

Budget Paper E

**REDUCING POVERTY
IN MANITOBA**

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■ REDUCING POVERTY IN MANITOBA

Manitoba's growing economy is creating opportunities. More Manitobans are connecting with training, jobs, better housing, and stronger, safer neighbourhoods – important resources in combating poverty. These measures help reduce poverty and are working.

Manitoba had the largest reduction in poverty for single-parent families in Canada between 1999 and 2004. The rate of single female parents living on low-incomes declined from 59.1% in 1999 to 37.1% in 2004 – an improvement of 37%. The child poverty rate has improved by one third, dropping from 18.9% in 1999 to 12.8% in 2004, which is Manitoba's best national ranking since 1989. Manitoba has the lowest average annual number of people on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) in 20 years, with almost 10,000 fewer people needing income assistance than in 1999.

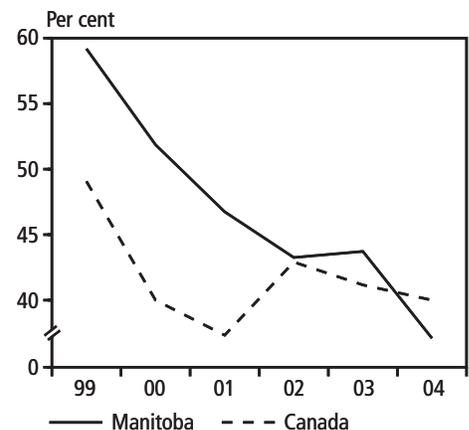
The provincial government recognizes the paramount importance of providing education opportunities, accessible child care, fair income support programs and other initiatives to serve as effective springboards to employment and greater independence. Budget 2007 introduces "Rewarding Work" – a new four-year plan to refocus the low-income support system to help more people gain employment and higher incomes. This new plan focuses on enhancing opportunities for education and training, expanding employment, making work pay for families, easing the transition from welfare to work and helping people retain jobs.

Issues surrounding poverty and low-income families are complex and involve personal, economic, social and systemic factors. The Manitoba government has consistently worked with other governments and community organizations, as well as across government, to develop and implement a range of programs and policy approaches to help low-income earners become more independent and tap into the Province's economic well-being. Employment is the most effective means of combating poverty. However, the necessary supports and services need to be available to those for whom employment is not a realistic option.

Manitoba's cross-sectoral, cross-departmental approach looks to strengthen neighbourhood communities and families, and provide individual Manitobans with access to the many training and job opportunities that are available.

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Reductions in the Incidence of Poverty Among Single Female Parents



Source: Statistics Canada

In 2004, the Manitoba government fully ended the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement, putting nearly \$14 million each year back into the pockets of low-income Manitoba families.

Children and Families

Access to quality child care encourages and supports parents who are looking for and maintaining employment. Quality child care also contributes to healthy child development. Since 1999, funding for Manitoba's early learning and child care system has more than doubled. The 107% increase has helped provide 6,668 newly funded spaces across the Province, bringing the total number of funded child care spaces in Manitoba to 23,108. Wages for early childhood educators have increased by 21% to help recruit and retain qualified workers.

Manitoba introduced its first five-year child care plan in 2002 to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of early learning and child care across the province. In 2005, the governments of Canada and Manitoba negotiated and signed an agreement to provide new multi-year funding for child care and early learning. Manitoba is disappointed with the Government of Canada's decision to withdraw from the 2005 agreement. However, Manitoba is firmly committed to ensuring quality child care is available for parents and families who need it, and will continue to call for a long-term sustainable federal investment in early learning and child care. Under the agreement, Manitoba received \$23 million last year, but based on the recent federal budget, it appears that Manitoba will only receive \$9 million for 2007/08. Budget 2007 increases the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million to backfill for withdrawn federal funds to ensure that the promises made to Manitoba families and communities are kept.

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Healthy Child Manitoba, a nationally recognized body that leads government departments and community partners on the well-being of children, continues to make a positive difference. Programs include:

- literacy, nutrition and parenting supports at 26 parent-child coalitions around the Province;
- the Healthy Baby prenatal nutrition benefit, helping over 25,500 low-income women as of December 2006;
- Families First, a community-based home visiting program providing support for families and children from conception to kindergarten, at no cost; and
- Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) supporting parents by providing practical parenting information, advice and support.

