

Manitoba PC Caucus Review

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MAJOR HIGHWAY INVESTMENTS COMING TO MANITOBA

February 15, 2019

Investments in modern efficient roadways are crucial in connecting communities, facilitating trade and growing the Manitoba economy. This was reinforced this week by Infrastructure Minister Ron Schuler and the federal Minister of Rural Economic Development as they announced a major investment in eight Manitoba highway improvement projects.

A combined total of approximately 350 kilometres of road will be improved through these projects. Work involves repaving sections of the Trans-Canada Highway, PTHs 2, 3, 5, 6, 10 and 16. Additionally, intersections will be safer by adding rumble strips, and paving road shoulders at various locations. New lanes will also be added along a six-km stretch of PTH 6 to improve safety, and along PTH 75 to improve connections to U.S. border facilities.

Trade is an important part of Manitoba's diversified economy and improvements to highway infrastructure are essential to ensuring market access and competitiveness. Once complete, these vital upgrades will help keep Manitoban drivers safe, improve traffic flow and boost trade to support economic growth for years to come.

As part of this agreement, the Government of Manitoba will be providing \$147,442,500 in funding for these projects, with the federal government contributing \$143,967,500.

"Our investment in these highway projects re-enforce the Province of Manitoba's commitment to support economic growth and will have a positive impact on Manitoba's economy for years to come," said Schuler. We continue to focus our investment on improving Manitoba's provincial highway network, ensuring Manitobans see their money at work each and every day. These critical investments provide Manitobans with the tools needed to strengthen access in and out of surrounding communities, ensuring residents have a safe and healthy place to live, work and raise a family."

The Government of Manitoba is committed to investing in infrastructure projects across Manitoba and will continue to work with our local and federal partners to deliver on the priorities of Manitobans.

For more information on the projects funded by this week's announcement, please visit https://news.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/newslinks/2019/02/BG-Canada_Build_Fund-IN.pdf

MANITOBA INTRODUCES BLOCK FUNDING MODEL FOR CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

The Manitoba government is implementing a new funding approach as part of its plan to reform the child welfare system and provide stronger supports to children and families, Families Minister Heather Stefanson announced this week.

“Block funding will fund authorities and agencies up front to improve outcomes for children and families, not by the size of their caseloads or the length of a child’s stay in care,” said Stefanson. “We want to give agencies the freedom to devote more money to prevention, early intervention, community and kinship involvement, and other positive supports. As well, the new model helps reduce their administrative burdens and improves autonomy and accountability.”

The new funding approach builds on engagement sessions held by Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Southern Chiefs’ Organization and Manitoba Metis Federation, ongoing dialogue with child welfare authorities, broader child welfare reform legislative review consultations, and the results of the block funding pilot project.

The minister also noted a change in how the federal Children’s Special Allowance (CSA) will be handled under the block-funding model. Child welfare agencies will retain the CSA as of April 1. The combined result of the changes in the approach to funding will see over \$435 million in financial resources available to CFS authorities and their mandated agencies in 2019-20, the minister noted.

The Manitoba government committed to reforming the child welfare system in October 2017 with a focus on community-based prevention, life-long connections through reunification and permanence, funding for results and legislative reform. For more information, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/fs/child_welfare_reform/.

KEEPING SCHOOL BOARD TAX INCREASES REASONABLE FOR TAXPAYERS: GOERTZEN



I appreciate that the Winnipeg School Division is working hard on their draft budget to keep tax increases to 2% or less while protecting front line services. This is important but not easy work.

Of course, in protecting students and taxpayers we would expect that the Winnipeg School Division trustees would look at the top first. In that regard, it is helpful to note that 197 staff at WSD make more than \$100,000 annually.

Of those making more than \$100,000 at the Winnipeg School Division, 5 are superintendents, 11 are consultants, 8 are directors. One Superintendent makes more annually than the Mayor of Winnipeg or the Premier of the province.

I’m sure that the WSD trustees will continue to work hard on their budget looking for efficiencies. The province will soon be issuing administrative spending reductions for divisions. The result of the budgeting will be instructive to that and to the K-12 review.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen
MLA for Steinbach
Minister of Education and Training

MANITOBA INVESTING IN CLEAN WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

This week, the Honourable Jeff Wharton, Manitoba Minister of Municipal Relations, and federal Minister Bernadette Jordan were in Selkirk to announce joint funding for important upgrades to water and wastewater systems in the City of Selkirk and the R.M. of Ritchot.

In the City of Selkirk, funding will support the design and construction of a forcemain and lift station in the western part of the City. Once complete, it will reduce storm water flooding, improve wastewater treatment, and expand the treatment and collection system to make way for up to 1800 new homes in the City, as well as new commercial development.

In the R.M. of Ritchot, funding will support upgrades to the raw water supply system and increase the capacity of the reservoir to meet rising water use from rural residents in the R.M. of Ritchot, Riel Industrial park, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe, Île des Chênes, as well as planned future expansion of the regional water system to the community of Grande Pointe and area. These upgrades will ensure the municipality can provide potable water to the existing and future population that meets both Manitoba's and Canada's water quality standards and legislation.

Both projects will be funded through the Small Communities Fund, with each partner providing one third of the eligible project costs. Canada, Manitoba and the City of Selkirk are each contributing \$800,000 to the Selkirk Forcemain and Lift Station project. For the Ritchot Water Supply and Additional Reservoir Capacity Project, the R.M. of Ritchot, along with the federal and provincial governments, will each provide \$1 million in funding.

REVIEWING SYSTEMS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

The provincial government is undertaking a review of the current youth justice system in Manitoba and its connections to the child welfare system, with the aim of ending cycles of crime for at-risk youth, Justice Minister Cliff Cullen and Families Minister Heather Stefanson announced this week.

“The current youth criminal justice system that our government inherited simply isn’t meeting the needs of young people or, more broadly, our society,” said Cullen. “Manitoba’s youth crime, incarceration and recidivism rates continue to be a problem. It is clear that we need a new, more comprehensive and effective approach to deal with these issues.”

Statistics show Manitoba has the highest rate of youth incarceration in Canada, at four times the national average, and the youth violent crime severity index is also among the highest in the country, Cullen noted.

A recent review of one month of admissions to the Manitoba Youth Centre confirmed significant overlap between young people involved in the child welfare system and the youth justice system. Approximately 60 per cent of youth charged with criminal offences are involved in the child welfare system.

“Children in care are at risk of being over-represented as offenders and victims, resulting in a cycle that is hard to break,” said Stefanson. “Unfortunately, the child welfare and criminal justice systems have operated independent of one another for too long, creating duplication, inefficiencies and poor outcomes for youth. Our government believes there must be a better way forward for young people and families who are often in crisis.”

A team of senior department staff will report back to government, with recommendations and an implementation plan to be made public later this year.