



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

there is an alternative.

March 9, 2019

Change Starts Here: The Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020

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One of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative Mb's most rewarding projects is putting together alternative municipal and provincial budgets. This year, community and academic volunteers came together to participate in a democratic process resulting in a comprehensive collection of policy papers embedded in a fiscal framework that mirrors the government's budget. Volunteers analysed their area of expertise, explained the current state of affairs, examined government budgets and considered input gathered in community consultations held around Manitoba.

Our *Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020, Change Starts Here* (APB), challenges politicians, educates the public and inspires all of us 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 actually afford 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.

Climate change

As the APB explains, "we cannot confront climate change if we continue separating 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 publically-owned 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.



CCPA-MB
301 - 583 Ellice Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website

[www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba)

blog

www.policyfix.ca

twitter

@ccpamb

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But rather than leading the province towards solutions, the provincial 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, attacking workers, 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 makes means that our natural, capital and human resources are not being used to their full potential.

Inequality and social exclusion

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.

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 will realize 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 and recognizes Indigenous self-determination. The APB increases spending on a variety of strategic program supports while quitting the use of social impact bonds (SIBS) to fund programs.

The APB restores four years of frozen child care operating grants and increases unit funding by 47 per cent. Such investments promote school readiness, build healthy

communities, help reduce poverty, create decent jobs, help parents work and contribute to the life-long health of children.

Restoring spending in: health care – including mental health and addictions programs and hiring nurses; K-12 and post-secondary education; the civil service; agriculture; municipal and rural infrastructure; and increasing spending in: food security; arts and culture; safe housing for those escaping gender-based violence; and supports for newcomers and the disability community will all have long-term economic and social benefits.

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 education section.

For those Manitobans who are frustrated with the lack of action on income inequality, reconciliation, climate change and the serious issues noted above, read our APB. The change you want starts there.

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

Change Starts Here: Manitoba Alternative Provincial Budget 2020 available online:

www.policyalternatives.ca/mbapb2020

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