Poverty is a significant factor in the issues that bring some families into contact with the child protection system. In October 2006, the government partnered with the four First Nations and Metis authorities responsible for the delivery of child and family services. They announced the launch of an action plan called *Changes for Children: Strengthening the Commitment to Child Welfare* to improve the Province's child and family services system. The plan implements the recommendations of three external reviews of the child and family services system and is being guided by the work of an implementation team to ensure there are meaningful systemic changes. The action plan also includes an initial investment of \$42 million over three years in the priority areas of workload relief, training and prevention.

- Workload Relief and Front-line Support provides \$11.5 million over three years for up to 150 new positions; computer-system upgrades to help effectively monitor and track child case loads; enhanced governance and information sharing; emotional and counselling supports for caregivers and workers; and continuing action on fostering, suicide prevention and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- Hiring additional professionals to develop and strengthen standards, prevention measures, early intervention programming, and design and implement training initiatives.
- Early intervention services provides \$22 million over three years for troubled families before problems become crises and children are mistreated.

Making fostering more attractive is the first stage of a new recruitment campaign and part of the *Changes for Children* action plan. As of January 2007, rates for foster parents increased more than 23% over 14 months. The \$6.1 million strategy to increase support for foster parents and children includes increases of 36% for recreation, camps, gifts and lessons for foster children.

In January 2007, a strategy was launched to strengthen supports for youth who are aging out of the child welfare system at age 18. Youth participation, mentorship and financial assistance are the focus of the action plan, which includes:

- establishing the Vision Catchers Fund to encourage youth to pursue careers by supporting high school completion, accessing post-secondary education and training, and developing special talents and skills;
- creating a mentorship program with young adults who have successfully aged out of the child welfare system to provide other youth with support and guidance;

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ACCESS Centres and Integrated Service Sites

The Manitoba government has worked with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to integrate certain health and social services in community ACCESS Centres. ACCESS Centres provide a single point of access for a wide range of health and social services, including primary care. ACCESS River East opened in March 2004 and ACCESS Transcona opened in June 2006. Plans were recently announced to build a new ACCESS Centre in northwest Winnipeg.

Other integrated health and social service sites have been opened in Winnipeg, including two in St. James-Assiniboia, one in St. Boniface/St. Vital via the Bilingual Service Centre, and one each in River Heights/Fort Garry and Seven Oaks. These sites provide a comprehensive set of health and social services, but do not include primary care services.

Budget 2007 continues to invest in areas that benefit women including child care, housing, safety and transportation.

- fostering youth involvement by increasing support to organizations such as Voices! Manitoba's Youth in Care Network, a youth-driven program providing support, encouragement and advocacy for youth making the transition to independence; and
- providing services for youth on a longer-term basis as more youth remain in care beyond the age of 18.

Stronger laws are now in place that provide more tools to collect child support, ensuring more children receive the financial support they are owed. These measures have helped encourage 45% more parents to pay full support for their children through the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

Women and Poverty

Across Canada, women are more likely than men to live in poverty and experience longer and deeper spells of poverty. Aboriginal women, visible minority and immigrant women, women with disabilities, single female parents and unattached senior women are particularly affected by poverty. While Canadian low-income statistics consistently show a gender gap, the portion of Manitoba's low-income population that is female dropped from 59.6% in 1980 to 52.2% in 2003.

Male-female pay equality has improved in Manitoba, with female workers earning nearly 90% as much as men. Wages for women have increased almost 22% and men's average wages have increased 10.5%. The narrowing wage gap can largely be attributed to pay increases for women in industries such as the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sectors, health care and education.

Supports such as the Healthy Baby Program, launched in 2001, help mothers during pregnancy and the early infant years by providing

financial assistance and nutrition education. The Healthy Baby Manitoba Prenatal Benefit helps income-eligible pregnant women meet their extra nutritional needs during pregnancy.

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Manitobans with Disabilities

Manitoba is committed to supporting the dignity, quality of life and opportunities for persons with disabilities. In 2001, the government released *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*. This vision paper presented a philosophy for responding to the needs of people with disabilities and outlined five priority issues for government: income supports, employment, disability supports, access to government and issues affecting Aboriginal Manitobans with disabilities.

The government is actively addressing these five priority areas. For example, commitments have been made on such issues as removing barriers to employment, providing disability supports for training programs and improving consultation with the community of people with disabilities.

The following are some accomplishments to date.

