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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Manitoba | 39e | 3e | Discours sur le Budget | 25 mars 2009 | Gregory F. Selinger | Ministre des Finances | New Democratic Party of Manitoba |

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present the 2009 Manitoba budget, a balanced budget, and our tenth consecutive balanced budget. Our government is the first in 50 years to bring in a full decade of balanced budgets.

Le Manitoba a eu l'économie provinciale la plus stable au cours de la dernière décennie.

***Translation***

*Manitoba has had the most stable provincial economy over the last decade.*

***English***

Investment has increased in Manitoba companies and our labour force has expanded, with more than 10,000 jobs added to Manitoba's economy in 2008.

**\*** (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, we continue to monitor precipitation levels and flood forecasts closely, and we are already working with municipalities to prepare for spring flooding.

Record investments have been made in floodproofing efforts around the province, with more than $850 million spent since 1999.

Because of these investments, we are confident we will be able to cope with the forecasted flood levels, reducing the effects and minimizing damage to communities, property and infrastructure.

We are living through a time of extraordinary change on a global scale. Since last fall, the world's financial circumstances have changed dramatically. The sound financial management practised by Manitobans and Manitoba businesses puts our province in a better position than many to face the current economic upheaval.

Last year, Manitoba's economy continued to grow steadily, outperforming the country as a whole for the third consecutive year.

The dividend of this steady financial management is the ability to stimulate our economy today and build for the future. Manitoba will not be immune to a global recession, but we are determined to take advantage of our economic strengths to sustain our quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we have moved quickly to implement an economic stimulus plan by accelerating infrastructure projects and investing in education, training and innovation. Going forward, we will continue to implement this plan by pursuing opportunities for economic growth, while maintaining affordability for Manitobans.

We must be realistic about the challenges that lie ahead. Experts predict the economy will continue to be volatile over the next 12 to 24 months. To deal with this, we have developed a plan to create and maintain jobs and critical services. We have made some difficult choices but have been balanced in those decisions.

We are dedicating investments to create jobs in the near term and building the foundation for prosperity in the future.

This budget offers a balanced plan that:

·         stimulates the economy and improves access to credit for businesses;

·         makes key investments for Manitobans and their families for the services they need; and

·         identifies practical strategies to reduce costs and modernize government.

More than one third of government departments will hold the line or see slight decreases. But we are not standing still. We are continuing to modernize government and build innovative partnerships to improve services for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is well positioned to take advantage of our fundamental strengths: our diversity, our agility and our creativity.

Le présent budget aidera le Manitoba à surmonter la crise économique actuelle et nous préparera pour un avenir plus prospère.

***Translation***

*This budget will help our province weather the current economic storm and prepare us for a more prosperous future.*

***English***

**Infrastructure Investments**

Manitobans have told us we need to invest in infrastructure projects to create jobs and stimulate our economy. We are acting on this sound advice. We have already made record investments in social housing, schools, highways, roads, health care, water and sewer systems.

Budget '09 builds on this approach with further investments in priority areas. It increases capital investment to $1.6 billion, a $625-million increase that will create and maintain about 10,000 person-years of employment.

We support the strategic investments recently announced by the federal government, providing significant funding for infrastructure projects, with a particular focus on much-needed investments in social housing. We are matching the federal social and affordable housing funding to further our work in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce the Province's largest-ever investment in social housing. We will spend $387 million on social and affordable housing, more than double the amount in budget '99‑2000.

We know that low-income Manitobans, especially women, struggle to find affordable housing. Our investments include more than $160 million in capital funding for the rejuvenation of existing facilities, including Lord Selkirk Park and Gilbert Park in Winnipeg and the Brandon Tenant Park. Budget '09 also provides funding for a range of housing options for individuals with mental health issues at risk of homelessness. We also continue to work with the Manitoba Métis Federation on housing options and opportunities.

Our schools must grow to meet the needs of our expanding communities. Since '99, the provincial government has provided more than $483 million in capital funding for public schools. Budget '09 includes funding for a significant new multimillion, four-year school capital program which will include the construction of new schools as well as renovation to existing facilities.

