

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

February 21, 2017

Manitoba Poverty Reduction Legislation Backgrounder

Make Poverty History Manitoba supports a renewal of Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy as required under existing legislation. After many years of pressure from anti-poverty advocates in Manitoba, The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act was brought into effect on June 16, 2011. This legislation enshrines the long term goal of poverty reduction and enacts reporting requirements with the goal of sustained and targeted efforts of government to reach these goals. All Canadian provinces except for B.C. have poverty reduction plans and/or Acts.

What does the Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy Act require government to do?

The Act requires government to:

- a.) Implement a long-term strategy to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion across Manitoba;
- b.) Establish or adopt poverty and social inclusion indicators to be used in measuring the progress of the strategy;
- c.) Provide annual reports to the public on the progress of the strategy;
- d.) Complete a five-year review of the strategy by May 2017.

How does this Act relate to the Manitoba Budget?

The Act also requires the government to take the poverty reduction strategy into account when preparing the budget and report on this in the budget papers.

What must the government strategy include?

The Act requires that government must develop a strategy that recognizes the multiple causes of poverty, and addresses various needs including: education, training, employment, income supports, affordable housing, community safety, and health. The Act also requires that the strategy target groups that face higher risks of poverty, and ensure programs are accessible to all who need them.

The 2015-16 annual report, *All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy*, was released in September 2016. The Act requires a Report within six months after the end of each fiscal year that reviews the implementation of the poverty reduction plan and evaluates the progress of the strategy. This report must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly upon completion or if the Assembly is not sitting at that time, within 15 days after the beginning of the next sitting. The most recent report was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development on December 2, 2016.

The Act requires a Committee consisting of Ministers and Community Representatives:

The Act requires an "All Aboard Committee" to consist of ministers responsible for policies, programs or services that affect poverty reduction or social inclusion, as determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; one member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from the members of the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship; three additional persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council based on recommendations from the minister in consultation with the United Way of Winnipeg and other groups. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is the formal name for the provincial cabinet.

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The Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship has not been convened by the new provincial government. The four community representatives on the All Aboard Committee were appointed by Order in Council before the last election and reconfirmed November 30, 2016.

The All Aboard Committee is responsible for providing advice to Executive Council on the poverty reduction strategy, indicators and proposed policies, programs and initiatives, community involvement in the development and implementation of the strategy.

The committee is to meet at least four times each year, at the call of the co-chairs. **To date Make Poverty History Manitoba is not aware of a meeting of the full All Aboard Committee since the new government began on April 19, 2016.**

The Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy Act can be found here:

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p094-7e.php>

What has the Manitoba government committed?

The new provincial government said in Budget 2016 "Work on Budget 2017 will begin immediately, and with it the development of a comprehensive plan to address poverty." (Manitoba Budget papers, D2). Further, in committee hearings, Families Minister Scott Fielding has said that he is "currently working with my Cabinet colleagues and community stakeholders in reviewing Manitoba's approach to poverty reduction [and] committed in future budgets for Manitoba's new government to set in place a comprehensive plan to address poverty."

The Province has told Make Poverty History Manitoba it is committed "to harnessing the generosity of Manitobans through the development of social impact bonds to explore new and innovative solutions to our province's social challenges, including poverty." The new provincial government said they would be reviewing the existing strategy and its 21 indicators but has provided no information on which indicators, if any, would be included in a new strategy.

What is Make Poverty History Manitoba doing?

Make Poverty History Manitoba promotes a community-led strategy, based on the *View from Here: Manitobans Call for a Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy*. It met with Families Minister Scott Fielding September 22, 2016 and at this meeting offered to co-create a comprehensive poverty reduction plan based on the community's plan. Make Poverty History Manitoba launched a public campaign, November 24, 2016, calling on the province to develop a comprehensive strategy including targets and timelines for poverty reduction and an increase in the EIA basic needs benefits. Approximately 100 supporters attended a rally held at the Manitoba legislature on January 6, 2017 to endorse this proposal. Make Poverty History has requested follow up meetings with Premier Brian Pallister, Minister Fielding and Finance Minister Cameron Friesen, but thus far has not been successful.