

# Change Starts Here

## What is an Alternative Budget? Hint: it was born in Winnipeg

Democratic budgeting process blends fiscal and social responsibility

Rylan Ramnarace  
@rylanram

The first Alternative Provincial Budget was released in 1991 by the Winnipeg-based group Choices, and this exercise continued annually throughout the 90s. Since that very first budget, Choices and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) have

(jointly and separately) released alternative budgets at the municipal, provincial and federal levels across Canada.

After Choices disbanded in 2002, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) undertook the responsibility of releasing alternative budgets. However, a Manitoban Alternative Provincial Budget hasn't been released since 2006, making the 2020 budget the first in 14 years!

"At the simplest level, budgets are



The Alternative Provincial Budget process involved community consultations, like this one held at Meet Me at the Belltower.

statements about how much money a government or agency plans to spend, what it plans to spend that money on and how it plans to raise it," John Loxley writes in *Alternative Budgets: Budgeting*

*as If People Mattered.*

As a result of these choices, governments will either run a deficit, balance the budget or accumulate a surplus.

*Continued on page 3*

## A catalyst to counter COVID-19

Welcome to the Alternative Provincial Budget newspaper

Molly McCracken  
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A year ago, community groups and academics got together to make a budget for Manitoba as if people and the planet really mattered. They wrote policy briefs in 20 areas where the province could make a real difference in people's lives.

*Change Starts Here: Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020 Report* was launched before the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has demonstrated how interconnected we are, and how we need a system-wide response to protect everyone's health and well-being.

The challenges presented by COVID-19—the need for a quality health system, a strong social safety net and protection for vulnerable and working people—shows that the ideas presented in the APB matter more than ever.

The virus brings a whole new set of challenges as we do everything we can to flatten the curve. It also reveals the stark inequities in our communities: those with sick leave and those without, those with savings and those without, those who can afford to stock up on food and those who can't, those who can work from home and those who can't.

These differences existed before COVID-19—what this pandemic

*Continued on page 3*

## How affordable housing and social welfare reform can break the cycle of poverty

Social housing and a Liveable Basic Needs Benefit could help many Manitobans

Luke Thiessen  
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If you've travelled through Winnipeg's downtown in the past year, you may have noticed the major construction happening on a highrise at 185 Smith Street.

The building is a former Manitoba Housing facility, sold to a private property management company in 2018. Some housing advocates see this building as an unfortunate portrait of the current provincial government's shift in attitude toward affordable housing in Manitoba—a new strategy that involves privatizing more housing to address rising costs.

Al Wiebe, chair of the Lived Experience Circle, says the province needs to find a better way.

"Many people can't afford their rents," Wiebe says. "Then it's food or rent, and when you can't afford both, eventually you get kicked out."

Wiebe says we need to see more affordable and social housing, whether through public, nonprofit or co-operative housing—something that the private sector just cannot provide.

"We need rent geared to income, and that only works if the housing is subsidized."

In its Alternative Provincial Budget (APB), the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba office, calls for just that. Recommendations include



Trainees at BUILD learn patch and paint techniques.

maintaining all existing housing stock, and a push to increase supply through the public, nonprofit or co-operative housing sectors.

The recommendations also include income supports and reform to social welfare, both to ensure housing security for low-income households and to eliminate disincentives to work and the so-called "welfare wall."

Wiebe says there's one change that seems obvious.

"A simple solution that costs the system nothing is reforming the clawback rate. That would certainly help subsidize people on the income side."

The APB outlines a new, scaling system of support called a Liveable Basic Needs Benefit (LBNB). Rather than a static clawback of 70% for those on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) earning over \$200 of outside

income, the LBNB would scale to allow people finding employment to keep a larger portion of their income while moving toward financial independence.

As a person with lived experience of homelessness and coming up through the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) system, Wiebe says it's important to address the barriers to getting out of its cycle.

"It puts you in that mindset where you're constantly struggling, because you can't get ahead, you can't get off. It keeps you trapped, it's a vicious cycle, a hamster wheel of poverty."

He says reforming the clawback is perhaps the most important step toward breaking that cycle.

"If you're on the edge, that little bit makes all the difference."

According to the APB recommenda-

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# Budget for people and the planet

## Change Starts Here: Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020

Lynne Fernandez  
@LynneFernandez

One of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative, Manitoba office's most rewarding projects is putting together alternative municipal and provincial budgets.

This year, many community and academic volunteers came together to participate in a democratic process to make this budget. They created a comprehensive collection of policy papers embedded in a fiscal framework that mirrors the government's budget.

Volunteers analyzed their area of expertise, explained the current state of affairs, examined government budgets and considered input gathered in community consultations held around Manitoba.

Our 2020 Alternative Provincial Budget (APB), *Change Starts Here*, challenges politicians and decision-makers to make different choices about where revenues come from and how they are spent. We believe that if we dare to think differently, we can seize this opportunity to enact the policies in the APB—policies that would provide quality public health care, education, childcare and transportation.

At the same time we can do something about the big problems of our age: inequality and climate change.

### The Pieces of a Green New Deal

As the APB explains, "we cannot confront climate change if we continue sep-

arating programs for economic growth and job creation on one hand, and environmental protection on the other. We need to integrate priorities that maintain a habitable planet while providing stable, decent livings for working people. This integration has most recently been captured in the notion of a Green New Deal."

Our budget capitalizes on advantages such as Manitoba Hydro and Efficiency Manitoba, our strong social economy sector, local businesses acumen and dynamic economic development strategies emerging in First Nations—like Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation—to show how a Green New Deal could roll out in Manitoba.

We have all the elements we need. All that's required is government leadership to put them together.

There's no better way to lead than with a bold budget that energizes all these sectors while putting thousands of Manitobans to work in decent jobs.

But rather than leading the province towards solutions, the government is implementing an austerity agenda that adversely affects all but the wealthiest Manitobans.

Whether it be through corporatization of our post-secondary institutions, dramatic cuts in health care and K-12 education, restricting access to Crown lands, or making it harder for vulnerable people to access decent housing, Manitoba is becoming a more difficult place to live. All this is happening on the heels of the premier's promise to make Manitoba the most improved province.

In fact, Manitoba's economic indicators have gone from being the strongest in Canada to being average at best. An obsession with debt reduction and tax cuts over a willingness to grow our economy through the sorts of investments the APB recommends means that our natural, capital and human resources are not being used to their full potential.

### Inequality and Social Marginalization

The APB takes bold action to help Manitoba's most vulnerable. We increase the supply of social and affordable housing and reverse the changes that disqualify many low-income renters from the Rent Assist program. These changes would also help low-income renters who have lost hours or their jobs due to COVID-19.

The APB converts Employment and Income Assistance to a Liveable Basic Needs Benefit. This move is paid for by small net increases in middle- and upper-income taxes and has a dramatic effect on low-income Manitobans' lives. The lowest income household could see more than an \$8,000/year increase.

Child welfare program spending is increased and implemented in such a way as to continue the process of devolution. The APB increases spending on a variety of strategic program supports while quitting the use of social impact bonds to fund programs.

The APB restores four years of frozen child-care operating grants and increases unit funding by 49 per cent. We see how important child care is to workers providing essential services during COVID-19. Child care promotes school readiness, builds healthy communities, helps reduce poverty, creates jobs, helps parents work and contributes to the life-long health of children.

The APB plans for long-term economic and social benefits by restoring and increasing spending in many areas.

Spending needs to be restored in health care (including public health, mental health and addictions programs and hiring nurses), K-12 and post-secondary education, the civil service, agriculture and municipal and rural infrastructure.

Spending needs to be increased in food security, arts and culture, safe housing for those escaping gender-based



violence and supports for newcomers and the disability community.

The APB divests in the justice system and re-invests funds to help those trapped in the criminal justice system leave, while freeing up funds to deal with homelessness, poverty and addictions.

The strength of our budget is the way the recommendations in one area complement those in others. Training and investment for the north are rooted in community economic development and environmental principles that support our Green New Deal strategy and agriculture section. Our food security recommendations support the universal meal program in our K-12 section.

This newspaper is just a taste — please visit [policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020](http://policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020) for the full *Change Starts Here* report.

Lynne Fernandez holds the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba.



