

Manitoba PC Caucus Review

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MANITOBA INVESTS IN OBSTETRICS NURSING AT HSC AND ST. BONIFACE

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Winnipeg's two obstetrical units are receiving an additional \$2.3 million annually to hire more baseline staff, to deal with an increase in the number of babies being born on the units.

“Additional nursing staff are needed to handle the steady increase in the number of births that obstetrics units at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital are seeing,” said Health, Seniors and Active Living Minister Cameron Friesen. “The addition of these new nursing positions will ensure both units are staffed appropriately at all times, both now and into the future, so newborns and their mothers continue to receive the high-quality care they require.”

The new funding will allow the St. Boniface obstetrics unit to schedule an additional two nurses 24/7, bringing their round-the-clock staffing from 12 to 14, plus a charge nurse. At Health Sciences Centre, the new funding will allow for one additional nurse around the clock, bringing that unit's 24/7 staffing from 14 to 15, plus a charge nurse. This represents an additional 8.4 full-time equivalent nursing positions at St. Boniface; and 4.2 at HSC.

The funding will also be used to create an elective caesarean section team at St. Boniface, which will operate two days a week, representing an additional 1.6 full-time equivalent positions. Such a team already exists at HSC.

The two units, at St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre, accommodated 11,710 deliveries between them in the 2017/18 fiscal year. This represents an 8.6% increase over the 10,783 deliveries that occurred there in 2010/11. By next year (2019-20), if volumes continue to increase as they have been over recent years, the deliveries will rise to more than 12,000, which would represent a roughly 13% increase over a 10-year period.

The funding increase takes effect immediately. The units expect to start offering additional shifts to existing part-time staff soon, and the new positions will be posted shortly.

RESEARCH REPORT ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION RELEASED

The Manitoba government has released a research report on sexual exploitation that will guide the Tracia's Trust strategy to help vulnerable young Manitobans, Families Minister Heather Stefanson announced this week.

"It is horrific to read that children in Manitoba are being violently victimized and lured into the sex trade for reasons such as money, food, shelter or drugs," said Stefanson. "Our sexual exploitation unit hears about hundreds of trafficking and exploitation cases every year. Even more shocking, a majority of cases are invisible, behind closed doors or online, so a large number of these hidden crimes go unreported."

The province launched its sexual exploitation strategy in 2002 and renamed it in 2008 to Tracia's Trust in memory of Tracia Owen, a 14-year-old who was sexually exploited and died by suicide in 2005. Annually, the strategy provides approximately \$10 million to many non-governmental organizations and interdepartmental initiatives related to prevention, intervention and service co-ordination, along with 12 regional teams that provide education, training and awareness.

"This report helps us better understand how often sex trafficking and sexual exploitation is happening in Manitoba, the needs of those who have been exploited and the barriers that keep them away from the help they need," said Stefanson. "Our government is already acting on these recommendations in areas such as substance abuse treatment. Sexual exploitation and human trafficking are urgent issues that require proactive, co-ordinated efforts across government departments and in the community."

The complete report and information about Tracia's Trust can be viewed online by visiting www.gov.mb.ca/fs/traciastrust/index.html.



PROVINCE ANNOUNCES BUDGET DATE SET FOR MARCH 7

Manitoba's 2019 budget will be presented on Thursday, March 7 after the provincial legislature resumes sitting, Finance Minister Scott Fielding announced recently.

"Three years ago, we made a promise to Manitobans to fix the finances, repair services and rebuild the provincial economy," said Fielding. "I look forward to updating Manitobans on the significant progress we have made and the next steps we will take to make Manitoba the most improved province in Canada."

Fielding noted the province continues to move in the right direction toward achieving balanced budgets based on summary financial results. The second quarter report for the 2018-19 fiscal year cites a summary deficit of \$518 million, which is an improvement of \$177 million over the 2017-18 year-end deficit of \$695 million.

"We are making consistent progress in reducing the deficit, while protecting and improving the front-line services Manitobans rely on," said Fielding. "We are keeping our promises and we are getting the job done."

The minister noted the government remains committed to returning the budget to balance in its second term and reducing the PST to seven per cent by 2020.