At post-secondary institutions, we have provided more than $565 million in new capital and maintenance projects in the last decade. This work will continue with additional investments for:

·         projects at the University College of the North at The Pas, Thompson and other regional centres;

·         projects at Brandon University and the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon;

·         trades facilities at Red River College;

·         the University of Winnipeg's science complex and the Richardson College for the Environment; and

·         Project Domino and maintenance projects at the University of Manitoba.

Our roads and highways link our families and communities, supporting business and connecting us to the continent. We have introduced major investments into our highway program, creating a five-year renewal plan to modernize aging infrastructure. We will also use stimulus funding provided through the '09 federal budget to add to this work. During the '09-10 construction season, investment in road-related projects is increasing by approximately 30 percent, to $535 million. This additional funding will create new jobs while building better roads and supporting our economy.

CentrePort Canada, a private-sector led corporation created to develop and promote Manitoba's inland port, takes advantage of our location in the heart of the continent and relies on the skills and expertise of Manitoba business and labour.

We continue to support CentrePort Canada by building on our modern transportation connections to provide reliable access to markets across the continent. We are also expanding the fuel tax exemption for international cargo flights to include direct and indirect flights to the United States.

This project will provide a competitive advantage and help make Manitoba the location of choice for industries and manufacturers looking for new and innovative ways to get their goods to market.

Nos investissements en installations et en équipement ont contribué à moderniser le système de soins de santé, ce qui nous permet d'offrir des services ultramodernes à la population manitobaine.

***Translation***

*Our investments in facilities and equipment have modernized the health care system, bringing state-of-the-art services to Manitobans.*

***English***

Later this year, the Artiste, a linear accelerator, combined with imaging technology, will begin providing high-precision non-invasive surgery to Manitoba patients, a first in Canada.

In 2004, the Emergency Care Task Force undertook a review of emergency health care in Winnipeg, and recommended plans for service improvements. This included a number of capital investments in emergency care, including expanding and upgrading emergency departments at Seven Oaks General Hospital and Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg.

We are continuing that work. Work has been done to improve emergency care at the Health Sciences Centre, and construction will soon begin on the redevelopment of the emergency department at Victoria General Hospital. We continue to develop the first-in-Canada mental health crisis centre, and a site is expected to be announced shortly.

Our government has invested in building modern health-care facilities throughout the province. We continue to invest in health capital initiatives. Work will soon begin on several projects, including:

·         renovations and upgrades to the Westman Regional Laboratory in Brandon;

·         construction of a state-of-the-art cardiac sciences facility at St. Boniface General Hospital;

·         additional hemodialysis investments in Russell, Gimli and Winnipeg; and

·         a new, 80-bed Aboriginal personal care home in Winnipeg.

An important part of healthy communities is ensuring that drinking water and waste-water systems are properly managed to protect water supplies for the future and encourage community development. With federal and municipal government support, investments in Manitoba water protection will total over $1 billion in the coming years. In budget '09, our provincial contribution of $46 million will be augmented with additional funding from other governments to support work in urban, rural and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities.

We are also supporting the development of a water and waste-water technician training program to ensure the long-term availability of qualified operators in Manitoba communities.

Flood damage poses significant risks not only to Manitobans, but also to our provincial economy. The Red River Floodway Expansion Project has substantially increased flood protection for the residents of Winnipeg, East St. Paul and West St. Paul, and the project is on schedule to deliver one-in-700-year flood protection in 2009.

As the floodway project reaches completion, the Manitoba Floodway Authority will partner with east‑side communities to build an all-purpose road. Building on the floodway's successful Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative, the program will ensure local residents have the opportunity to share in the project's economic benefits.

**Manitoba's Education Opportunities**

When other governments faced economic uncertainty in the past, cuts were made to much-needed services. Admissions to physician and nursing schools were reduced, college and university enrolments fell, funding for innovation and training slowed and tuition costs rose dramatically.