### About the Golden Boi:

After standing tall on the Manitoba Legislature for a hundred years, the Golden Boi is finally hopping down to feel the pulse of the community — at a social distance! — and to suggest positive changes for the next century.

**AESES**

**EQUALITY MATTERS**

**AESES SUPPORTS WHAT MATTERS**

Association of Employees Supporting Education Services: Representing support staff workers at The University of Winnipeg, St. Andrew's College, and University of Manitoba.

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## What is an Alternative Budget?

Loxley writes that governments have often used “financial constraints” as an excuse to make cuts to social services such as healthcare or income assistance all in the name of reducing the deficit.

Alternative budgets, on the other hand, provide a different vision of how budgeting can be done by demonstrating that being fiscally responsible and socially responsible are not mutually exclusive.

Alternative budgets make the case that expanding and retaining social services is actually the only way to be fiscally responsible.

Alternative budgets accomplish fiscal responsibility by utilizing bold, innovative strategies and smart revenue generation, among other key attributes.

Additionally, alternative budgets are powerful educational and democratic exercises as they are developed through community participation that helps people understand the budgeting process and put forward their own ideas, some of which will even be included in the final budget.

In this sense, alternative budgets can provide a very important challenge to the status quo ways of doing things, whether it is by challenging government cuts or by making budgets more democratic and accessible.

## COVID-19

reveals is that government responses at a time of crisis are essential: public health directives, legal requirements for paid sick leave, income relief for those who need it, a moratorium against evictions and more.

These measures are even more urgent due to the Manitoba government’s five-year austerity agenda that has cut health services, public services and income transfers to low income people, making them more vulnerable at this time.

In her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, journalist Naomi Klein finds the public disorientation following a collective shock or crisis is used to push through pro-corporate measures that exacerbate inequality.

This crisis is a wake-up call that can be harnessed to protect vulnerable people, workers and the planet, Klein writes. Instead of bailing out big corporations, government support should be used to create a Green New Deal in Manitoba—and we outline how this can be done.

We wrote the APB before COVID-19. It is a resource to guide Manitoba through a recovery that is inclusive and resilient.

*Molly McCracken is the director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba*

## Affordable housing

tion, the LBNB would replace the basic needs portion of EIA, and would also be available to low-income households not receiving EIA. In combination with other provincial and federal benefits, it would raise incomes for all Manitobans closer to Canada’s official poverty line.

The benefit would provide a financial floor allowing every person to meet their basic needs. And as a person or household earned additional income, they could keep more of it to eliminate the current disincentive for many people to find outside work, lifting families out of poverty and bringing more income tax revenue and economic benefit as a result.

Wiebe says new and reformed welfare benefits can help not only to break down the welfare wall, but also to keep people from falling into homelessness.

“When you are in the EIA system, you cannot afford any kind of crisis,” Wiebe says.

Statistics show that people with disabilities are also disproportionately likely to be stuck on EIA, making up 35 per cent of the program’s caseload versus 14 per cent of Manitoba’s population.

The APB makes it clear this population is especially vulnerable, and its recommendations envision a more secure and dignified life for those who face challenges exiting the system due to disability.

# Stable employment can be created in northern Manitoba

## Partnerships and community economic development have proven to be successful

Rylan Ramnarance

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Northern Manitoba continues to struggle with high unemployment and a volatile economy.

As of November 2019, unemployment was at 35.1 per cent, and unemployment in First Nations communities is even higher with it being “typically above 75 per cent,” according to the province’s *Look North Report and Action Plan*. In contrast, unemployment in Southern Manitoba is only around 7.1 per cent—5.4 per cent in Winnipeg.

Employment in Northern Manitoba has historically been contingent on large private corporations, especially in the natural resource industry. This resulted in sudden busts, as once profits begin to dwindle, corporations up and leave.

For example, the Tolko paper mill—which employs 330 of the Pas’ 5500 residents—shut down in 2016, despite receiving millions of dollars in government aid over the last couple of decades. This mill was purchased by Kraft industries, but only after the provincial government agreed to give them a three-year tax break on municipal taxes worth over \$2.5 million.

When they shut down, these corporations also tend to leave significant environmental waste, with the toxic mine waste at Lynne Lake being a prime example.

The volatility of Northern Manitoba’s economy and the high unemployment rate have made it clear that new approaches need to be taken to ensure a more stable economy.

One way to work toward this goal is to diversify the economy so that it’s not so dependent on natural resource extraction. If natural resource extraction is done, it should benefit community members’ long-term interests.

The government should require companies to use pre-existing models such as those used by Manitoba Hydro, which entered into partnership agreements with First Nations communities for the development of the Wuskwatim and Keeyask generating stations.

These agreements helped Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) develop innovative programs at the Atoskiwin Training and Education Centre (ATEC) in order to train workers—many of whom have not had contact with the labour market.

Another strategy is to use a community economic development approach,

which allows community members to democratically control development. This approach could see an increase in social enterprises and would work towards a more inclusive economy. Such a model is being used in NCN.

The Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) increases the amount of money available from the Community Economic Development Fund (CEDF) for the 2020/2021 year including the amount of money set aside for the previous two years when it was under review. In other words, the APB recommends that the budget be increased three-fold from its annual average of \$2.99 million for one year.

The APB provides training dollars to First Nation communities interested in adopting a similar model as ATEC. Funds could, for example, complement money borrowed from the CEDF for environmental clean-up, training in traditional arts or for work in the tourism industry.

As explained in the Justice chapter, Indigenous-led, self-determined restorative justice is an important part of reconciliation. The APB dedicates funding from the divestment of funding in the Justice department to restorative justice programming in the North.

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Welcome

We acknowledge this newspaper was produced on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and on the original lands of the Métis Nation. We are allies with Indigenous peoples and work to advance Truth and Reconciliation in our research and commentary.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba is a charitable, non-partisan research institute active in Manitoba since 1997.

This newspaper is a summary of the fully-costed Alternative Provincial Budget with 20 policy briefings on areas of provincial policy.

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Read the full report: *Change Starts Here: Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020* at [policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020](http://policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020), or call 204-927-3200 to obtain a paper copy of the report for a \$10 donation.

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# Making fiscal sense of the APB

## How Manitoba can turn downward trends around

Jesse Hajer

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COVID-19 will bring the global economy into recession, and Manitoba will be deeply impacted. Tough economic times reduce revenues and put pressure on the province's finances through increased demand for income supports.

Manitoba's position is made worse by the austerity agenda that has dominated the Pallister government. Even before COVID-19, Manitoba's economy was losing its edge relative to the rest of Canada.

Advantages previously held in unemployment, labour force participation rates and employment rates have narrowed or disappeared in recent years. Between 1999 and 2016, Manitoba's unemployment rate was 2 percentage points below the national rate on aver-

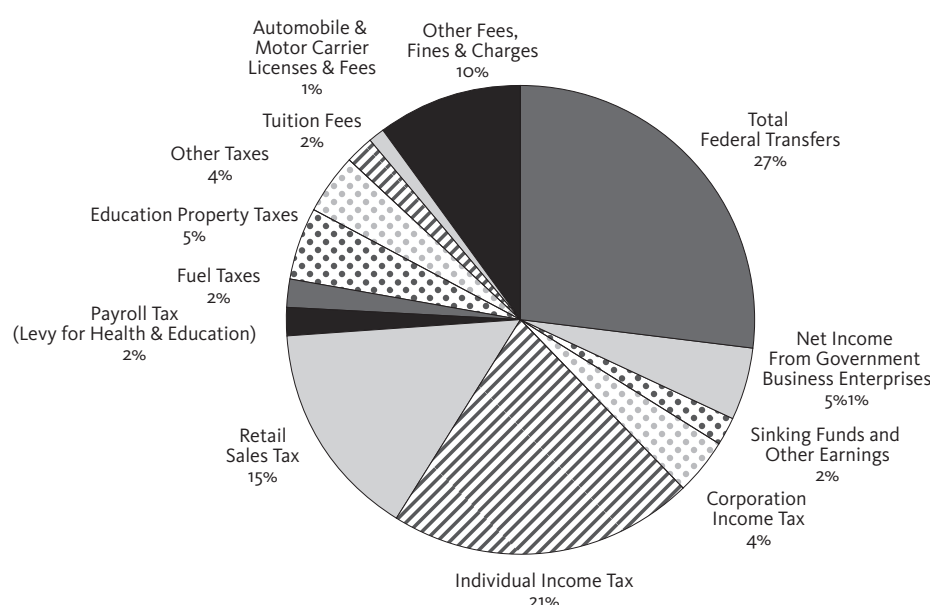
age, while from 2017–2019 that gap fell to 0.4 percentage points.

