- The Province of Manitoba (member of civil service)
- Municipality
- Arms-length provincial entity (ex. school division, health region/authority, university, crown corporation, etc.)
- A non-profit organization, contractor or professional office (ex. physician practice) that independently delivers public services with provincial funding
- Other:

Select government department/secretariat:

- Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration
- Agriculture
- Crown Services
- Economic Development, Investment and Trade
- Education and Early Childhood Learning
- Environment, Climate and Parks
- Families
- Francophone Affairs
- Status of Women
- Treasury Board
- Finance
- Mental Health and Community Wellness
- Seniors and Long-term Care
- Health
- Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations
- Intergovernmental Affairs
- Justice
- Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services
- Municipal Relations
- Natural Resources and Northern Development
- Public Service Commission
- Sport, Culture and Heritage
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Other:

Select area in Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration where you are/were employed:

- Advanced Education
- Immigration
- Adult Learning and Literacy
- Other:

Select area in Education and Early Childhood Learning where you are/were employed:

- K-12 Education
- Early Childhood Learning / Child care
- Other:

Select area in Families that you are/were employed in:

- Child Welfare / Child and Family Services
- Housing
- Income Assistance (EIA, Rent Assist, etc.)
- Disability supports
- Other:

Select area in Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services you are/were employed with:

- Labour
- Consumer Protection
- Government Services
- Other:

Select your area in Municipal Services:

- Community Development
- Other branches supporting municipalities
- Other:

Select the sector/type of arms-length provincial entity you are/were employed with:

- Crown corporation
- Schools and School Divisions
- Adult Learning and Literacy Centres
- Post-Secondary Education (Universities and Colleges)
- Healthcare
- Other:

Select crown corporation you are/were employed with:

- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation
- Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation
- Efficiency Manitoba
- Manitoba Arts Council
- Manitoba Centennial Centre
- Manitoba Film and Music
- Workers Compensation Board
- Other:

Select type/area of health care:

- Mental Health/Addictions
- Home Care
- Long-term Care
- EMS
- Health Regions/Authorities, including Hospitals
- Community-based Clinics
- Other Health:

Select the category that best represents your program/policy area of work:

- Agriculture
- Arts, Culture, and Sport
- Adult Learning and Literacy
- Child Welfare
- Childcare
- Economic Development, Investment and Trade
- Income Assistance and Disability supports
- K-12 Education and Schools
- Environment or Conservation
- Seniors
- Mental Health, Addictions and/or Harm reduction
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Immigration
- Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Development
- Justice
- Labour and Consumer Protection
- Natural Resource Management
- Post-Secondary Education (Universities, Colleges, and Apprenticeship)
- Skills Training and Workforce Development
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Community Development, Poverty Reduction
- Municipalities
- Women
- Other:

Select the type of organization that you work for:

- Indigenous authority
- Non-Indigenous authority
- Indigenous child welfare agency
- Non-Indigenous child welfare agency
- Other:

Select the category that best represent your area of work in health:

- Home Care
- EMS
- Long-term Care
- Hospital
- Community-based Clinic
- Physician Practice
- Other Health:

For the remainder of the survey, please restrict your answers to your current or last area of public service work/employment, as selected above.

Part A: Workplace Characteristics (Continued)

In my current or last public service job, I would describe myself as:

- Senior management
- Supervisor or Manager
- Front Line Worker
- Other:

Please list your current/last occupation/profession and/or job title, or briefly describe your employment-related responsibilities:

My employment responsibilities apply to the following geographic areas (select all that apply):

[For a map depicting these regions, see: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/rha/map.html>]

- Northern Manitoba
- Prairie Mountain / Wesman
- Southern Manitoba
- Interlake and Eastern Manitoba
- Winnipeg
- All of Manitoba
- Other:

You can elaborate on your responses to any of the above questions here:

Part B: Presence of Austerity

Part B: Presence of Austerity

From 2016 to 2020, the government of Manitoba prioritized balancing the budget through expenditure reductions and restraints. To achieve this, the government undertook a number of measures that could be considered part of an “austerity” agenda, including but not limited to:

- Implementing a public sector wage freeze directive;
- Eliminating approximately 17% of the civil service workforce;
- Directing the broader public sector to cut 15% of management staffing;
- Froze funding or below inflation increases for core public services;
- Privatizing or contracting out services to the private sector; and
- Reduction and/or elimination of funding to external organizations for public and social services delivered by some non-profit organizations and municipalities;

In 2019, the auditor general declared that the province was successful in this goal and had eliminated the budget deficit. During the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in

2020, the government sought further reductions in expenditures in non-health public service areas, to reallocate to COVID-19 related spending.

Has the work done by you and your close co-workers in your area of work been impacted by the Government of Manitoba's austerity measures aimed at reducing expenditures and balancing the budget?

- Our work was greatly impacted
- Our work was moderately impacted
- Our work was impacted in a minor/marginal way
- Our work was not impacted

How has your employment been impacted by these austerity measures (select all that apply)?