- A rapid re-enrollment policy within the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Program, which provides financial assistance quickly if an employment opportunity for a person with a disability has not succeeded and the individual needs to resume benefits.
- The earnings exemption allows participants to retain up to \$115 of net monthly earnings for single parents with disabilities, and \$100 for other persons with disabilities. It also allows them to retain 30% of net monthly earnings in excess of these amounts, recognition of the higher employment costs required for persons with disabilities.
- Manitobans with disabilities, who receive funds such as an inheritance or life insurance, will not have their EIA benefits reduced if they set up a trust fund for disability-related equipment or services to improve their quality of life. These trust funds can accumulate up to a lifetime limit of \$100,000 per person with a disability.

The federal government has recently announced plans for a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). Manitoba is supportive of an initiative that encourages asset-building and financial independence for persons with disabilities, and will co-ordinate provincial programming so income assistance participants with disabilities will also receive this benefit. It is similar to measures Manitoba already has in place. For example, Manitoba

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already allows EIA recipients to set aside these kinds of trust funds to contribute to the quality of life for people with disabilities, without affecting their EIA rates. Manitoba also supports savings for similar programs for the future, such as Individual Development Accounts.

The Disabilities Issues Office continues to work with government departments and community partners to implement the commitment made in *Full Citizenship*.

Closing the Gap for Aboriginal Peoples

The Manitoba government has committed to reducing the persistent gap in well-being between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This commitment extends to areas of education and early childhood development, housing and infrastructure, relationships and accountability, health and well-being, and economic opportunities.

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council, made up of business and labour leaders, has highlighted the importance of Manitoba's growing Aboriginal population in a growing economy. This focus has helped make Aboriginal training, employment and business development a significant part of major capital projects like the expansion of the Red River Floodway and the construction of the Wuskwatim hydro-electric dam.

The \$60 million Canada-Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro pre-project training initiative has provided training for almost 1,200 First Nations and Metis people. As Wuskwatim and, in the future Conawapa develop, there will be increasing need for trained workers. Wuskwatim also represents a unique partnership with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. There are currently 200 people working on Wuskwatim, two-thirds of whom are of Aboriginal descent.

Aboriginal education supports are increasing through programs such as ACCESS, the Aboriginal Midwifery Education Program at the University College of the North, and training for licensed practical nurses in seven Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal Education Action Plan goal is to increase high school graduation rates, encourage post-secondary education and connect young Aboriginal people with employment opportunities. Investments in the University College of the North and support for bursaries, such as the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation and the Millennium Manitoba Opportunities Grant, help deliver positive results for the Aboriginal community.

- Aboriginal student enrolment in universities and colleges is up 77% and 59% respectively since 1999.
- Aboriginal apprentice enrolment has tripled since 1999.

- The number of employed off-reserve Aboriginal people rose 30% between 2001 and 2005.

Other partnerships in health care are working too. The development of the new renal centre at Island Lake demonstrates how all levels of government can work together with First Nations to provide an important health care service for the 10,000 residents in the Island Lake area. Manitoba has the only two on-reserve dialysis machines in Canada – Island Lake and Norway House.

Other initiatives developed in partnership with Aboriginal people include the Northern Development Strategy, the Aboriginal Education Action Plan, the Aboriginal component of the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, and Manitoba Hydro revenue sharing and training partnerships with First Nations. These initiatives provide more development opportunities for this rapidly growing segment of Manitoba's population.

Budget 2007 funds several key areas which will help support the commitment to closing the gap. This includes ongoing investment in education to support Aboriginal academic achievement, a new young Aboriginal entrepreneur initiative to assist with business development costs and investments in roads in northern Manitoba.

Better Start for Newcomers

Since 1999, federal and provincial funding has almost quadrupled for settlement services to help new immigrants make Manitoba their home. It is expected to be over \$17 million in 2007/08. A new approach to settlement and integration will support a wide range of services and programs throughout the province such as:

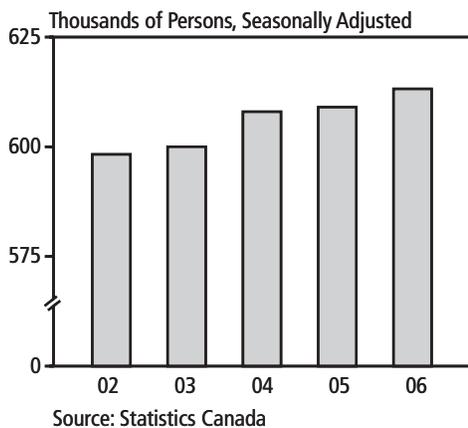
- improving the delivery of settlement services by responding to the needs and priorities identified by immigrants and service providers, while strengthening community involvement in helping immigrants settle and succeed in Manitoba;
- developing new models of English as an Additional Language services and training, including specific language training geared to work as well as general language training to ensure faster integration of immigrants into Manitoba's labour force and community; and
- increasing support for Manitoba's Qualification Recognition Initiative to better assess and recognize the valuable qualifications immigrants bring to the province.

