



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

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Ending Poverty, Our Collective Responsibility: 2019 Manitoba Throne Speech

Yesterday, Manitoba released its Speech from the Throne - the provincial government's plan for the next couple of months while they're in the Legislature making decisions.

Ending Poverty in Manitoba is a collective responsibility - one that deserves to be on the top of the priority list for any government plans. Poverty hurts communities.

We know that many instances of violence, theft, and crime in Winnipeg recently, and in the past, stem from the root cause of poverty and social exclusion. We will not stop crime without addressing the root causes. **To address crime, we have to address poverty.**

We know that for many, poverty is a cycle, emanating from the intergenerational traumas of colonization and the genocide of Indigenous peoples, which can be passed down between generations unless there is adequate support for basic needs, healing, and a hand up out of poverty. Poverty is a pervasive reality in our province - one that that impacts us all, whether first hand or because we share this community called Manitoba.

We know that austerity (cuts, cancellations, and favouring the rich & powerful) has made income inequality in Canada and Manitoba grow rapidly over the last three decades. And, while cuts have served to reduce budget expenditures in the very short term, poverty is costly - putting a

burden on health, policing, justice, and families budgets. Austerity costs, poverty costs.

We know that the impact of climate change will disproportionately affect low-income and Indigenous communities in our province, and will greatly alter our economy impacting urban, rural, and Northern Manitobans.

We also know that our communities are resilient, strong, and resourceful. But, to really make a dent in the cycle of poverty in this province: we need the provincial government.

We need our provincial government to prioritize ending poverty with key investments, programs, proactive solutions and tackling root causes, and addressing the climate crisis head on through a just transition.

We need to see this plan as a keystone of any Manitoba throne speech.

It's the only way we can make sure that everyone in our communities are included.

What We Really Needed from the Throne Speech

In the upcoming legislative session, Manitoba should immediately revise its poverty reduction strategy, committing to a bold target and timeline within a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to reduce poverty and social exclusion in Manitoba. Addressing poverty through a

there is an alternative.

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comprehensive strategy is a key pillar to reducing crime, tackling the climate crisis, and strengthening Manitoba's economy.

We can't end poverty in Manitoba without a whole-of-government plan, connected to key economic, social, and environmental goals. Bold targets and timelines focus attention on what is to be achieved and by when. By setting goals, targets and timelines, there is a better chance that a policy will succeed and meet established outcome targets.

We believe Manitoba should commit to action on the following five priorities that are based on broad community consultations and stemming from the community-written poverty reduction plan, *The View from Here*. These key policies will have the greatest impact on both addressing the depth and root causes of poverty, and in affecting the widest number of people experiencing poverty. Manitoba should look to all the recommendations in the View From Here to implement as part of a renewed poverty reduction strategy.

We have reviewed our five priorities against the Throne Speech, knowing that we await many more details from the upcoming Legislative session and spring budget.

1. Social Housing:

What We Need: Build at least 300 new social housing units annually for five years.

What We Got: Housing was only mentioned once in the Throne Speech, in relation to helping seniors age-in-place. While this is absolutely an important part of affordable and social housing in Manitoba, it is disappointing to not see a greater emphasis placed on housing, particularly reducing wait list for social housing units in Manitoba - a cost-effective method of reducing poverty and homelessness.

2. Livable Basic Needs Benefit:

What We Need: Increase the basic needs allowance for Employment and Income Assistance recipients to a level

that will satisfy basic needs and support human dignity by creating a portable Livable Basic Needs Benefit.

What We Got: Manitoba has committed to creating a new income program for Manitobans with long-term disabilities, in response to calls from the highly successful community mobilization through the Disability Matters Vote campaign. We will continue to monitor the consultation and design process of this policy area as consultation begins this week.

Employment & Income Assistance (EIA) rates for all Manitobans are too low, and remain much lower than what's needed to make sure everyone, including people with disabilities, single adults, seniors, and/or parents/families, can meet their basic needs. The welfare wall, a term that refers to the barriers that folks face transitioning from EIA into meaningful employment, remains insurmountable without rates that allow people to meet their basic needs, and supports for those who are willing to transition to the labour market.

3. Mental Health:

What We Need: Double the funding allotted to community-based mental health services for low income Manitobans.

What We Got: The provincial government promises to improve and enhance mental health and addictions services based on the recommendations of the Virgo report, and by the Illicit Drug Task Force and the Community Wellness and Public Safety Alliance. New programs include an acute medical sobering facility staffed by mental health professionals, supportive recovery and a 24/7 drop-in centre, and 12 new treatment & waiting spaces at HSC in Winnipeg for those suffering meth psychosis and other serious addiction and mental health issues. To address the needs of mental health and addictions throughout the entire province, we need to greatly increase the funding allotted to community-

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based mental health services and programs, particularly for low-income Manitobans.

4. Child Care:

What We Need: Create at least 17,000 subsidized, not-for-profit childcare spaces with priority in low-income neighbourhoods

What We Got: Capital grants will be extended now to the private sector, however the fees for these spaces are not regulated and so will be too high for low & moderate income parents. Additionally unless more capital funding is available, then this will stretch an already limited budget to the private sector as well. There was no announcement of an end to the freeze on operating funding for non-profit child care centres, the majority of child care providers. The province announced a new Portable Child Care Benefit for lower income families, if they can find a spot. It is unclear if this will mean subsidized child care for low income families will be clawed back.

5. Minimum Wage:

What We Need: Raise the minimum wage to a poverty line wage of \$15.53 per hour. **What We Got:** Minimum wage was not mentioned in the Throne Speech. While the throne speech maintains the government's commitment to creating 40,000 jobs, the plan to help transition adults who are willing to work into meaningful employment remains unclear, as well as supports for employment intermediaries, training opportunities, community economic development, and cultural supports so that folks are able to maintain and thrive in a working environment.

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