Job growth in Manitoba is also lagging behind federal trends. Canada had strong job creation in 2019, with indicators suggesting many of these were good, full-time jobs. Manitoba, on the other hand, saw effectively no job growth, with increased part-time employment at the expense of full-time work, and more Manitobans leaving the job market than those entering.

The prospects are not expected to improve anytime soon, with employment forecasts significantly below national projections for 2020.

It isn't just labour market indicators that are heading south. Economic growth rates in Manitoba were higher than the national average four out of five years between 2012 and 2016, averaging 2.3 per cent. This fell to 2 per cent between 2016–2018, and over the last year, Manitoba's economic growth

### Government of Manitoba Revenue Sources as Percentage of Total, Actual 2018/19



# Punishment does not create safety or decrease crime rates

## Funding for fundamental social supports could create better solutions

Tapji Garba

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For the past two decades, the Manitoba government has had a "tough on crime" attitude toward its criminal justice system, as well as increased spending—but that hasn't led to a decrease in crime rates.

Between 2001–02 and 2016–17, the justice budget went from \$304.2 million to \$602.9 million (adjusted to inflation).

Manitoba has the highest adult incarceration rate in Canada. The incarceration rate also reflects racial hierarchies as Indigenous people make up the largest portion of people sent to jail.

Between 2007–08 to 2017–18, the imprisonment of Indigenous men increased by 60 per cent and indige-

nous women by 139 per cent.

Yet this increase in spending and incarceration has not led to a decrease in crime rates. Why have things not changed?

First, the broad category of crime includes vastly different things—ranging from impaired driving to domestic violence—that require methods of resolution other than policing and imprisonment.

Second, the doubling of the justice budget is coupled with a decrease in spending on fundamental social supports such as housing and health.

The decreased funding for public services and community support reproduces the conditions that lead to criminalization, and those who are convicted of crimes have often been victims of crime themselves.

projections have been revised down significantly.

The Pallister government's austerity measures are hurting growth. Falling infrastructure spending by the Manitoba government has been particularly harmful to growth and employment, given infrastructure's strong local and regional economic spinoffs. Major infrastructure projects initiated by the previous government have reached or are nearing completion, leaving a significant gap that the private sector has been unable to fill.

Paired with aggressive cuts to public sector jobs, and broader cutbacks in health, education and social services, Manitoba has faced the highest net inter-provincial outmigration since the 1990s.

Provincial government revenues have declined significantly as a percentage of economic output over the last 12 years, falling from just over 25 per cent to 23 per cent of GDP.

If revenues had been maintained at 2006/07 levels, an additional \$1.9 billion would have been available to the province, more than double the actual deficit inherited by the current government in 2016.

The revenue options to address income inequality and the climate crisis in the Alternative Provincial Budget are as follows:

- Increase the corporate income tax rate by 1 per cent, to 13 per cent (+\$42 million)
- Eliminate the Basic Personal Amount tax credit (+\$898.1 million) and replace with the Liveable Basic Needs Benefit
- Increase PST to 8 per cent (+\$250 million, based on July 1st increase)
- Introduce a provincial carbon Tax (+\$300 million)
- Introduce a Sweet Beverage Tax (+\$75M)
- Increase personal income taxes on higher income earners(+\$253.2 million), including the following changes:
  - increase tax rate on the third tax bracket (for incomes between \$70,610 and \$90,000) to of 18 per cent (up from 17.4 per cent) and
  - introduce a new higher tax rate bracket of 20 per cent on incomes

earned over between \$90,000 and \$100,000 (+\$146.3 million)

– a new higher tax rate of 21 per cent on incomes over \$100,000

If the government invests in strategic infrastructure that can help people and businesses be more productive, this helps Manitoba become more competitive.

Similarly, if the government invests in education, childcare and healthcare, our society benefits and becomes more prosperous—government then has to spend less on future healthcare and social service costs, and more people are working. When more people work, more income tax is paid and the government can pay down debt or have money to invest in programs.

Deficit spending can be used to stimulate the economy during a recession when companies stop spending, lay off employees and those employees stop spending, causing more companies to lose money and lay off even more employees.

Governments around the world will likely introduce stimulus packages in response to COVID-19 and go into debt so they can invest in such a way to stimulate the economy and keep people employed.

As long as the economy is growing at a faster rate than the interest rate that government is paying on their debt, its ability to pay back that debt will grow faster than the debt itself.

In a low-risk developed economy like Canada, this is not a concern, with growth rates well above government borrowing rates, although poor economic performance in Manitoba since 2016 has narrowed this gap.

Manitoba's debt servicing costs as a proportion of GDP have been very stable, at around 1.3 to 1.4 per cent of GDP since 2010/11.

We do not think that government debt should be taken lightly, and that deficit spending needs to deliver a big bang for the buck. But during an economic crisis such as COVID-19, borrowing money today will stimulate the economy and save more money in the future, so it makes sense to borrow.

tive routes to justice and investment in foundational social supports.

\$47 million will be invested in alternative routes to justice and \$18 million will be invested in fundamental social supports.

Of the first \$47 million, \$10 million will be invested in legal aid, \$5 million in building 24-hour safe spaces across the province, \$12 million in harm reduction programs (including public education) and \$20 million in Indigenous-led self-determined restorative justice programs.

The \$18 million left for social support will be invested in affordable and sustainable housing, community-based mental health services, changing EIA into the Liveable Basic Needs Benefit and access to public transit.

The APB offers a route to justice that does not rely on policing and imprisonment, and rejects one-size-fits-all solutions to complex social problems. Investing in supports that would allow communities to attain stability while having their basic needs met shows that "safety is produced by social stability, not punishment and social exclusion,"

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# Tackling climate change and creating jobs: A Green New Deal for Manitoba

Social enterprises are already leading the way for meaningful change

Meghan Mast

@mastmeghan

Imagine we had the foresight to make choices now that would affect the health and well-being of our community in the future. What if we could address the climate crisis while also providing well-paying jobs for Manitobans? The Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) believes all this is possible.

Meaningful climate action and job creation can be achieved, according to the APB, through the combination of a carbon tax increase, an electric vehicle program, a multi-modal transit system and by putting community members to work retrofitting homes.

In fact, some social enterprises in Winnipeg have already proven success with the latter. BUILD is a social enterprise contractor in Winnipeg that trains and employs people who have barriers to employment.

## Retrofits Save Energy and Water

For fourteen years, BUILD has been re-insulating Manitoba Housing's single family dwellings, along with large swaths of the North End, through the Affordable Energy Program and Hydro Rebate Program.

Many of these homes are poorly insulated to begin with, so the retrofits make a huge difference. They took basements and attics with no insulation and brought them up to PowerSmart standards.

Between 2000 and 2011, BUILD and BEEP—its counterpart in Brandon—have together lowered greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2,205 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and saved the province over \$1 million in reduced energy bills.

BUILD was also employed by the provincial government to retrofit affordable housing units with energy efficient toilets between 2006 and 2013. During that time, they retrofitted 6800

toilets, saving \$4 million in water bills and an accumulated 1.2 billion litres of water—enough to drain and refill Falcon Lake several times.

However, as their funding dwindled over the last several years, the social enterprise hasn't been able to make a positive environmental impact the way they once did.

98 per cent of their revenue comes from cleaning up and sometimes renovating apartments to make them rentable again. "Right now that's our bread and butter," said Shawn Hogan, social enterprise manager for BUILD.

## Funding Energy Efficiency

BUILD's team is insulating fewer houses because since the province cut the budget for advertising for them a year-and-a-half ago, not many people know about the programs anymore. Then last year BUILD's funding from the Manitoba Government was not renewed. BUILD is still insulating, but at a much reduced volume of work.

"It would be wonderful if [the province] funded the programming through non-siloed budgets," said Hogan. That way the social enterprise, which had been budgeted under the Education and Training budget, wouldn't just be measured through one category of success.

Hogan believes they could continue to retrofit homes while also improving the carbon footprint of commercial and publicly-owned buildings: "I think the province should explore net-zero retrofits on all public buildings over time."