In 2006, Manitoba exceeded its target of attracting 10,000 new immigrants each year and committed to a new target – to double the number of new immigrants settling in Manitoba over the next ten years. Manitoba's

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Manitoba Labour Force



Provincial Nominee Program continues to fast-track the arrival of skilled immigrants to Manitoba. Successfully attracting new immigrants requires effective settlement services to help immigrants put down roots in Manitoba and make it home. Other services such as language training, labour market integration, credentials recognition and ethno-cultural initiatives that celebrate the economic, social and cultural contributions that new immigrants make to Manitoba are another important component of the government's immigration commitment.

Support for Employment and Training

Manitoba continues to enjoy one of the lowest unemployment rates across the country, with a rate of 4.3% in February 2007. There are jobs opportunities, but unemployed Manitobans and those enrolled in Employment and Income Assistance may not have the necessary skills to take advantage of them. Budget 2007 will help more Manitobans tap into the job market by providing more employment and training opportunities, and other incentives for low-income people.

Education continues to be a key economic development tool for the Province. Education and training can help connect Manitobans to jobs that improve the quality of their life. Funding for public education has increased every year. Manitoba's high school graduation rates have increased by 10 percentage points in the past seven years, from 73% in 1999 to 83% in 2006.

The 10% tuition reduction for universities and colleges, in place since 2000, is making post-secondary education more accessible and affordable, and supported a one-third increase in enrollment. The government has recently introduced a 60% tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba. The new rebate makes post-secondary education an even higher-return investment and encourages youth to put down roots while establishing their careers in Manitoba.

The government has undertaken a number of initiatives to increase education and training opportunities, particularly for groups that face barriers to joining the work force.

- Since 1999, the economy produced an average number of 6,514 new jobs in Manitoba each year, up from the average of 3,067 from 1990 to 1999.
- The Canada-Manitoba Manitoba Hydro pre-project training initiative has trained close to 1,200 people for work on hydro-electric dam projects, such as Wuskwatim in Northern Manitoba.
- The minimum wage has been increased seven times in Manitoba since 2000. This is a 33% increase that sets the minimum wage at \$8 per hour as of April 1, 2007.

- A more equitable workers' compensation system has been introduced, improving benefits for many injured workers.
- The Province has recently committed \$45 million to enhance the new University College of the North (UCN) capital facilities in The Pas and Thompson, and to establish two new regional centres in Grand Rapids and Oxford House. Budget 2007 also provides funding to link 14 regional centres, nine of which are in First Nations communities. The regional centre network allows UCN to bring more educational opportunities to more residents across Manitoba's north.
- Income assistance recipients seeking employment have more training support, extended child-care subsidies and can keep more of their earnings before their assistance levels are affected.
- With its last budget, Manitoba made a record three-year \$60 million funding commitment to universities and colleges. Budget 2007 strengthens this commitment, providing an average funding increase of 7% for universities and colleges this year. New graduate scholarships have also been provided, along with new funding for bursaries.
- Career Trek Inc. continues to support innovative programs to help young people from under-represented families complete high school, pursue post-secondary education and create a better future. Its mission statement is: Stopping Poverty through Education.

Education, training and partnerships with other governments, businesses and community organizations help connect low-income Manitobans to employment.

Income Support

The Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Program is a program of last resort for individual Manitobans and families in financial need. The intent is to help people become financially independent and find employment as soon as reasonably possible. The program looks at ways to provide for citizens in need and help people make successful transitions to work.

- Participants with disabilities, and single parents who are working and not receiving cash assistance, are still eligible for extended health services for up to 12 months to ease the transition to employment. The Province is looking to enhance the extended health provisions over the next three years.
- Families with children under age six, who receive EIA benefits can receive the full federal Universal Child Care Benefit without affecting their income assistance levels. This benefits more than 10,000 young children, and provides low-income families with more than \$10 million per year.

Income assistance recipients seeking employment have more training support, extended child care subsidies and can keep more of their earnings before their assistance levels are affected.

The Rewarding Work initiative will help families with low incomes take advantage of the Province's economic prosperity.

