
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH ACTION PLAN

The *Opportunities for Economic Growth Action Plan* is an industry-informed vision for the future of Manitoba's economy, and was developed to include a range of tangible, focused and strategic actions that government will advance, in partnership with stakeholders and the private sector, to create a stronger economic future for Manitobans.

The targeted actions as outlined in the action plan build on the investments of Budget 2023 and respond directly to what government heard from stakeholders.

Workforce Skills and Supply

Employers are experiencing significant labour shortages. Manitoba needs to expand its efforts to attract international talent, recruit workers, retain employees and bring back students from other jurisdictions after graduation. The action plan includes:

- investing \$4.1 million in additional annual funding for Sector Councils to support new programming for improved recruitment and retention practices, and promotion of work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary students;
- investing \$3.6 million in the new Internationally Educated Professionals Program to help newcomers gain certification and find employment in Manitoba's, high-demand regulated professions;
- aligning skilled worker and business investor nominations through the Provincial Nominee Program with strategic industry growth areas, and selecting immigration candidates with a family connection to bolster retention in order to meet labour market needs for Manitoba;
- partnering with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and Canada West Foundation on a youth outmigration research project to identify ways to attract and retain young people in Manitoba;
- developing a micro-credentials framework that allows industry to identify and fill skills training gaps;
- working with The Winnipeg Foundation to support Manitobans on employment and income assistance make meaningful transitions into the labour market;
- developing partnerships needed to successfully hire and retain Indigenous employees through mentorship programs and connections between businesses, and working with service providers to develop culturally appropriate career fairs and other activities; and
- improving Manitoba's personal income tax structure to bring it line with other provinces, allowing families to keep more of their income and attracting inter-provincial migration.

Building an Enabling Business Environment

Significant government investments in infrastructure and people are needed to encourage growth, particularly in remote and northern communities. The action plan includes:

- committing over \$4.1 billion in a multi-year infrastructure strategy to improve provincial highway, water control and northern airport assets throughout the province;
- investing up to \$100 million for critical water and wastewater infrastructure projects in eight rural communities that will provide safe water supply and attract industrial investment;
- investing an additional \$50 million in the Manitoba First Fund for a total of \$100 million to leverage private-sector investment and help Manitoba businesses access capital at all stages of business growth;
- investing \$15 million in the Communities Economic Development Fund to support economic development and incentivize private-sector investment;
- renewing and expanding funding for Futurpreneur to offer financing and support to enterprising young Manitobans; and
- reducing inter-provincial trade barriers by removing more exemptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and New West Partnership Trade Agreement.

Capitalizing on Emerging Sector Growth Opportunities

Businesses require varied supports throughout all stages of the business life cycle. For example, new startups may require access to market support, tax relief, or start-up capital, while mature businesses may require labour supports. The action plan includes:

- investing \$5 million to improve mineral exploration and application processes. This includes increasing facilitation services and tools to enhance early engagement between Indigenous communities and industry to maximize project awareness and economic opportunities while mitigating environmental risks, and increasing knowledge of Indigenous cultures and traditional land uses.
- supporting Manitoba's burgeoning gaming and film industries through a \$1.5-million investment to launch a virtual production training studio in Winnipeg and enhancements to the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit.
- launching Manitoba's first Life Sciences Strategy to harness opportunities, leverage data, attract new investment, drive innovation and create high-quality jobs in Manitoba.

Quality-of-Life Investments

In order to accelerate recovery in cities and communities throughout the province, including Winnipeg's downtown, investments that build safe, vibrant city centres and attract events to Manitoba are required. The action plan includes:

- investing \$126 million in a whole-of-government homelessness strategy to modernize the emergency shelter network, enhance prevention, and improve client and mental health supports;
- investing \$100 million in the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community fund and providing \$450,000 to Indigenous Tourism Manitoba to support the development of Indigenous-led tourism businesses;
- increasing municipal operating funding by 28 per cent with an additional \$47 million in 2023 for projects and services that improve the quality of life of local residents;
- investing \$35 million for heritage preservation and conversion of the former Hudson's Bay Company downtown property to a mixed-use facility, in partnership with the Southern Chiefs Organization;
- supporting the redevelopment of Portage Place Mall in downtown Winnipeg that will provide affordable housing, health and social services, and safe community spaces; and
- phasing in minimum wage increases to \$15.30 by October 2023.