



ALLAboard:

Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy

In Manitoba, we believe that all people deserve a high quality of life and the opportunity to realize their potential. **Taking action to reduce poverty is the right thing to do.** In this time of economic uncertainty, we have an opportunity to merge our goals of stimulating the economy, supporting the workforce and tackling poverty. Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that people are supported to succeed in life.

Over the past ten years Manitoba has achieved significant success in reducing poverty. Given the current global economic challenges, it makes sense to review this work and reconfirm our commitment to poverty reduction. With **ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy**, the province can more effectively build on this success and strengthen the programs and initiatives currently in place.



Reducing poverty helps all Manitobans prosper

A 2008 study found that 40 per cent of Manitobans felt they were always one or two paycheques away from being poor. Because poverty prevents people from reaching their full potential, we must collectively work towards reducing the effects and eliminating the causes of poverty. By creating economic conditions for all people to flourish, we ensure a strong future for our province that includes a strong labour market, less crime and better health. To be effective, our poverty reduction strategy must focus on education and training, early childhood development, healthy families and communities, and the labour market. We must ensure our plan supports individuals and Manitoba as a whole, including individuals in urban centres, rural areas, and Northern Manitoba. **ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy** is both a strong poverty reduction plan and a strong economic plan. We must work together to accomplish our goal of continuously reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion.

Framework and vision

ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy envisions a future where people are socially included, connected to their communities, participating in the economy and contributing to our province. Poverty is complex and goes beyond having enough money to live each day. A poverty reduction strategy should create the conditions that allow people to participate fully in society as valued, respected and contributing members. Everyone benefits from a society that helps all individuals prosper. We believe that there are four pillars to reduce poverty and promote prosperity:

- **safe, affordable housing in supportive communities**
- **education, jobs and income support**
- **strong, healthy families**
- **accessible, co-ordinated services**

Manitoba recognizes that poverty is not only about money; it is about social exclusion. Social exclusion occurs when individuals, families, or communities face poverty-related problems, such as unemployment, poor housing or family breakdown. These issues tend to keep them from the benefits, resources and opportunities they may find from participating more fully in their communities and reaching their full potential.

Values and guiding principles

- We understand that poverty is about more than money alone.
- Poverty is complex and requires long-term solutions that get at root causes.
- We must focus on building policies and programs based on evidence and invest in what works.
- We recognize that people face unique challenges related to gender, race, culture and ability.
- We need a multi-faceted approach: preventing people from falling into poverty; reducing the number of people living in poverty; and improving the lives of those living in poverty.
- We recognize the importance of improving the lives of those living in poverty as they transition between and away from supports.
- We need to build partnerships with other governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities and individuals.



Progress so far

Manitoba has taken important steps to reduce poverty, creating many successful initiatives. Child poverty has been reduced by 40 per cent since 2000 – a significant achievement. Manitoba has the third lowest poverty rate of all provinces for children and adults. But there is still more work to do.

A strong foundation

Universally accessible health care and education are two major pillars in Manitoba society for social inclusion. These pillars allow everyone to have access to basic services. Within these universal programs there are special initiatives targeted to provide inclusion for vulnerable groups. In addition, Manitoba has many other programs and supports in place to help reduce poverty. Some key programs and initiatives:

- **Rewarding Work** helps low-income people get and keep jobs by increasing the benefits of working, over receiving welfare.
- **Employment Manitoba** helps individuals prepare for, return to, find and keep jobs.
- **Family Choices** child care agenda emphasizes improved access, universality, affordability and quality child care.
- **Healthy Child Manitoba** works across government to create the best possible opportunities for Manitoba children and their families.
- **Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative, Manitoba Council on Aging, Elder Abuse Strategy, Aging in Place, and SafetyAID** – promote the health, independence and well-being of all seniors.
- **Changes for Children** is strengthening and improving the child and family services system.
- **HOMEWorks!** is an affordable housing initiative.
- **Closing the Gap** is our 10-year initiative to reduce the gaps in the well-being of Aboriginals, compared to non-Aboriginals.
- **Adult Learning and Literacy** helps people complete high school or upgrade courses to pursue higher education. It also supports a province-wide literacy strategy.
- **Neighbourhoods Alive!** and other Community Economic Development programs and initiatives support community based initiatives that build neighbourhood capacity, enhance physical conditions, support the local economy and improve safety and well-being.
- **Northern Healthy Foods Initiative** in rural and Aboriginal communities supports community projects that promote nutrition and increases access to healthy food.
- **Improvements to the tax system** provide increased support to low-income Manitobans. Together with lower rent, childcare and utility costs, our lower taxes make this province among the most affordable places to live in Canada.
- **Pay day loan regulations** protect borrowers from potentially abusive industry practices. The laws will help people avoid becoming deeper in debt while repaying their loans.
- **Manitoba Hydro's Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program** supports energy efficient retrofits in homes to save energy, lower energy bills and improve the quality of housing.
- **Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative** includes a continuum of training interventions and supports to enable northern Aboriginal residents to prepare for jobs on approved and proposed northern hydroelectric projects.





