



Manitoba Budget 2018

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Manitoba Federation of Labour

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The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is pleased to provide this submission on priorities for the 2018 Provincial Budget. The MFL is Manitoba's central labour body, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress, and represents 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 2018 focus on:

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

We are deeply opposed to your government's cuts to front-line services in our province and the harmful impacts they will have on working people in our province. All Manitobans count on healthcare, education, and social services to be there when they need them.

Manitobans know that cuts and privatization are not the answer. The Provincial Government needs to make strategic investments to protect and enhance the services delivered proudly by our dedicated public-sector workers. Manitobans are disappointed by your abandonment of your election promise to protect front-line services, and your decision to put the bottom line ahead of people and the services that Manitoban families count on.

And we have learned recently that this government plans to cut the civil service by 1200 jobs over the next few years. That is not an approach that will protect the services that Manitobans count on.

Overly aggressive vacancy management has already resulted in staffing levels for many core services being dangerously inadequate, compromising service levels and outcomes for families who depend on them. And the provincial government continues to erode its own revenue base by borrowing \$110 million over three years to run-up the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, contrary to the intent of the Fund.

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

Health Care

As part of Budget 2018, we recommend that the government prioritize health care services that families depend on, and look for opportunities for improvement, like the following:

- Reverse your government's decision to limit healthcare services and access in Winnipeg and commit to reopening emergency rooms that have or are planned to be closed at the Victoria General Hospital, the Seven Oaks General Hospital and the Concordia Hospital, as well as reopening the Urgent Care Centre at Misericordia;
- Invest in continuing to build Manitoba's comprehensive, universal public home care program rather than continue down the dangerous path of privatizing home care services evidenced by your government's recent decision to contract out services to two Ontario-based for-profit corporations;
- Work in partnership with other provincial and territorial leaders to push the federal government on developing a National Pharmacare Program similar to

Canada's universal healthcare system, which the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently reported would save Canadians approximately \$4.2 billion annually;

- Work with healthcare unions on establishing Union Bargaining Councils, similar to the Employer Bargaining Councils established in the Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act, to take over responsibility for bargaining to support and respect healthcare professionals in their demanding work and respect the democratic decisions already made by health care workers about their current union representation;
- 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, including reversing decisions to cancel PCH projects in Lac du Bonnet and Winnipeg;
- Resist imposing a new healthcare tax on Manitobans and any further cuts to Manitoba's healthcare system;
- Commit to reopening the 18 emergency medical services stations that the government is closing in rural Manitoba;
- Fully restore free outpatient occupational and physiotherapy services for Manitobans who require them;
- Significantly increase the number of midwives working in Manitoba to help meet the enormous unmet demand for critically-important midwifery services;
- Strengthen investment in public mental health and addictions services, with a focus on improving accessibility and reducing stigma;
- 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; and
- 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.

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 2018, we encourage the Manitoba government to:

- Continue investments with SAFE Work Manitoba on public campaigns to raise awareness and strengthen prevention programming;
- Develop new resources to support psychologically healthy workplaces;
- 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 2018 place a strong focus on education by:

- Supporting high quality public education for all Manitoba students;
- Reversing this government's plan to increase the costs of tuition by five per cent plus inflation each year and completely deregulate course-related fees, decisions which will add hundreds of dollars of new costs on families and students each year;
- Opposing KPMG's recommendations to make college and university less accessible and affordable to low-and-middle-income families by freezing grants to post-secondary institutions and cutting programs;
- Increasing provincial support for post-secondary education, on a multi-year and predictable basis;
- Ensuring 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;
- Strengthening Manitoba's apprenticeship system, with a focus on preserving and strengthening training integrity and safe working conditions;
- Recognizing Powerline Technicians as a Red Seal trade in Manitoba and utilize the standard 1:1 apprentice: journey person ratio;
- Establishing 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
- Strengthening 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 important programs and supports:

- Take concrete steps to reduce the waiting list for child care spaces by increasing 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;
- Reconsider your government's Social Impact Bonds scheme that will see private corporations profit from the provision of social services, relied on heavily by the most vulnerable in our province. Manitoba is fortunate to have the in-house expertise within the public and non-profit sectors to deliver high-quality social services right here in Manitoba, and there is no need to outsource the financing, planning and evaluation of social programs to wealthy consultants and corporations;
- 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, without resorting to privatization through Social Impact Bonds;
- Resist acting on KPMG's misguided recommendation to privatize social housing, which would put the goal of private profit over the needs of low-income Manitobans, which would only increase the number of people forced to go homeless, and offload additional costs on the healthcare system. Low-income

Manitobans need investment in quality affordable housing, not cuts and privatization;

- Provide Manitoba's women's shelters with a badly needed increase in funding to account for rising costs, current shortfalls and unmet needs;
- Reverse this government's cruel decision to slash Rent Assist subsidies that hurt some of the most vulnerable people in our province and fully restore support for those Manitobans who need it most;
- 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 rights to employment leave Manitoba workers experiencing domestic violence in order to get the help they need;
- 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; and
- Expand licenced before- and after-school programs to engage children and enrich learning opportunities.

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 2018:

- Prioritize the creation of good jobs and keep investing to tackle Manitoba's significant infrastructure deficit, including taking full advantage of joint federal funding opportunities for cost sharing infrastructure projects;
- Commit to a phased-in increase of the minimum wage to a living wage level of \$15-an-hour in order to lift low income Manitobans working full-time above the poverty line, enabling them to be able to at least afford their basic needs and live with dignity;
- Re-institute openness and transparency regarding considerations of public-private partnership (P3) funding models for capital projects to protect Manitoba taxpayers against the higher long-term costs that P3 funding models have created in other provinces;
- Reconsider this government's expression of interest in pursuing private sales of legalized cannabis, and instead institute a public model for the sale of legalized cannabis and distribution, which is the most responsible way to ensure safe sales, as well as quality service, strong public education, and good family-supporting jobs;
- Ensure transparency regarding this government's plans for all revenue related to carbon pricing and legalized cannabis sales;
- Restore the Province of Manitoba's share of municipal transit costs back to 50 per cent in order to limit the negative impacts the government is already causing to transit service in Manitoba communities, including the City Winnipeg;
- Reverse this government's decision to freeze the wages of security guards and allow for mandatory wage increases as set out in legislation;
- Reconsider the government's 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 partnership with the Town of Churchill, labour, Aboriginal communities and other northern and port stakeholders, work with the federal government to reopen rail service to the Town of Churchill and on strategies to save the Port of Churchill and expand economic opportunities, including resuming federal ownership of the port and rail line;
- Work in partnership with the City of Thompson, labour, and business to develop proactive solutions to protect mining sector jobs and municipal services in Thompson;
- 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 and the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 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; and
- Support Manitoba Hydro in building valuable hydro-electric resources to create good jobs, keep rates low for Manitobans, and stimulate economic growth, while maintaining publicly-owned energy efficiency programs.
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