



Manitoba Budget 2017

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Manitoba Federation of Labour

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The Manitoba Federation of Labour is pleased to provide this submission on priorities for the 2017 Provincial Budget. The MFL is Manitoba's central labour body, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized working people from every sector and every region of the province. The MFL works to promote good jobs, fairness, and social and economic justice for all. The priorities outlined in this submission are informed by long standing MFL policies, Convention resolutions and emerging needs identified by our members.

As overriding priorities, the MFL would like to see Budget 2017 focus on:

- Protecting and improving quality public services that working families depend on;
- Investing to create good jobs, better infrastructure, and keep our economy growing; and
- Reducing poverty and inequality, and building stronger communities.

We were pleased that your government promised to protect public services from reckless cuts that hurt families and stifle economic growth. We are concerned by recent indications that this promise may not be honoured. Manitobans expect their government to keep its word about the public services that make-up such a big part of Manitoba's exceptional quality of life, overall affordability, and stable economic performance.

Cuts and privatization are not the answer. Manitoba needs to invest to protect and enhance the services delivered proudly by our public sector workers. Overly aggressive vacancy management has already resulted in staffing levels for many core services being dangerously inadequate, and compromising service levels and outcomes for families who depend on them. Adequate staffing is essential to repairing and enhancing critical services. And any moves to privatize . whether through selling-off crown assets, increased private delivery options, Public Private Partnerships or Social Impact Bonds . will only further degrade service and affordability, costing Manitobans far more in the long-run.

We are pleased that government is taking a multi-year approach to returning to budget surpluses. Making massive cuts or privatizing to balance right away would result in enormous harm to families, strangle the economy and tax revenues, and increase debt in the long-term.

Our members have prioritized a number of areas of government service that we hope you will consider and review for improvement:

Health Care

A new National Health Accord is vitally important to support all provinces in providing high-quality, publicly-delivered health care services, when they're needed, and close to home. The MFL would be pleased to be part of lobbying efforts in this regard, including pressing for a national pharma care program, and a comprehensive strategy for seniors' care.

As part of Budget 2017, we recommend that the government continue to prioritize health care services that families depend on, and look for opportunities for improvement, like the following:

- Significantly increase the number of midwives working in Manitoba to help meet the enormous unmet demand for critically-important midwifery services;
- Strengthen investment in mental health and addictions services, with a focus on improving accessibility and reducing stigma;
- Increase investment in staffing and the creation of new public PCH beds throughout the province to help meet growing needs in Winnipeg, Brandon, rural Manitoba and the north;
- Work with unions representing health care support services across the province to standardize wages and job duties as an important part of ensuring high quality care;
- Work in partnership with federal and local governments to address the serious problem of boil water advisories and to ensure safe, clean drinking water for all

Manitobans, including our many First Nations citizens who are presently without access to this basic and essential right;

- Fund the cost of sex reassignment surgeries, hormone therapies and other procedures necessary, and increase funding to the Trans Health Clinics in Winnipeg and Brandon and support vulnerable populations;
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure that all government workplaces are equipped with AED devices to assist in responding to Manitobans requiring emergency heart care.

Workplace Safety & Health:

Working families need to know that their loved ones will return home from work each day, healthy and safe. Unfortunately, thousands of Manitobans continue to be injured on the job or develop illness from dangerous conditions at work. Some never make it home at all. Workplace tragedies don't have to happen. With the right laws, policies and investments, we can ensure that all workers stay safe on the jobs. Through Budget 2017, we encourage the Manitoba government to:

- Continue investments with SAFE Work Manitoba on public campaigns to raise awareness and strengthen prevention programming;
- Work with SAFE Work Manitoba, labour and employers to develop a comprehensive strategy for psychological health in the workplace;
- Increase the number of workplace inspectors and strengthen enforcement of workplace health and safety laws . in private sector and public sector workplaces (including provincial government departments and agencies);
- Provide adequate resourcing for the criminal prosecution of employers responsible for workplace fatalities, and properly support victims and families of workplace injuries and illness;
- In co-operation with SAFE Work Manitoba and Safe Workers of Tomorrow, develop targeted strategies to protect especially vulnerable workers, such as youth, new workers and newcomers;
- Provide adequate funding for the Workers Advisory Office to support injured workers in complex dealings with the WCB;

- Continue public awareness and targeted workplace campaigns and strict enforcement against claim suppression activities; and
- Develop a concrete action plan to address hazards and improve health and safety standards for workers, inmates and others within correctional institutions, including providing for appropriate staffing levels.