- I have been laid off or lost my job
- My hours were reduced
- My hours were increased
- My workload has intensified/increased
- My workload has decreased
- My work has changed. Explain:
- No impact
- Other. Explain:
- Unsure / Don't know

You can elaborate on your responses to any of the above questions here:

Part B: Presence of Austerity (continued)

Has work done in your current area of work been scaled back or eliminated as a result of austerity measures?

- Yes. Explain:
- No
- Unsure / Don't know

Has (more) work in your area been privatized or contracted-out to private companies or other non-government organizations?

- Yes. Explain (service type contracted out, to what type of provider, etc.):
- No
- Unsure / Don't know

Did you experience any of the following changes to your work scheduling (select all that apply):

- Assigned more shifts than desired
- Assigned longer shifts than desired
- Shorter or missed breaks/meals
- Staffing shortages
- Other Resource shortages (reduced budgets or limiting of spending to support people's work/tasks)
- Increased number tasks requested of me
- More contract/casual staff hired (opposed to permanent staff)
- No change
- Other:

You can elaborate on your response to any of the above questions here:

Part C: Consultation on Austerity Measures

Part C: Consultation on Austerity Measures

Did management or other senior government officials explain or justify to stakeholders in your area of work the need for austerity measures in your area?

- Yes
- No
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area.

Please briefly describe the rationale provided:

Please rank your agreement/disagreement with the following three statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral / Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know / Unsure
Prior to austerity measures noted above being implemented, I had meaningful opportunities to contribute ideas on how to reduce expenditures in my area:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work-related experience, expertise and opinions were reflected in the austerity/expenditure reduction measures that were implemented:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the work-related experience, expertise and opinions of front-line workers in my area of work were reflected in the austerity measures implemented:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You can elaborate on your response to any of the above questions re. consultation on austerity measures here:

Part D: Impact of Austerity on Service Quality

Part D: Impact of Austerity on Service Quality

In your opinion, the austerity measures implemented in your current/last area of work and related changes led to:

- Improved service quality for stakeholders/users of the service
- No change in service quality for stakeholders/ users of the service
- A reduction in the quality of service or stakeholders/users of the service
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

As a result of austerity, has your ability to deliver services/care to individuals (clients, members of public, students, patients, other public sector workers, etc.) as part of your employment responsibilities been affected in any of the following ways (check all that apply):

- I am able to provide improved services to individuals
- I am able to see fewer individuals
- I am not able to spend as much time with individuals
- I am asked to provide the same or increased service with fewer resources
- No change
- Other:
- Not Applicable in my area of work

Thinking specifically about lower income Manitobans and/or those living in poverty, in your opinion, the austerity measures implemented in your area and related changes led to:

- Improved service quality for low-income service users
- No change in service quality for low-income service users
- A reduction in service quality for low-income service users
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

What is your opinion on the current model for delivering the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program?

- The current model for delivering EIA is well adapted to the needs of clients
- The current model for delivering EIA requires minor adjustments and improvements.
Please elaborate:
- The current model for delivering EIA requires a fundamental overhaul. Please elaborate:
- unsure / don't know
- Other:

In your opinion, expenditure cuts and restraints implemented in your area of work:

- Positively impacted public safety
- Did not affect public safety
- Worsened public safety
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no expenditure cuts or restraints implemented in my area

In your opinion, other austerity measures implemented in your area of work, such as privatization and contracting out:

- Positively impacted public safety
- Did not affect public safety
- Worsened public safety
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no other austerity measures, such as privatization and contracting out, in my area

You can elaborate on your responses to any of the above questions re. public service quality and public safety under austerity here:

Part E: Impact of Austerity - Cost Savings and Value**Part E: Impact of Austerity - Cost Savings and Value**

Thinking about cost savings in the immediate or short-term impact (within 1-2 years), do you believe the austerity measures implemented in your area of work save the public sector money?

- Yes, they create savings for both my area and the public sector as a whole.
- They created savings for my area, but transferred costs to other areas of the public sector (other departments, areas, branches, levels of government etc.)
- No, they ended up increasing costs in both my area of work and for the public sector as a whole.
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area
- Other. Please explain briefly:
- Unsure / Don't know

Thinking about cost savings in the long-term, do you believe the austerity measures implemented in your area save the public sector money?