- Manitoba restored the National Child Benefit, ending the claw back of this benefit from families in the EIA program and providing them with nearly \$14 million more per year in disposable income.
- EIA recipients living in Manitoba's northern and remote communities are benefiting from increased rates that recognize and help offset the costs of essential goods and nutritious foods. This compliments a transportation pilot project to lower the cost of bringing supplies to northern communities.
- The Northern Energy Cost Benefit increased monthly income assistance in 2006 by \$25 per home and affected approximately 2,000 households in northern and remote areas of Manitoba. It helped offset the increase in the cost of basic necessities due to rising energy costs, including fuel to transport goods.
- In 2001, northern, rural and urban hydro rates were equalized throughout the Province, ensuring fairness and equality in access to this important resource.
- Manitoba is partnering with SEED Winnipeg on asset-building programs, such as Individual Development Accounts. These provide money-management and matched-savings for the purchase of economic assets; such as education, a first home or business capital. These asset-building accounts, as well as Registered Education Savings Plans and Canada Learning Bonds, allow Manitobans to save for a specific goal, without affecting income assistance benefits for participants.
- The Building Independence Program develops and supports activities that promote job opportunities and enhance the employability of EIA participants. It provides tools such as child care and voice mail services, job readiness assessments, and links to training and employment.

There are almost 10,000 fewer people receiving income assistance than in 1999, the lowest in almost 20 years. Still, many Manitobans need support to become gainfully employed. The Rewarding Work initiative will help families with low incomes take advantage of the Province's economic prosperity. The four pillars of the new four-year plan are:

1. Enhance Employability – improve the employment skills of participants so they are better equipped to find and keep sustainable employment.
2. Encourage Work – provide incentives for participants to find employment and increase hours of work, reducing dependence on assistance.

3. Ease the Transition to Employment – ease the transition of participants from welfare to work and reduce the fear associated with leaving the security of income assistance.
4. Enhance Employment Retention – support low-income workers already in the labour market and encourage them to remain employed by reducing the “welfare wall.”

Specific initiatives include:

- Manitoba Child Benefit – provides more money for low-income working families to help with the costs of raising their children. For families on income assistance, a separate Child Benefit will replace a portion of their existing child-related assistance. This is a significant step in breaking down the “welfare wall,” ensuring that families have support for their children when they move from income assistance to work;
- a new Manitoba benefit which will complement the federal government’s newly announced Working Income Tax Benefit program. This will help the transition from welfare to work;
- help with new expenses that come with a job are now available, including a new transportation allowance and an increase of \$25 per month (January 2008) for persons with disabilities, childless couples and singles;
- increase education and training opportunities, including a new pilot project offering longer-term training supports, increasing support for Vocational Rehabilitation Services, promotion of high school completion and doubling the Rural Jobs Project; and
- job retention supports are being enhanced.

Strengthening Community

Strong communities and safe neighbourhoods contribute to the quality of life for all Manitobans. The Manitoba government has developed a range of unique partnerships with community organizations. They encourage and support the commitment of Manitobans to invest in their neighbourhoods and promote community well-being and economic development.

Neighbourhoods Alive! is the provincial government’s long-term, social and economic development strategy. It supports and encourages community-driven revitalization efforts in designated older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. These neighbourhoods may be experiencing significant social, economic and environmental challenges such as high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime, as well as a lack

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of adequate recreation, family support, affordable housing and economic opportunities. Neighbourhoods Alive! helps with physical renewal such as housing, local economic development and improvements to safety and well-being. Budget 2007 expands Neighbourhoods Alive! to Dauphin, Flin Flon, The Pas, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk.

Other partnerships supported by the Province include:

- SEED Winnipeg's Build a Business and asset-building programs, and community financial service centres all provide business and financial services to Winnipeg's inner city and north-end communities.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson harness the ideas of local residents and help put them into action.

The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative helps northern communities gain access to nutritional foods and become more self-sufficient through local production of healthy food. The program is a partnership with the Northern Association of Community Councils, Four Arrows Health Authority, Bayline Regional Round Table, Frontier School Division, and a number of First Nation communities and Northern Association of Community Councils in Northern Manitoba. It has been supporting efforts to promote traditional gathering, harvesting of country foods, and building family and community gardens. In 2006, there were 300 community gardens.

In Winnipeg's Centennial neighbourhood, local residents are taking action to revitalize their community through innovative home retrofit projects. This year, community-based energy efficiency projects will be expanded to other neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, Brandon and the four First Nations of the Island Lake region.

In 2006 Manitoba passed payday loan legislation that requires payday loan companies to operate within a comprehensive regulatory framework. The legislation will help protect borrowers against high fees and industry practices that contribute to the debt spiral that borrowers can encounter.