Our government's plan is to emerge stronger than ever before. We know we must keep investing to strengthen our province and grow our economy in new and knowledgeable ways.

L'éducation et la formation professionnelle sont la pierre angulaire de notre économie.

***Translation***

*Education and training are the cornerstone of our economy.*

***English***

To keep moving forward and building our province's future, we will continue to invest in our greatest resource: the people of Manitoba. This year, we have made significant investments in our public schools, raising operating investments by $53 million, or 5.25 percent. We have also continued the Tax Incentive Grant to encourage divisions to hold the line on property taxes while focussing on the needs of students and parents.

Our post-secondary institutions provide exciting and vibrant settings for learning. Mr. Speaker, we are increasing base operating grants and strategic program investments, totalling a 6 percent increase for our colleges and universities.

**\*** (14:50)

Over the last decade, we have introduced new measures to train more health-care providers in Manitoba, ensuring a strong health-care sector. To continue our support of Aboriginal medical students, we are doubling the amount for scholarships to ensure funds for both first- and second-year students.

Mr. Speaker, budget '09 will also create new training opportunities for nurses in Manitoba, increasing opportunities at the University of Manitoba, Brandon University and the University College of the North.

We will increase funding to the Bright Futures Fund to encourage disadvantaged students to stay in school and consider a post-secondary education.

Our Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate continues to offer an incentive for graduates to start their careers in Manitoba, returning 60 percent of eligible tuition fees up to a maximum of $25,000.

To help support Manitoba students and ensure continued access to affordable education, we are increasing funding to the Manitoba Bursary Fund.

We expect to receive the Levin report on tuition and accessibility in the next ten days. We will continue to consult and work with the public and other stakeholders to ensure continued access, affordability and excellence in education for Manitoba youth and their families.

With support from the federal government, Manitoba will expand skills-training opportunities for individuals, particularly those affected by labour market changes.

Budget '09 will also provide increased funding to develop and expand programs, including literacy, at adult learning centres across the province.

We are further investing in apprenticeship programs to ensure industry has the skilled labour needed to grow companies and create new opportunities for young Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, budget '09 will:

·         fund additional apprenticeship training seats;

·         establish a new bursary fund for current and prospective apprentices demonstrating financial need; and

·         provide a new financial incentive to encourage youth to pursue careers in the skilled trades after graduation from high school.

Budget '09 continues our support of the Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative, which helps unemployed and under-employed people upgrade the skills they need to enter apprenticeship programs and advance their careers.

We are committed to working with our partners–First Nations and Métis leaders, Aboriginal communities, the private sector and our federal and provincial counterparts–to ensure a bright and secure future for Aboriginal youth, while building our work force and growing our economy.

**Business and Innovation**

The world is Manitoba's markets, and our province's diverse population connects us to the far reaches of the globe. We have one of the faster-growing bioscience sectors in Canada, a strong research sector and innovative companies that continue to develop and market new products.

Research makes innovation possible. It finds new solutions to old problems and leads to technological discoveries. Mr. Speaker, budget '09 builds on our investments in knowledge and provides additional funding for innovation, to support Manitoba Research and Innovation Fund initiatives and develop opportunities for the future. The Research and Development Tax Credit will be made refundable for corporations that work with research institutes in Manitoba on new technologies. At 20 percent, Manitoba has the highest research and development tax credit in the country. This will support successful projects such as the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, which encourages industry to reduce waste and implement lean manufacturing principles to increase productivity, and better weather difficult financial times.

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council brings together the business and labour communities, along with Aboriginal, academic and community leaders, to advise us on pressing economic issues. Their much-valued advice and leadership on projects such as CentrePort Canada helps us make the best possible decisions for Manitoba's economy.

The newly formed Manitoba Innovation Council is beginning their work. The council will work to build closer relationships between the business, research and investment communities, and lead in the development of a stronger culture of innovation in Manitoba.

Les entreprises peuvent réaliser des économies en cherchant à optimiser l'utilisation de leurs ressources.