- Yes, I expect they will create savings for both my area and the public sector as a whole.
- They create savings for my area, but transfer costs to other areas of the public sector (other departments, areas, branches, levels of government etc.)
- No, I expect they will increase costs in both my area of work and for the public sector as a whole.
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area
- Other. Please explain briefly:
- Unsure / Don't know

In your opinion, the austerity measures implemented in your area of work will lead to Manitobans getting:

- Better value from the government/taxpayer money spent on public services
- About the same value
- Less value for money
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area
- Other:

Please elaborate on your responses to the above questions re. cost savings and value under austerity here:

Part F: Impact of Austerity - Working Conditions

Part F: Impact of Austerity - Working Conditions

In your opinion, austerity measures implemented in your current/last area of work led to:

- Improved working conditions and job satisfaction
- Did not affect working conditions and job satisfaction
- Worse working conditions and job satisfaction
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

In your opinion, austerity measures implemented in your area of work led to:

- Improved employee mental health
- Did not affect employee mental health
- Worsened employee mental health
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

In your opinion, austerity measures implemented in your area of work led to:

- Improved employee recruitment and retention
- Did not affect employee recruitment and retention
- Worsened employee recruitment and retention
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

In your opinion, expenditure cuts and other austerity measures implemented in your area of work, such as such as privatization and contracting out:

- Positively impacted worker safety
- Did not affect worker safety
- Worsened worker safety
- Unsure / Don't know
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area

Reflecting on the impact of austerity implemented in your area of work:

- It made me more satisfied with my job
- It did not have any impact on my job satisfaction
- It made me less satisfied with my job
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area
- Other:

Reflecting on the impact of austerity on your desire to stay with current/last public service employer:

- It resulted in no change on my desire to stay with current/last public service employer
- It made me want to stay in my current/last job longer
- It led to me to consider jobs elsewhere or with other employers
- It led me to leave my public service job
- There were no austerity measures or efforts to reduce expenditures in my area
- Other:

You can elaborate on your responses to any of the above questions re. working conditions and austerity here:

Part G: Austerity over time

Part G: Austerity Over Time

Comparing expenditure restraint under the NDP government prior to 2016 versus that of the Progressive Conservative government after 2016:

- Provincial austerity in my area has been relaxed (expenditures have been more generous, staffing levels have increased, etc.) since 2016.
- The intensity of provincial austerity has remained about the same
- Provincial austerity in my area of work has become more intense (greater expenditure restraint/cuts, larger staff reductions, etc.)
- Other:
- Unsure / Don't know

Thinking of provincial austerity before and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020)

- Provincial austerity in my area has been relaxed (expenditures have been more generous, staffing levels have increased, etc.) since the pandemic started.
- The intensity of provincial austerity has remained about the same
- Provincial austerity in my area of work has become more intense (greater expenditure cuts, etc) since the pandemic started
- Other:
- Unsure / Don't know

Thinking of provincial austerity under Premier Heather Stefanson (November 2021 to present) versus when Brian Pallister was Premier (April 2016 to October 2021):

- Provincial austerity in my area has been relaxed (expenditures have been more generous, staffing levels have increased, etc.) since November 2021
- The intensity of provincial austerity has remained about the same
- Provincial austerity in my area of work has become more intense (greater expenditure cuts, etc.)
- Other:
- Unsure / Don't know

You can elaborate on your responses to any of the above questions re. austerity over time here:

Part H: Policy Alternatives

Part H: Policy Alternatives

Do you believe the private sector would perform your unit/organization's tasks in a more efficient manner?

- Yes. Please briefly describe:
- No. Please briefly explain:
- Unsure / Don't know

Are there opportunities in your area of work, if your budget was increased, to provide value-for-money (provide additional or higher quality services in a cost-effective way) for Manitobans/taxpayers?

- Yes. Please briefly describe:
- No. Please briefly explain:
- Unsure / Don't know

Do you have ideas for how government services can be delivered more efficiently (better or more services for same or less cost) in your area?

- Yes. Please briefly describe:
- No

Are there opportunities in your area of work to provide value-for-money for Manitobans/taxpayers by eliminating or reducing expenditures and/or services in your area of work, and transferring the funding elsewhere?

- Yes. Please briefly describe:
- No. Please briefly explain:
- Unsure / Don't know

Part I. Final Comments

Use this space to add any additional comments or information you think relevant for this study:

Part J: Worker Characteristics

Part J: Worker Characteristics

The following four questions will be used to determine if survey responses differ significantly based on racialized status, gender identity, work experience and level of education. Again, you may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

With respect to gender identity, how do you describe yourself? Choose all that apply.

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender
- Non-binary/non-conforming
- Another gender identity:
- Prefer not to say

What is your cultural background? Choose all that apply.

- African
- European
- East Asian
- South Asian
- South East Asian
- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuit
- Indigenous
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Middle Eastern
- Another cultural identity:
- Prefer not to answer

Enter your years of experience working in the public sector and/or delivering public services:

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

Years of Experience

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than High School
- High School Diploma
- Vocational or College Diploma or Degree
- Some University but no Degree
- University Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate or Professional Degree
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

Part K: Interview

Would you be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview to discuss how austerity has impacted services to Manitobans and working conditions? Interviews will be recorded to facilitate transcription.

- Yes. If yes, please enter your name, phone number and email address at which to contact you. Alternatively, please email jesse.hajer@umanitoba.ca to volunteer for an interview.

- No

Please click “submit” to finalize the submission of your survey responses. If you do not click “submit” your data will not be recorded.

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