Education and Training:

Quality public education and post-secondary opportunities support Manitobans in getting good jobs and providing for a stable and secure future. Education supports greater equality, empowerment, participation in our society, and overall economic prosperity. We recommend that Budget 2017 place a strong focus on education:

- Support high quality public education for all Manitoba students;
- Work with teachers, parents and post-secondary institutions to raise student awareness about consent and rape culture;
- Increase provincial support for post-secondary education, on a multi-year and predictable basis, without any deterioration to current affordability for students;
- Ensure that quality English as a Second Language training is available for newcomers at no cost, and Adult Learning Centres are resourced to deliver specialized supports for adults in need;
- Strengthen Manitoba's apprenticeship system, with a focus on preserving and strengthening training integrity and safe working conditions;
- Establish new apprenticeship opportunities within the civil service to help address skills shortages and recruit and retain skilled trades people (we recommend a careful review of serious staffing recruitment and retention problems affecting Manitoba Infrastructure maintenance yards); and
- Strengthen training standards for security guards, including mandatory CPR / AED training.

Families:

The department of Families is responsible for many vital programs that support all kinds of families in a multitude of crucial ways: child care to allow parents to return to work or

school, child welfare services for children and families in need, critically-important community living and disability services, and many more. We urge the government to prioritize these needed programs and supports:

- Provide Manitoba's women's shelters with a badly needed increase in funding to account for rising costs, current shortfalls and unmet needs;
- Review and overhaul the existing funding process for Community Living Disability Services to better resource current service requirements, accommodate reassessment of needs and changes to service levels required over time, and address serious wage gap and other barriers to staff recruitment and retention.
- Partner with the MFL to promote new entitlements for Manitoba workers experiencing domestic violence to employment leave to get help;
- Accelerate implementation of recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry . especially reducing longstanding excessive social worker caseloads to a cap of no greater than 20, as recommended by Justice Ted Hughes . to address serious gaps in Manitoba's child welfare system and ensure the safety, care and security of children and proper safety and support for child welfare workers;
- Strengthen investments in preventative services (including cultural supports) for families to enhance their capacity to care for children and reduce the number of children coming into care;
- Continue working with existing non-profit service providers on long-term funding agreements to enable greater focus on service delivery and attainment of outcomes, and less focus on project-by-project funding applications and other administrative work. Long term funding and goal setting should be pursued without resorting to privatization through Social Impact Bonds, a model that tends to under-serve those most in need, in the pursuit of profit maximization for private financiers.
- Increase the number of publicly-funded, not-for-profit, affordable child care spaces accessible in all regions of the province (including in connection with post-secondary institutions), improve child care subsidies for lower income families,

improve accessibility to outdoor green spaces for children, and expand service times to accommodate parents working evening, night and weekend shifts;

- Expand licenced before- and after-school programs to engage children and enrich learning opportunities; and
- Work with communities to deliver programs that support diversity, fight discrimination and violence, and assist equity seeking groups in the workplace, home, community and society at large.

Jobs, Infrastructure and the Growth:

Now, more than ever, Manitobans are looking for leadership from the provincial government in creating good jobs, building critical infrastructure and supporting strong economic growth. We recommend that Budget 2017:

- Prioritize the creation of good jobs and keep investing to tackle Manitoba's significant infrastructure deficit;
- Commit to a phased-in raising of the minimum wage to a living wage level so that low income Manitobans working full-time can at least afford their basic needs and live with dignity;
- Reconsider the government's new policy against the use of Project Labour Agreements (PLAs), as these agreements have proven successful at delivering high quality and high value projects, built safely by skilled labour, on-time and on-budget;
- Reconsider Community Benefit Agreements as a model for providing lasting socio-economic benefits in First Nation and other communities;
- In partnership with labour, local Aboriginal communities and the Town of The Pas, work to ensure the continuation of good paying forestry sector jobs in northern Manitoba;
- In dialogue with Town of Churchill, labour, Aboriginal communities and other northern and port stakeholders, work with the federal government on strategies to save the Port of Churchill and expand economic opportunities, including resuming federal ownership of the port.

- Develop a plan to ensure that proper communication services, including cellular service, are available in remote areas of the province to assist in dealing with health and safety needs, other emergency situations and regular day-to-day social and economic requirements;
- Move forward with the review of funding for cultural institutions, such as the Manitoba Museum, with an eye to ensuring adequate capital and operating support for these important establishments;
- Lobby the federal government for the resumption of door-to-door mail service for Manitobans who have lost it, and encourage the development of postal banking and other opportunities to sustain a strong national postal service.
- Engage with the federal government to develop national strategies for new and expanded green jobs, including a national transit strategy, and a national energy strategy.
- Ensure that all government workplaces are equipped with proper recycling options in support of occupational environmental responsibility.