Next Steps

We must focus on groups of people and communities who are at high risk and who are at “trigger points” in their life cycles. This includes times of major life changes, such as when people become adults, have children, lose their jobs, lose their partner or become sick. **Manitoba is committed to strengthening our efforts on poverty reduction every year.** This year, the **ALLAboard: Manitoba’s Poverty Reduction Strategy** with over \$212 million in new investments, will build on our foundation of programs to reduce poverty through:

Safe, affordable housing in supportive communities

- Adequate, affordable housing is critical if individuals and families are to move out of poverty. Strategic investments in housing will stimulate the economy, promote community and economic development, enhance social well-being and improve our infrastructure for future generations. Budget 2009 saw the largest ever investment in social housing totaling \$387 million. Manitoba will be unveiling a long-term housing vision.
- This year, hundreds of homes for older Manitobans and families will be built across the province. There will also be major renovations at four Manitoba Housing sites in Winnipeg, one in Brandon and one each in Neepawa, Dauphin, The Pas and Swan River.



- Manitoba will be developing housing projects for homeless individuals, which will be accompanied by outreach and support services to maintain a stable tenancy. Based on a *housing first* approach, these services will connect people to permanent housing and health and social supports. In addition, a homelessness prevention strategy will be developed with community stakeholders over the coming year.
- There will be increased funding for community safety to provide more Lighthouses programs; an expansion of the SafetyAID program for low-income seniors; and increases to the successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program.
- Manitoba is introducing a Portable Housing Benefit project, which provides increased access to private market housing and support services for individuals with mental health issues.
- Manitoba will continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to provide a range of housing options with support services for Aboriginal Manitobans, immigrants, seniors, persons with disabilities, homeless individuals and those suffering from mental health issues and addictions.

Education, jobs and income support

- Manitoba is going to create good jobs and prepare people for those jobs using strategic investments to stimulate the economy and provide effective training support. Budget 2009 provided increased funding for programs and initiatives that focus on training, education and improved skills. These include Career Trek, the Bright Futures Fund, literacy and apprenticeship programs and the Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative.
- Rebound is a new program that helps workers who have been displaced by the current economic downturn. Initiatives include direct job referrals, training, financial support, links to infrastructure, literacy and other essential skills upgrading and development of “green” jobs that support a healthier environment.
- There will be a renewed focus on improving graduation rates, particularly in northern Manitoba. There will also be a new Northern Aboriginal Youth Internship pilot program that will provide 25 students in northern Manitoba with support to graduate from high school and find work.
- Employment and Income Assistance will explore potential changes that increase employability. It will continue to focus on asset building programs like Manitoba Saves!
- Manitoba has committed to increases in property and personal tax credits and the Manitoba Shelter Benefit.
 - Minimum wage increases are an important part of any poverty reduction strategy. A reasonable minimum wage helps keep Manitoba competitive. It also allows lower-income individuals to earn more money. The Manitoba government makes regular increases to the minimum wage, balancing employee needs with the employers’ ability to pay. The minimum wage was \$6 an hour on Dec. 31, 1999. As of May 1, 2009, the minimum wage is \$8.75 an hour. A further increase on October 1, 2009 will bring the rate to \$9 an hour.
 - *marketAbilities*, a program under the Rewarding Work strategy, helps people with disabilities find and keep jobs. The program also includes a public awareness campaign about the advantages of hiring Manitobans with disabilities.