Housing and building retrofits are labour intensive, so there's lots of room for growth here. The APB recommends using funds to upgrade and replace heating, cooling and ventilation equipment, replace natural gas furnaces and boilers with low-carbon alternatives and increasing the energy efficiency of building envelopes.

This would create an estimated 3500 high quality jobs for Manitobans as well



People gather in front of the Manitoba Legislature as part of the Global Climate Strike on Sept. 27, 2019.

as reduce the GHG emissions by 100 kT of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Groups like BUILD should be supported by a provincial strategy which funds training programs and makes changes to procurement so government purchasing has a social, economic and environmental benefit.

## An Investment That Pays Off

Investments in these social enterprises will ultimately pay off. In 2016 Manitoba Housing, in partnership with four social enterprises and Simpact Strategy Group, found that "for every dollar invested [in a social enterprise], \$2.23 of social and economic value was created." Plus, employing people with barriers to employment also reduces dependency on Employment and Income Assistance.

Another important approach to job creation and climate action is to develop a multi-modal transit system. Currently, about a third of Winnipeg's GHG emissions come from residential vehicles, while another 18 per cent comes from commercial vehicles.

The APB would restore the targeted funding lost under the Pallister government's scrapping of the 50-50 cost-sharing agreement, and further

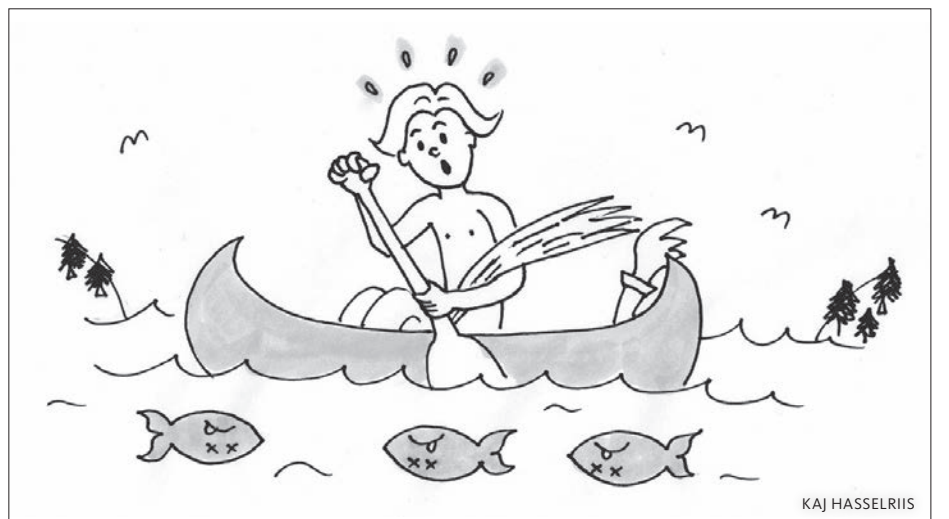
invest to develop a Frequent Service Transit Network to support the low-income bus pass and help finish the Eastern rapid transit corridor. This would generate about 700 good construction and transit operations jobs.

While getting people out of cars is key to reducing emissions, the APB would also offer incentives for buying Electric Vehicles (EVs). Just as B.C. did, Manitoba could offer \$3,000 off the final, after-tax vehicle price for a qualifying new battery electric vehicle, and up to \$1,500 for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle.

Efficiency Manitoba would be required to launch a marketing campaign to educate the public on EVs, similar to what B.C., Ontario and Quebec have done.

Where will all this money come from? Ultimately the shift from Alberta gas to Manitoba Hydro will have positive economic returns for the province. In the meantime, a carbon pollution levy could help fund the initial investments.

If Manitoba wants to get serious about doing their part to address the climate crisis while also creating jobs, the provincial government needs to look at what has worked elsewhere and build upon the successes in our own backyard.



KAJ HASSELRIIS

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## Punishment does not create safety or decrease crime rates

according to the APB.

The current government has recently introduced its own criminal justice reforms with the aim of making the system more efficient and cutting costs. They have reduced the jail population by 11 per cent and have even closed the provincial jail in Dauphin.

While the closure of jails is a good thing, the provincial government's reason for acting is rooted in an austerity agenda, and does not include meeting the needs of vulnerable people. What is needed is social transformation, and the APB presents a workable start.

# CHANGE STARTS HERE

## MANITOBA ALTERNATIVE PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2020

www.policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020

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Art: Megan D. Krause

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# Finding affordable childcare a struggle for Manitobans

Province has frozen childcare spending since 2016

Kaitlin Vitt  
@kaitlinvitt

Thousands of parents in Manitoba have children on a waitlist to get into childcare. But the solution in a one-year budget isn't as simple as opening up more spaces, says the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba office.

More than 16,600 names are on the online waiting list registry for childcare. Childcare spaces need to be added, but the entire system also needs to be stabilized, the CCPA-Manitoba says in its Alternative Provincial Budget (APB). The first step is to spend all money allocated to childcare.

This past year, government funding set aside for childcare was underspent by 5 per cent, or \$9 million. The funding allotted for this sector has been frozen since 2016, which the APB says was too low even then.

Frozen funding means early childhood educators haven't seen an increase in wages and benefits, plus parents have to put more of their own money toward childcare.

In Manitoba, parents are responsible for contributing more than half of the revenue in the childcare sector, the APB says. A middle-income two-parent family in Manitoba will pay about 22 per cent of their net income on childcare fees for two children. A 2018 study by Cleveland Consulting suggests anything more than 10 per cent is unaffordable.

"The struggle to find affordable childcare is real," says Brianne Goertzen, who uses childcare for her five-year-old child. "It is disheartening that our government is clearly looking to further place childcare out of reach for Manitobans."

Goertzen is the vice chair on the steering committee of the CCPA-Manitoba and the provincial director of the Manitoba Health Coalition. She also serves on the boards of Child Care Now and Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, two organizations advocating for publicly funded and quality childcare.

For Goertzen, childcare is necessary—she and her husband work full time and don't have family supports in the province. Ultimately, she would like to see a comprehensive, universal childcare system. She says she thinks the APB is a step in the right direction.

"The children of Manitoba are quite literally the future of Manitoba," she says.

"Research clearly illustrates the social, developmental and emotional well-being of children when receiving quality childcare."

The APB notes that quality and accessible childcare promotes school readiness, helps build strong communi-



ties and allows parents to work, which can help to reduce poverty.

The budget also mentions how inclusive and culturally appropriate childcare is important for Indigenous families and for reconciliation since it promotes equity among children.

"All Manitobans should care about the state of childcare in our province," Goertzen says. "When there is accessible childcare, it allows parents of today to go to work and contribute to the economic vitality of the province."

Though Manitoba's parent fees are the second lowest in Canada, the APB says that this is only because the cost is "astronomical" in other provinces. While a parent in Winnipeg pays \$651 a month for infant care, a parent in Toronto will pay \$1,758 a month, according to a 2017 report by the CCPA.

Full and partial childcare subsidies are available for low-income parents as well as parents and children with social needs. With a full subsidy, parents pay \$2 a day for each child, which the APB says can still be difficult for low-income families to manage.

In the 2019 speech from the throne, the government proposed spending \$18 million each year to give parents cash to pay for childcare of their choosing. But the APB recommends reversing this so that the money isn't possibly spent on unregulated and unmonitored childcare. The CCPA-MB says this money could go toward regulated childcare spaces instead.

Another direct recommendation in the APB is for the government to reconsider the Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit Program, which sets aside \$2.1 million for tax credits for private corporations that invest in new childcare spaces. The APB suggests redirecting this money to non-profits instead.

# A quick guide to budgeting terms

Get to know key words used in provincial budgets

Compiled by Rylan Ramnarace

## Revenue:

The income that is expected in the coming year.

## Expenditure:

The amount of spending that is likely to take place in the coming year.

## Surplus/Deficit:

The difference between revenue and expenditure. If there is money left over, there is a surplus. If expenses exceed revenue, there is a deficit.

## Debt/Assets:

The total value of the organization. If there was a deficit this becomes part of the debt. Assets refer to those items of worth which the organization owns and could sell.

