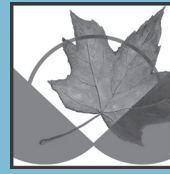


Election 2016 UNSPUN



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MANITOBA OFFICE

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We need to maintain momentum on job training

At the end of 2015 The Conference Board of Canada predicted that in 2016, Manitoba's economic activity would be second only to BC, with strong performance expected in the service, manufacturing and construction sectors. The CBOC thinks we'll see even stronger output in 2017. The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics (MBS) report, *The Review 2014*¹, explains that "Manitoba's labour market performance has been a strong indicator of its robust economy". According to the report, Manitoba had one of the strongest labour markets in the country.

In 2014 Manitoba's labour force grew 1.7 percentage points more than did the national (6.7 vs 5) and fulltime employment was 1.4 percentage points higher than the national rate (5.5 vs 4.1). Private sector employment grew at 6.9 per cent vs 4.4 nationally. This growth helped keep Manitoba's unemployment rate at an average of 5.3 per cent, the 2nd lowest in the country.

These indicators bode very well for Manitoba, especially when combined with economist Jim Stanford's evaluation of our economy: "[. . .] one key factor jumps out as an explanation for Manitoba's strong record: robust capital investment. Both private and public capital spending have grown strongly – a refreshing contrast to other provinces where capital spending has disappointed".

In order to keep this trend going, employers need skilled workers - who can be difficult to find in a low-unemployment environment. In fact the Bureau found that 55.6 per cent of

employers faced challenges recruiting skilled labour and 31 per cent had trouble finding un/semi-skilled workers. There is a clear need for targeted interventions to meet employers' needs and help workers access decent jobs, especially Manitoba's youth.

Although better than the 2014 Canada-wide youth unemployment rate of 13.5 per cent, Manitoba's 10.7 per cent rate shows that youth have a hard time breaking into the labour market. The current government has begun to respond to this situation. The Province's Apprenticeship and Certification Board expanded programs to include a new accreditation pilot project so that high school students can obtain credit for Level One technical training. This project will be expanded to include other trades.

Other significant changes to support apprenticeship and training include helping employers hire apprentices or newly certified workers. The government's *New Employer Hiring Grant*, launched in 2014, gives businesses that hire apprentices for the first time a \$1,000 bonus. Under the Paid Work Experience Tax Credits, employers can also claim up to \$5,000 in wages for apprentices and newly certified journeyperson. All major government building projects have to support apprentices thanks to the 2014 *The Apprenticeship Employment Opportunities Act*.

Pilot programs delivered under the Gateway Initiative assist under-represented Manitobans (i.e. women in non-traditional trades, Indigenous persons, new Canadians and persons with

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disabilities) with apprenticeship training. Under this initiative, the Northern Construction Trades Training Program is training over 30 northern residents in the Industrial Electrician, Industrial Mechanic and Steamfitter-Pipefitter trades so they can obtain employment with northern industry and Hydro construction projects. This is a good start in helping Northerners get a foothold in the labour market, but both the federal and provincial governments need to better support programs like the Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre to help Northerners, including those who live on-Reserve, succeed in the labour market.

Also working with under-represented workers, the Province's Building for Tomorrow Youth Camp program provides trade related programming to approximately 340 young Manitobans, giving them an opportunity to explore a variety of education and career opportunities in skilled trades. Programs such as these are particularly important in Manitoba.

A low unemployment province like Manitoba must utilize as much of its potential labour force as possible. Luckily we have a tremendous resource: a young and growing Indigenous population. But years of racism and colonial policies have prevented too many Indigenous youth from having the same opportunities as others – a situation that is reflected in the MBS's analysis of the Aboriginal workforce.

The off-Reserve unemployment rate for First Nations youth between 15 – 24 years was 21 per cent. For Metis youth, the rate was 15.2 per cent – lower than the rate for First Nations but still higher than the 10.7 per cent for youth overall. Besides the targeted apprenticeship and training programs already mentioned, there are other policies that can help level the playing field for Indigenous youth.

All levels of government to expand support for of social enterprises like BUILD and BEEP, MGR and Aki Energy, and specially tailored educational programs such as (to name a few): Urban Circle Training Centre; the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD); YouthBuild – offered by the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology; the Community Educa-

tion Development Association (CEDA) Pathways to Education program; and, the Manitoba Youth Transitional Employment Assistance and Mentorship program at Ka Ni Kanichihk. These institutions work directly with multi-barriered students and workers, many of whom have difficulty in school and/or lack job experience.

Manitoba also needs an urban-Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) that could connect multi-barriered Indigenous jobseekers with employers and support both parties to ensure a more successful transition into the workforce. Employers have described challenges attracting and retaining Indigenous workers, and an LMI, staffed by caseworkers sensitive to these challenges, could fill an important gap in service. According to employer surveys conducted by the MBS, companies would welcome government incentives to help them target this cohort: an LMI would do just that.

The MBS notes that since 2007, Manitoba's labour market productivity has led the country with an impressive increase of 14.1 per cent, way ahead of the national rate of 8.5 per cent. But this strong performance will not continue without continued, comprehensive government interventions to educate and train our youth.

A framework is emerging with the new apprenticeship programs noted above, the educational opportunities for Indigenous students, and with the government procurement supporting the social enterprise sector. An LMI would bring these initiatives full circle, giving employers and Indigenous Manitobans the support they need to forge a new working relationship.

This election cycle all parties need to articulate their plan to deal with Manitoba's labour market needs and how they would improve the programs and policies we have.

Our economic future depends on whoever wins getting it right.

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¹2015 report not available at time of writing.

[UNSPUN is the 2016 provincial election commentary from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba](#)

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