Strong, healthy families

- Family Resource Centres will be created in three new community schools in low-income neighbourhoods. They will provide numerous supports to help children grow and develop and to help their parents.
- Manitoba will continue with the next stage of the Family Choices child care agenda and with Phase 2 of Tracia’s Trust, Manitoba’s strategy to reduce sexual exploitation. Manitoba also continues to fund the Changes for Children initiative, which works to keep children safe through a renewed focus on family support and prevention and early intervention programs.
- Building on the successful Full Citizenship strategy for persons with disabilities, Manitoba will be announcing a new province-wide strategy for persons with disabilities in 2009.
- The creation of a Healthy Foods Action Fund will help communities develop solutions to food security issues.
- Two new Rewarding Work pilot programs – the Parent Wellness Initiative and Recreational Opportunities for Children – will be announced. They will focus on mental health support and increased opportunities for children at risk.
- Increased funding to the Family Violence Prevention Program will allow expansion of the At the Root program and enhancements to women’s shelters for renovations and safety measures.
- The Manitoba Child Benefit provides monthly benefits to low-income families to assist them with the cost of raising children. This benefit ensures that parents will not lose all support for their children when moving off welfare.



Accessible, co-ordinated services

- To provide easier access to government and community support, Manitoba is developing a strategy to provide individuals and families with information on support and services. Manitoba Family Services and Housing will be developing the first part of this strategy: ServiceLink. It will be an online tool to help Manitobans identify what benefits and services they may be eligible for.
- MY TEAM - Manitoba Youth Transitional Employment Assistance Program is a new, innovative, responsive, pilot project to help youth who no longer receive services through the child welfare system because they have turned 18. It will provide access to support services to build brighter futures for young people who otherwise face barriers to success and are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Manitoba provides integrated, one-stop access to employment and training services in 16 Employment Manitoba Centres across the province.
- Career Development Initiative and Career Development Gateway are new initiatives that improve accessibility to supports and services. Through this initiative the province provides single-window access to quality career development resources, programs and services.

A strategy for all Manitobans

ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy is a poverty reduction strategy for everyone in our province. However, a number of our programs and initiatives are targeted towards certain high-risk groups. If all Manitobans are to prosper, the unique needs of these key groups must be met. Women, newcomers, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal Manitobans face complex, multiple risk factors that demand more support to enable these groups to participate fully in society. We are committed to closing the quality of life gap that separates some Manitobans.

Strong partnerships

Our strategy depends on co-ordination and collaboration across provincial government departments. Integrated services and easy access require us to work together to reach the common goal of a prosperous Manitoba.

For the **ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy** to be truly successful, the economy will need to show continued long-term growth and the federal government must be a willing partner. We need the federal government to do its part by building on recent investments, such as the *Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Agreement*. Non-insured, Aboriginal, and low-skilled workers need improvements in access to education and training. We also need to partner with the federal government to increase child care funding, work with homeless individuals and increase investments for affordable housing both on and off reserves.

The effectiveness of our poverty reduction strategy also hinges on our ability to partner with business, non-profit agencies, First Nations and Métis directly as well as with municipal governments, such as the City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council. **Moving forward to reduce poverty will take a collaborative effort.** We're all in this together.

Demonstrating progress

To measure our progress on poverty reduction, we will track key indicators from the **four pillars of the strategy**. When taken together, they will provide a true picture of our province's progress.

Indicators could include the following examples:



1 Safe, Affordable Housing in Supportive Communities

Indicators:

- Number of affordable housing units built and renovated (contracted to build and in progress)
- Participation in SafetyAID and Lighthouses

2 Education, Jobs and Income Support

Indicators:

- Market Basket Measure
- Graduation rates – provincially and by region
- Census labour force statistics for at-risk groups
- Number of EIA participants moving into work
- Employment Manitoba employment outcomes of participation
- Unemployment rates

3 Strong, Healthy Families

Indicators:

- Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores
- Percentage of children 12 and under for whom there is a regulated child care space
- National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY)
- Teen pregnancy rates

4 Accessible, Co-ordinated Services

Indicators:

Increased participation of:

- Prenatal Benefit
- Manitoba Shelter Benefit
- Manitoba Child Benefit

Our goal is to continuously reduce poverty and increase social inclusion.

Co-ordination and monitoring

The **ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy** will be monitored by a new interdepartmental working group that will report to a new Ministers' Poverty Reduction Committee. This working group will help co-ordinate the many activities across government, improving effectiveness while working together strategically to ensure success.

Stakeholder input

Feedback from key stakeholders will play an important role in guiding the work. Over the coming months, a variety of sectors will be consulted to ensure this strategy makes sense. We will invite more partners to participate as we move forward together. Our goal is to continuously reduce poverty and increase social inclusion.

The success of this strategy depends on a strong, steady economy and the commitment of our partners, particularly the federal government. It is going to be hard work, but we are committed to taking action against poverty.

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