## Debt Servicing Charges:

If there is a debt, interest must be paid on the debt. Making these payments is called servicing the debt. Many lenders do not care if the debt is ever paid as long as you continue to make your interest payments, however interest rates can go up if lenders think the debt is getting too high relative to the size of the economy (see Debt to GDP ratio).

## Crown Corporation, Crown Lands:

A corporation that is owned by the government, a piece of land owned by the government.

## Privatization:

When a Crown corporation or government asset is sold off to a for profit entity e.g. the sale of MTS in the 90s, selling Crown land.

## Social Enterprise:

A business that functions with the financial, environmental and social interests of the community it resides in/serves at heart. Profits are reinvested in the enterprise rather than to shareholders, as occurs in most corporations.

## Poverty Line:

The minimum amount of income considered adequate by the government of Canada to purchase necessities such as nutritious food, shelter, transportation and clothing. (\$36,544 for a family of

two adults and two children in Winnipeg using the Market Basket Measure).

## Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

GDP is an attempt to measure all of the goods produced and services provided within a country, province or city in a given year. Although growth in GDP is seen as a positive, it does not measure who benefits from this growth, nor the negative impact growth may have on the environment.

## Debt to GDP ratio:

The amount of government debt relative to GDP. According to 2019 statistics, Canada's sits at 28.5 per cent and Manitoba's is at 34.3 per cent.

## Colonialism:

Colonialism is the systematic erosion and oppression of Indigenous peoples and their way of life by non-Indigenous peoples, which includes mass displacement.

## Truth and Reconciliation:

Truth and Reconciliation is an attempt to mend the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in part by working to undo the harm caused by colonialism.

## Austerity:

Government policies that attempt to reduce deficits, taxes and the size of government through cuts to government spending.

## Cuts:

Can come in various different forms. Can either be when the government reduces services through funding to a department e.g. healthcare, resulting in the department needing to cut services/staff in order to stay within the allotted budget, or it can take the form of the government failing to keep budget funding increases equal to that of inflation or increases in population.

For example, if inflation is 1 per cent but the budget is held at the same monetary value as the year before, the department will have to make cuts to make up for the 1 per cent funding shortfall. If resources don't increase to meet the needs of a growing population or an ageing population, that too can be considered a cut to services.

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# Hungry Manitobans need poverty-related supports and improved access to food

Addressing food insecurity is an important building block for healthy communities



Ala'a Eideh of Food Matters teaches newcomer participants how to navigate the Canadian food system.

Meghan Mast

@mastmeghan

Our health care systems are broken in many ways, but a valuable place to start improving things is by addressing a key root cause of poor health: food insecurity.

While many people might think of hunger as a global issue, it's a concern many people are struggling with locally. In Manitoba, a large number of people are having difficulty affording food.

According to the Alternative Provincial Budget (APB), nearly one in seven households—and more than one in five children—in Manitoba experience household food insecurity.

Indigenous people, people of colour, recent newcomers, lone-parent households, people with disabilities, those on social assistance and those with low-

paid and unstable work are more likely than others to be food insecure.

Addressing this would improve people's health. The APB outlines that, "people who experience food insecurity are more likely to experience malnutrition, infection, chronic disease, difficulty learning, social exclusion, mental illness and depression."

Increases in diet-related diseases costs the province billions of dollars annually. The cost of diabetes was estimated to be \$498 million in 2010 and is expected to reach \$639 million by 2020. We cannot afford to look the other way.

Rob Moquin, the Executive Director of Food Matters Manitoba, says the best way to address food insecurity in a meaningful way is to tackle poverty.

"When people get to the point where they're skipping meals, it's not an issue of priorities, it's an indication that they

don't have choices in the first place. Hunger is a manifestation of poverty."

According to Moquin and the APB, poverty can be mitigated through income reform and social supports. The APB outlines that existing federal benefits like Old Age Security and the Canada Child Benefit have already shown us this is possible. Federal programs like these, if supplemented with provincial supports, can help, and have improved food security for Manitobans.

The APB also recommends the federal government work with the other provincial governments to create a universal K-12 food and nutrition program, and spend \$500,000 to develop programs and invest in infrastructure that enhances community members' opportunities to grow, prepare, store and share traditional foods.

For urban centres like Winnipeg, the issue is not lack of food but access to food. In Northern Manitoba the causes of food insecurity are more complicated because of availability issues, and the quality is often compromised because of how long it can take for food to reach its destination.

Plus, food prices in the North are significantly higher than in cities. According to the APB, the cost of healthy eating for a family of four is 46 per cent higher in Northern Manitoba than Winnipeg.

To address this, the APB recommends increasing funding for the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative from \$1.247 million to \$5 million so Northern communities can be better equipped to strengthen their local food economy.

In these communities it's important to support local food production, according to Moquin. "There's a lot of

momentum there for that work and a lot of untapped potential," he said.

To offset the costs of all these recommendations, the APB suggests a tax on all sugar-sweetened beverages. Since this would likely disproportionately impact low-income people, it's important such a tax not be implemented in a vacuum, but rather in the context of the larger APB, which includes income support and a revamped tax scheme for low income people.

Ultimately, Moquin acknowledges that these investments will not show results overnight.

"What we'd want to see is patience from the government, that these things take time," he said. "It might not appear that the financial investment is having an immediate return, but this is a long haul."

Improving food security would have a positive effect on Manitobans' health, but our healthcare system still needs attention.

The APB made several recommendations including raising the mandated ratio of patient-to-staff-time at long term care facilities in the province to at least 4.1 care hours so patients can get the care they need and staff aren't overworked.

The APB also advises reinstating Quick Care Clinics in conjunction and expanding important services outside the city of Winnipeg so they can address regional needs.

Ultimately though, these recommendations should be considered within the context of the larger APB because providing affordable housing, as well as addressing poverty, climate change and the racism embedded into our institutions will truly help build our healthy communities.

## Taking care of health

Reinvest in Quick Care Clinics and tackle growing health crises

Brianne Goertzen

@MBHealth2018

The province's austerity measures have led to overworked staff who are stretched too thin. For the health of all Manitobans, it's time for an alternative approach to funding health care.

The effect of health care on public finances is considerable: it's about one-third of the total Manitoba budget, with proposed operational expenditure in the 2019 budget in the amount of \$6.188 billion. The impacts the current system overhaul—including the closure of emergency rooms at Concordia and Seven Oaks, mandatory overtime for nurses, increased wait times and more—are having on patients and staff demonstrate that access to health care continues to be a top issue for Manitobans.

Health care costs will continue to increase due to changing demographics, inflation and population increase. While the federal government must increase their financial support to the provinces, it's important for leadership to come from the province. The Alter-

native Provincial Budget (APB) has a vision for a more robust health care systems for all Manitobans.

Key areas include mental health and addictions funding, investment in medical staff, increases for community-based care, seniors care and considerations of ecological and social determinants of health.

A comprehensive approach to dealing with these key areas will improve Manitobans' overall health while reducing the cascading effects of inaction on individuals.

If the province is serious about addressing mental health and addictions, it must invest in tackling this growing health care crisis. The government should follow the Virgo Report's call for a total investment of 9.2 per cent of its total health care spending in mental health and addictions support. This will address historical gaps in funding and provide much-needed supports and services for Manitobans.

The distribution of these funds must consider regional needs and must ensure that all services are not concentrated inside the perimeter of Winni-

peg. Investment must include culturally appropriate mental health supports for Manitoba's newcomer community.

The APB spreads this investment over three years. In addition to the above increases, it recommends transferring \$12 million divested from Justice adding it to harm reduction spending.

In Manitoba, the percentage of the population that is 65 years of age or older is 15.6 per cent, and pressure on services for seniors will only increase as baby boomers age. The APB invests in publicly owned and operated long term care facilities home care and personal care homes, which are residential homes for seniors who need assistance with daily living.

The APB's public consultations revealed the need to increase hours for those receiving home care so individuals can stay in their homes for as long as possible. It recommends that the government invest in a comprehensive study examining senior care in the province, and specifically identifies how to comprehensively address senior care, including how to increase home care and alleviate the strain on caregivers.

Many people who participated in the APB consultations had accessed our health care system recently. They reported seeing too many stressed-out and overworked staff, including nurses, health care aides and professional technicians.

Understaffing leads to worker burn-

out and negatively affects patient care. Difficulty retaining health care professionals in the north and in rural areas means that understaffing is having a disproportionate impact in remote communities.