Manitoba is committed to community economic development principles that expand on traditional forms of economic development and contribute to the well-being of neighbourhoods and the people who live there.

Manitoba has implemented shelter support programs geared to housing costs and family income to help families obtain adequate housing.

Safe and Affordable Housing

Access to safe, affordable, appropriate housing is vital to Manitobans, including seniors, people with low-incomes, Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities. Manitoba has implemented shelter support programs geared to housing costs and family income to help families obtain adequate housing. Federal-provincial-municipal partnerships are also providing more stability and security for individuals and families by building new, affordable housing units and improving existing housing across the Province. Since 2000, the Province has invested over \$100 million in partnerships to repair, renovate or build 4,900 affordable housing units.

Budget 2007 includes \$7.8 million for the Manitoba Shelter Benefit. It combines and expands on previous shelter benefits provided under the Shelter Assistance for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program and the Shelter Assistance for Family Renters (SAFFR) program. The new benefit is also available to persons with disabilities, including some who receive income assistance, low-income seniors and families needing help to pay rent for private housing.

There are several active programs underway to provide safe, affordable housing for Manitobans.

- The Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative is a partnership between the governments of Canada, Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg to address homelessness, declining housing stock and the revitalization of Winnipeg's older neighbourhoods.
- Manitoba's share of the profits from the development of Waverley West will be invested in further improvements in Winnipeg's inner-city housing, resulting in more variety and greater housing choices for people at all income levels.
- The governments of Canada and Manitoba have each contributed \$36.9 million for a total of \$73.8 million to the Affordable Housing Initiative in Manitoba. Manitoba has been working with other levels of government to develop safe and affordable housing for families with low and moderate incomes, including new energy-efficient infill homes in Winnipeg's inner city and affordable rental housing in a number of communities in Manitoba.
- The establishment of family resource centres at some Manitoba Housing Authority (MHA) sites helps improve tenant-support services. These family resource centres operate like drop-in centres and provide programming to tenants such as public-access computers, employment-skills training, job interview preparation, conflict resolution, crisis

counselling, parenting for teens, a toddler's group, community kitchens, a craft co-operative and community dinners. They can also offer opportunities for work experience.

- Low-income seniors in St. Vital are benefiting from over \$2 million in funding from the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative to build a supportive housing and assisted living apartment block as part of the Riverside Lions Seniors Residences Inc. project. The building will be a fully accessible five-storey, 75 unit apartment building. It will feature 48 supportive housing studio units for seniors with early-stage dementia/Alzheimer's and 27 one-bedroom units offering assisted living for seniors.
- Low-income residents of Winnipeg's inner city also have access to more affordable housing with the construction of pocket suites through a new pilot project developed by S.A.M. (Properties) Inc. in collaboration with several community organizations. The project is being funded with over \$1 million from the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Pocket suites are smaller than an apartment but offer more privacy and other features not available in a typical rooming house, such as an individual bathroom, a kitchen unit and some furniture.

Budget 2007 introduces a new, robust multiyear housing strategy with supports for:

- inner city revitalization
- homelessness
- urban Aboriginals
- northerners, and
- seniors

This strategy will be implemented with the assistance of the federal Housing Trust and will include:

- developing housing options for the inner city including infill housing, co-operative family housing, rental/transitional housing, rent supplements and improvements of publicly owned housing stock;
- engaging community organizations and other levels of government in a long-term strategy for people at risk of being homeless;
- introducing a new off-reserve program for Aboriginals, in both urban and rural areas of Manitoba, to help provide new affordable housing options;

- providing additional rent supplements, developing new publicly owned housing stock, increasing investment in preventive maintenance for existing stock, and developing new options for rehabilitation and ownership for residents of Northern Manitoba; and
- funding the development of new supportive housing units, and rent supplements for seniors as part of the government's Aging in Place strategy.

Conclusion

The Manitoba government has successfully made a difference in priority areas including:

- reducing poverty for children, women and families
- providing more opportunities for Aboriginal people
- ensuring people with disabilities have the opportunity to develop their potential in the workforce
- connecting more Manitobans with educational and job training opportunities that pave the way for a brighter future
- providing a positive start for newcomers
- expanding child care and affordable housing

Building on that success is an ongoing effort. The government recognizes there is more work to be done in reducing poverty and is committed to exploring, developing, and implementing programs and policies that help more Manitobans seize the opportunities offered by a vibrant, dynamic and growing economy.

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