The APB recommends that the province recruit more health care professionals with a particular focus on Northern and rural Manitoba. It should also increase the number of nurse practitioners, and the number of training positions in college and university nursing programs.

New and existing staff should have access to cultural competency training. Increases to interpreter services will ensure that newcomer and Indigenous communities receive the care they need.

APB consultation participants voiced clear opposition to the closure of local Quick Care Clinics, including users of the St. Boniface Medical Centre. The APB recommends that the government reinvest in Quick Care Clinics, mobile clinics and access centres in conjunction with the expansion of medical professionals.

As the largest proportion of provincial expenditures, adequate funding in health care includes access to primary and extended care for the diverse populations and regions in Manitoba. The APB reinvests in mental health, seniors' care and staffing to enhance health care in our province.

# Broadening supports for gender-based violence

Safer spaces and more inclusive shelter systems are needed in Manitoba

Lorie English

@lorie\_english

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an epidemic that cuts across all demographics — race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. It's not a new issue facing communities, but it has been a difficult one to both address and resolve.

Because it's accompanied by shame and stigma, this violence often goes unreported. Low investigation rates and even lower conviction rates continue to be deterrents for people to come forward.

In 2012, Manitoba released a Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy, articulating much of the work that needed to happen in order to reduce rates of violence against women in the province. Since that time, levels of funding to the Family Violence Prevention Program have remained relatively stagnant. Funding levels to agencies providing gender-based violence supports are not even keeping pace with rates of inflation.

Many of the recommendations made in the report remain unaddressed. In order to truly tackle the issue of GBV, we must increase investment in both support services and prevention.

In June 2019, *Reclaiming Power and*

*Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* was released, detailing a number of recommendations resulting from the National Inquiry.

Many of the Calls for Justice speak directly to changes that must be implemented in order to reduce the genocide occurring against Indigenous women, girls, trans and Two-Spirit people in Canada. Given that Manitoba has a high number of Indigenous people in the province and Winnipeg has the highest level of urban Indigenous citizens, any efforts to address GBV must be informed by the full findings of this report.

A barrier to accessing support services for people experiencing violence lies in the name and the definition. Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters are equipped to support women experiencing domestic violence — specifically intimate partner violence. Despite attempts to broaden this definition to include other forms of gender-based violence, often these kinds of referrals are declined by VAW shelters.

While it is possible for anyone to be a victim of violence, women, transgender, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people are at a much more significant risk. Across Canada, women are at a 20 per cent higher risk of violent victimization than men. Manitoba has



KARA PASSEY

the second highest rate of gender-based violence among the provinces.

Indigenous women in Canada are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women. Between 2009 and 2014, 342,000 women in Canada were victims of intimate partner violence.

When we apply an intersectional lens to GBV data, we see that trans women are twice as likely as cisgender women to experience intimate partner violence, a risk that increases if they are also people of colour, Indigenous, and/or youth. Immigrant and refugee women are also overrepresented among victims of intimate partner violence.

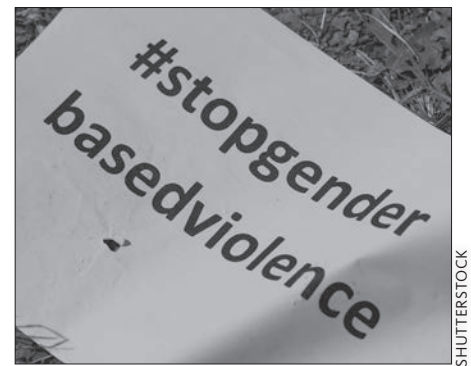
The Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) invests in gender-based violence prevention by providing capital and program funding for a 24/7 safe space that is trauma-informed and inclusive of transgender, Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people as recommended in *Connecting the Circle: A Gender-Based Strategy to End Homelessness in Winnipeg*.

The APB also recognizes that the current shelter system is not designed to meet the unique needs of many women, and that existing shelters are

almost consistently at capacity.

The APB supports a new, more specialized gender-based violence shelter to serve women who are experiencing both violence and homelessness, as they are at high risk of further violence, disappearance and death. This can also be done in partnership with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, as suggested in the Manitoba Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy, to ensure that proper resources are in place to support women who are using substances.

*The preceding is an excerpt from the APB. Read the full report at [policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020](http://policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020).*



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# Full arts budget, full lives

New Access to Arts Committee builds an enriched and representative arts community.

Jessica Seburn

@snakeandflower

Most of us know that life in the arts is not just about wearing smocks and blasting a C Sharp on a plastic recorder. Arts and cultural programming can impact us as individuals, families, communities and as a province.

By encouraging expression through music, dance, theatre, visual art, performance and film, we can build better communities, improve the economy and individual health and wellbeing. In short, a thriving arts and culture community creates a healthy and thriving population.

The Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) illustrates why all of us, young and old, can benefit from an investment in arts and culture.

With Indigenous peoples under the age of 25 being the largest-growing population in Manitoba, a focus on cultural arts from a young age — and on — can help keep families in our province.

One recommendation from the



Tiffany Ponce is an R&B singer from Winnipeg.

NORTHERN TOUCH MUSIC FESTIVAL

APB would be to use \$800,000 of a full \$9.7 million arts and culture budget to improve representation and accessibility.

The APB would create a new access to arts committee, operated through the Manitoba Arts Council, which would prioritize reconciliation and honouring the diversity in our province.

The committee would include at least one Indigenous representative,

someone from the disabilities community and one newcomer to Canada. The \$800,000 would be used to fund operations, hire staff and create a new equity-driven project funding stream.

The access to arts committee will oversee applications for grants and will create programming specifically designed to reduce barriers and cumbersome administrative hurdles.

The current process of arts grant distribution and funding is based on a business rationale, while the new committee format would seek to review projects based on an “underserved rationale.” The committee would seek to be representative first, rather than focusing on what will give the biggest financial payout.

Frances Koncan, an Anishinaabe/Slovene writer, director, journalist and playwright, feels accessibility and representation in the arts community is still a barrier.

“Marginalized artists are already struggling to make work under a system that doesn't want them, and we expend huge amounts of energy that could be used to make work into navigating these organizations and the politics of colonial Canada,” she said.

“We're always stuck wasting our time trying to convince people we have value, and these programs can really help us just focus on the creative work.”

Arts and culture activities support education, help to improve performance in schools and lead to higher graduation rates for lower-income

students. A better-educated population becomes an employed population, which encourages economic growth. Access to arts opens up the possibility for a reduction in poverty rates.

Studies have shown that when seniors are able to access arts and culture activities their overall well-being and feelings of social inclusion increase. Around 15 per cent of Manitoba's current population is over the age of 65, and that number will nearly double in the next 20 years.

An aging population will put a strain on medical resources, but with opportunity for social and art-based activities and programming, there is evidence to indicate a reduction in the need for doctor's visits, reduction in dementia and improved overall mental health.

Access to arts and culture can affect positive change at any age and stage in our lives.

The recommendation for the creation of the access to arts was inspired by *Our Way Forward: Manitoba's Culture Policy and Action Plan* report. The report states the importance of allowing all people “to participate in and contribute to cultural experiences, regardless of their geographic location, ability, age or background.”

Koncan agrees.

“Creative thinking is such a powerful tool and the more we fund it and the more we inspire people to partake in artistic practice, the more we inspire them to be open, amazing critical thinkers who will change the world.”



# Young farmers struggle to break into the industry

Government needs to support local agriculture industry, advocates say

Justin Luschinski

@juschinski

It's almost impossible for young Manitobans to get into farming. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba office (CCPA-Manitoba) aims to support young farmers to help grow the food you eat.

CCPA-Manitoba released its Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) this spring, and addressed many issues facing the farming industry in Manitoba. According to the report, young farmers trying to break into the industry struggle with high land prices and little job security. The average age of a Manitoba farmer is 53.8 years old.

Dean Harder, a board member with the National Farmers Union, said the government needs to step in and help make farming more sustainable.

"There's a new surge of people who are concerned about where their food comes from, there's a new surge of farmers that are willing to develop the soil better than even some of our forefathers," Harder said.

"What does it mean if there are no new farmers entering the field? ... Maybe there's less people who care about the land, less people who care about the nutrition that goes into our food."

Harder added that there are several key factors that discourage young farmers. The initial costs to start a farm are high, while the market price for crops and livestock have dramatically declined over the past few years. According to the APB, for every dollar spent, farms on average spend 81 per cent just to run the operation.

Also, farm sizes have increased dramatically to an average size of 1,193 acres, valued between \$2,344 to \$5,010 per acre. Farmland is largely unaffordable to the average young Manitoban, especially with farming's low income and the risk of losing crops.

There are some provincial programs available to young farmers, such as the Young Farmer Rebate, but Harder said that more needs to be done.

Harder said that unless someone comes from a farming background, there's very little support.

"For example, let's say you're a young farmer who [didn't grow up on a farm.] What you might do is move from the city to the country, meet with people and over time, develop a relationship with one of the older farmers," Harder said.

"They can be mentored. But there's a process, and there's nothing assured other than you hope that they get along. Some of our recommendations give

that process some structure."

Harder said there are several things the government can do to make farming more accessible. The APB calls for the creation of a Manitoba Quota and Land Trust, which will allow retiring farmers to transfer land to a younger Manitoban with some financial benefits, such as certain tax exemptions and annuities.

Harder also calls for an official farmer-to-farmer mentorship program, which will facilitate those relationships and help young farmers break into the industry.

According to the APB, Manitoba's farming economy is consolidating into larger farms. As of 2016, Manitoba has 14,791 farms, which is a 46 per cent loss

of farms since the mid-80s.

Although Manitoba has the largest portion of young farmers under the age of 35 at 10.8 per cent, the number of farmers over the age of 55 has increased to 52.1 per cent.

Harder says many of these changes come from increasing corporate control over the food system. Federal and provincial policies tend to maximize trade and food exports, which means that import/export companies are taking a large cut of Manitoba farmer's dwindling revenue.

Harder highlighted that the report calls for a local food strategy to be implemented. This will encourage more organizations to buy local, which supports rural economies.

Demian Lawrenchuk of Food Matters plants seedlings with a young northern Manitoba girl.



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# Revisioning expectations for Manitoba's education system

New visions are necessary for K-12 education, post-secondary and newcomer services

Alexandra Neufeldt

@AlexEJNeufeldt

After evaluating the budget scenarios for the education sector, post-secondary sector and newcomer services sector, the Alternative Provincial Budget (APB) has identified many areas where government investment could make a big impact for many young and vulnerable Manitobans.

You may have heard Brian Pallister argue against funding school meal programs, but those programs are already providing vital support for students, and the APB team proposes that a \$15 million investment in meal programs could make a huge difference for many Manitoban families.

Among the recommendations that the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS) made to the Province's K-12 Education Review, "meaningful and concrete action to mitigate student poverty" was ranked by the MTS as being among the most important. School meal programs can both provide important nutritional support for students and release some financial tension experienced by parents.

Currently, many school nutrition programs are in dire need of funding and unable to provide enough food to

address students' needs. Funding formal nutrition programming for all students is not only very achievable within the provincial budget, but also an effective anti-poverty measure.

The Government of Manitoba has also been slowly cutting its funding for operating school costs while enrollment rises and class sizes grow. The APB suggests reinvesting that lost funding back into schools, and putting a class size cap on Kindergarten to Grade 3 classes to ensure that students and teachers are getting both the funding and the quality time needed to succeed.

The APB's proposed support doesn't stop at elementary and secondary schools—it also aims to provide stability for post-secondary schools. Since 2016, roughly \$13 million has been cut from university operating budgets, but by restoring that funding, universities can work towards greater financial accessibility for students, greater stability and resources for staff and less corporate influence in research.

Justice in access to education is a key goal of the APB, which means increasing bursaries for Indigenous and rural students and regulating fees for international students.

International student fees are typ-



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The APB suggested re-investing in school meal programs, which are vital for many Manitoba families.

ically three to four times those of domestic students, and due to federal regulations, international students can work at most 20 hours per week. With international students contributing over \$400 million per year to the Manitoba economy, bringing these students into the public healthcare system and regulating and limiting international student fees are an essential part of the APB, as well as the only decent course of action.

While the APB aims to provide greater stability for international students, providing better resource access for all newcomers is also part of this budget's goal.

In 2019–2020, the Province invested \$3.1 million into organizations that help newcomers to settle in Manitoba, but because of restrictions on federally funded services, there is a real need for more investment in the sector, "including targeted programs for youth, parents, and refugees with disabilities," the APB states.

Funding for language programs is especially important, because most of the

funding for those programs comes from the federal level, and in recent years, the federal government has reduced funding for stage two language courses (Canadian Language Benchmark 5–8) in Manitoba.

The Province did some initial work on developing employment-related language instruction, but hasn't invested funding. The APB outlines a plan to provide both stage one and two programming for all newcomers.

The APB also proposes expanding existing employment training programs for newcomers. This would include developing employment programming for newcomers not eligible for federal services as well as training and accreditation assistance for internationally trained professionals.

Provincial programs for students and newcomers provide an opportunity for our province to set expectations for living in Manitoba. In the APB, these sectors foster expectations of accommodation, justice, compassion and hope.

# Fixing Child Welfare begins at home

A focus on prevention could help repair a broken system

Luke Thiessen

@ljthiessen

Manitoba's child welfare system is unique within Canada for reasons both good and bad.

With the country's highest rate of Indigenous children in care at almost 90 per cent, the racial bias and entrenched colonial practice are undeniable and well-documented. However, as a result of many reform efforts over the past few decades, Manitoba's child welfare system also features a number of positive policies and processes not found anywhere else.

One of these is the Authority Determination Process, which guides families through selecting which Child and Family Services (CFS) Authority aligns most closely with their cultural beliefs, values and customs.

But the reality is that structural problems and imbalance continue to cause issues. In its 2020 Alternative Provincial Budget (APB), the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba office (CCPA-Manitoba), would address these issues through several specific recommendations.

Each of these approaches work to prioritize prevention, early intervention and family restoration within the system.

The Child Welfare Legislative Review found that current funding models "can inadvertently incentivize child apprehensions." The APB would work to fix this by prioritizing and restructuring a number of programs and initiatives.

One of these is an innovative idea called Birth Helpers. Many children—often babies—continue to be apprehended into Manitoba's Emergency Placement Program. Birth Helpers act as a critical support to Indigenous mothers who are at risk and face apprehension of their babies.

Some work is already being done to implement Birth Helpers, but the CCPA-Manitoba says it's not enough. The APB would establish consistent funding to increase access and bring this type of initiative to all CFS authorities.

Another part of prevention and family restoration comes from community organizations not mandated by CFS.

The APB includes increased funding for organizations doing this type of work. This includes Ma Mawi Chi Itata Centre, where the Family Group Counselling program has been proven to increase



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The APB focuses on child welfare approaches that prioritize early intervention and family restoration.

family reunification and prevent child apprehensions. Another example is the Winnipeg Boldness Project, and its recent pilot program supporting young fathers to aid in prevention.

For all of this focus on new initiatives and external support, there is already some positive movement in the system to support children in care further into adulthood.

More and more agreements are extending supports for young adults from age 18 to 21. However, many advocates argue this is still inadequate, and recommend increasing the maximum age to 25.

The APB would commit to this increase, and also allocate funding to service providers to ensure this population has enough support as they transition into adulthood.

It would also increase funding to community organizations doing similar work, including the Canadian Mental Health

Association (CMHA). Through its Futures Forward program, the CMHA supports at-risk young adults as they transition to work or post-secondary education.

Finally, the APB also aims to address the reported funding inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous child welfare agencies. The APB would increase funding to bring pay for workers in Indigenous agencies on par with Manitoba Government Employee's Union rates, and address a number of other inequities.

There is only so much a provincial budget can do to address structural challenges that lead many families into the child welfare system. But as CCPA-Manitoba suggests, it's a significant part of a broader comprehensive solution, one that adjusts priorities, addresses imbalances and provides safety and security for those most vulnerable in the system.

# Municipalities' infrastructure needs provincial investment

APB focuses on priorities like water treatment, local and provincial transit

Molly McCracken  
@mmmollymcc

Manitoba's municipalities are the foundation of the provincial economy. Winnipeg alone accounts for nearly two-thirds of the province's population and 70 per cent of the provincial gross domestic product. Brandon is a hub for Western Manitoba, as is Thompson in the north.

Municipalities in Canada have limited tools for revenue generation and are heavily reliant on provincial funding—but this has been in decline to Winnipeg and other municipalities.

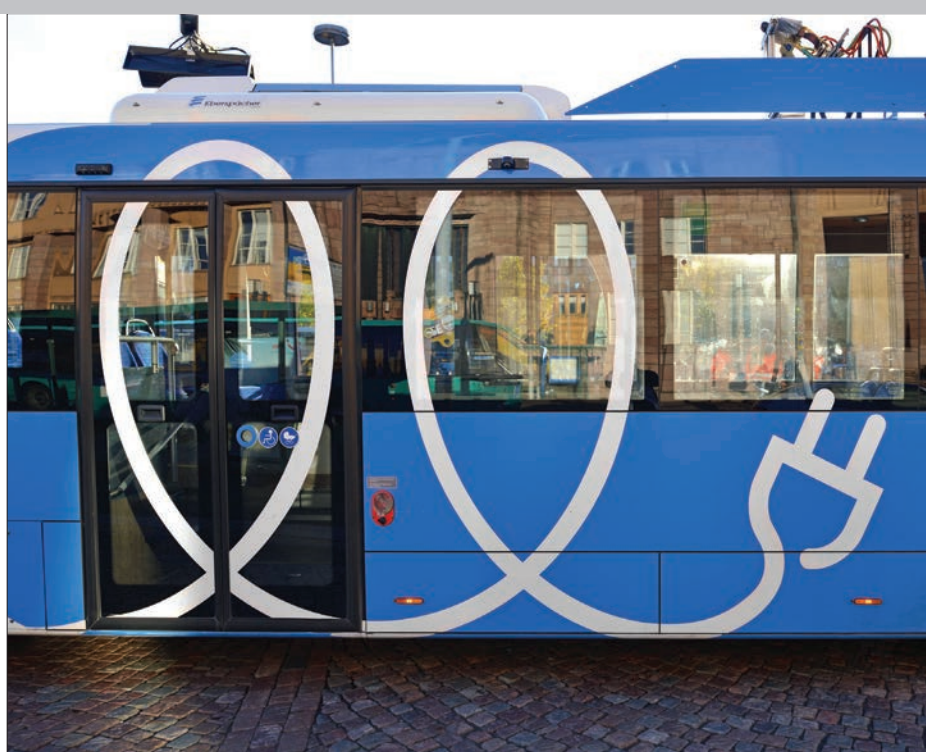
This funding provides vital assistance for municipalities' operating and capital budgets, and when adjusted for inflation, has decreased by 24.11 per cent since 2016. Cities across the province rely on this type of funding for major capital projects, such as rapid transit and bridge construction, as well as day-

to-day services like policing and water systems.

Reducing funding for transit disproportionately impacts low income people, and hampers climate change mitigation efforts, like shifting transportation toward public transit.

In Winnipeg, the province froze its funding for transit at 2016 levels. Prior to the freeze, Winnipeg and Manitoba had a cost-sharing agreement for operating costs not covered by fares split 50/50. Now Winnipeg is wholly responsible for the growing operating costs of Winnipeg Transit.

The negative impact of transit service cuts is especially true for communities like Thompson, where municipal bus service has been sporadic since October 2018 when Greyhound ceased operating in Western Canada. Additional provincial assistance must be provided to ensure residents have access to transit in the wake of Grey-



An electric bus in Helsinki Finland, 2017.

hound's exit from the market.

The case of the North End Treatment Plant in Winnipeg, which deals with 70 per cent of wastewater treatment, shows the lack of provincial action on infrastructure. The plant is the single largest source of phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg, which has enormously detrimental effects on the lake.

The federal government offered \$1.4 billion in upgrades mandated by the province in 2003 to reduce phosphorus pollution. Despite being an issue of significant provincial importance and having federal money on the table, the

provincial government has not agreed on a timeline to fund the project.

The Alternative Provincial Budget restores provincial funding agreements such as the transit cost-sharing agreement and five-year road renewal program. Additionally we invest in a Frequent Service Transit Network, and in Active Transportation infrastructure network to compensate for the loss of the Greyhound bus service.

For more on progressive options for municipalities themselves, please see *Imagine a Winnipeg: 2018 Alternative Municipal Budget*.



KAJ HASSELRIIS



**ROSS EADIE**  
City Councillor  
Mynarski Ward

Ross listens!

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**how the APB\***  
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Register for the free online launch here:  
[tinyurl.com/apb2020](https://tinyurl.com/apb2020)

\*Alternative Provincial Budget from CCPA-MB



### Changes for Good

Times are changing, especially now, and whether those changes are for the better or not is for us to decide. There-fore, we often need to determine what kinds of changes are best. Below is a list of clues, each yielding a five-letter word. Can you solve each of them to figure out what the best kind of changes should be? The final answer will have two words.

#### HINT FOR BEGINNERS

A word will be parsed from each column of clues. Each word will yield a letter, so each word in the answer will have 14 letters each. Still stuck? Try finding the answer to each. Still stuck? Try finding the answer to the clues first, then compare the answers between the two columns.

- Describes a fix when it's temporary
- Where birds gather at night
- A bird or a large machine used in construction
- What is blown off when pent-up emotions are released
- A potato, colloquially
- Threatened, or challenged (sometimes doubly)
- A medieval contest with two opponents on horseback
- Acceleration multiplied by mass
- Deals or agreements
- A digestive organ that secretes bile
- Thinly slice or cut
- Adults usually have 32 of these
- To change or edit
- One who rests on a bed?

- One's strength or specialty
- A part of a larger amount
- What Faceman and Hannibal were part of
- Tin or aluminum is gifted for this anniversary
- An intense beam of light that may burn or cut
- Sometimes it's the final word in a fairy tale
- Wonder's part-timer
- A characteristic or behaviour that's strange or peculiar
- More domesticated
- A British meal typically served on Sundays
- Old-fashioned or time-stamped
- A structural element that supports a floor or ceiling
- Greatly need or want
- There's ten of these made by each person in a Western duel

### Putting Out an APB

by Derek Bowman

#### ACROSS

- 1. Org. with an alternative provincial budget
- 5. CIA's old Soviet counterpart
- 8. Scottish cap
- 11. Music player from Apple
- 12. Without exception
- 14. Legislative package to address climate issues
- 16. Cadbury Creme \_\_\_\_
- 17. Jazz singer Anderson whose name sounds like a wall-climbing plant
- 18. Modernizing, in a way
- 23. Blackjack need
- 24. Applications
- 25. Cut closely
- 28. Labour groups
- 32. Course of action
- 34. Martha Stewart's "Potluck Dinner Party" cohost, familiarly
- 35. "Portlandia" state: Abbr.
- 37. Edward Snowden's former employer, for short
- 38. Carbon-tax principle
- 43. "That makes sense"
- 44. Prominent boot part
- 45. With 55-Across, call to action
- 51. Didn't include
- 52. Winterpeg wear
- 53. Took a load off
- 54. Losing tic-tac-toe line
- 55. See 45-Across

#### DOWN

- 1. Smoke, briefly
- 2. Subj. for EMT training
- 3. "The Tell-Tale Heart" author
- 4. Doe follower, in song
- 5. Panda's skill in a 2008 film
- 6. Co. that merged into Verizon
- 7. "Incidentally," in a text
- 8. Famous Roman fountain
- 9. Actor Delon or racer Prost
- 10. "You must be pulling \_\_\_\_!"
- 13. Adds while proofreading
- 15. Private nonprofit, often
- 18. Grating sound
- 19. Reverberation
- 20. Greenish-blue hue
- 21. Sch. in Terre Haute, Ames, or Pocatello
- 22. Desmonds in a till
- 26. Like a tempestuous storm
- 27. Light brown colour
- 29. Chaplin of "Game of Thrones"
- 30. Overly inquisitive
- 31. Mineral springs
- 33. Nevertheless
- 36. Affects emotionally
- 38. Plays the banjo, e.g.
- 39. Bombers coach Mike
- 40. Cleared a hurdle
- 41. Total nonsense
- 42. Pinkish-yellow shade
- 46. Sticky stuff
- 47. Them or they, in Trois-Rivières
- 48. Baby beluga?
- 49. Sticky stuff
- 50. \_\_\_\_ Agathe, MB

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Answer available at [policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020](http://policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020)



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