***Translation***

*Businesses can save by looking at ways to use resources more efficiently.*

***English***

Green Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro will introduce a new Power Smart Shops program to help small businesses save energy and dollars through energy efficiency upgrades.

The Business Start Program offers loan guarantees to help entrepreneurs establish new businesses and create jobs. To create more opportunities, we increased the maximum loan guarantee from $20,000 to $30,000.

We are expanding the use of tax increment financing to support revitalization and renewal initiatives focussed on projects that will result in significant economic development and community revitalization.

The Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program provides loans for businesses wishing to create or maintain jobs by expanding or upgrading their Manitoba operations. New Flyer Industries is just one example of a company that has used this program to build their company and achieve great success. Mr. Speaker, we are tripling the value of loans available through this program to ensure companies have access to the credit they need to support their businesses.

We are also making a tangible investment to protect Manitoba workers. Budget '09 provides funding to implement Manitoba's first-in-the-country legislation, which improves protection for foreign workers wanting to live and work in Manitoba.

We are increasing resources to address workplace safety and health issues, ensuring Manitoba workers remain safe on the job.

Mr. Speaker, we are introducing reduced taxation rates for mining to stimulate investment in this sector. Effective this July 1, rates will fall from 18 percent to 10 percent, 15 percent and 17 percent, depending on taxable income. We are increasing support for additional exploration by doubling the available tax credit from 10 percent to 20 percent, effective April 1, 2009, and then rising to 30 percent, effective April 1, 2010. We are also extending the Manitoba Mineral Exploration Tax Credit for three more years.

Manitoba's Aboriginal Procurement Initiative, the first comprehensive provincial program of its kind in Canada, has resulted in a 28 percent increase in Aboriginal businesses providing goods and services.

None of this work would be possible without strong links to Manitoba's business and labour communities. We will continue to consult with them to ensure Manitoba's economy remains strong and competitive.

**Balanced Fiscal Framework**

Mr. Speaker, budget '09 is balanced, with a projected net income of $48 million and includes 1.8 percent growth in summary expenditures. Our summary budget includes core government departments, all Crown corporations, other reporting entities and our pension obligations.

Manitobans' personal disposable income per capita, after accounting for inflation, has increased by 6.7 percent over the last two years. In 2009, Manitoba is expected to outperform Canada in real income growth for the third consecutive year.

The net debt-to-GDP ratio has been reduced by more than 25 percent since '99. This year, given the extent of our economic stimulus investments, we expect it will increase but will still remain more than 25 percent lower than in 1999.

Manitoba's debt-servicing cost has been cut by 55 percent, from 13.2 cents of every dollar of revenue in '99-2000 to 6 cents on the dollar in '09‑2010.

We have seen similar improvements in our Crown corporations. For example, Manitoba Hydro's debt-to-equity ratio is projected to be 75:25 in the coming year, compared to 86:14 in 1997-98.

Depuis notre arrivée au pouvoir, nous avons mis en place des mesures précises afin d'assurer une gestion financière saine.

***Translation***

*Since coming into office, we have implemented specific measures to ensure sound fiscal management.*

***English***

We have continued to pay down debt while ensuring the costs of core government capital investments are amortized and fully reflected in annual budgets.

Starting April 1, 1961, the Province failed to fund the employer's current service contributions for pensions. This led to an accumulated and unfunded liability of almost $3 billion in '99-2000 and would have reached $8.5 billion by the year 2035.

In 2002, our government began to pay these costs for new employees. We are proud to confirm that, today, we meet our obligations to sound pension funding. Mr. Speaker, we now pay the employer's current service contributions for all civil servants and teachers across the province.

We will also consult with all members of the Legislative Assembly about directing slated salary increases to their pension liability.

We have a responsibility to make the best possible choices to ensure a sound future for this province. The Fiscal Stabilization account acts as a shock absorber to ensure core government programs are not disrupted when exceptional circumstances arise. And so, we have made the choice to use $110 million from the Fiscal Stabilization account to ensure we can maintain vital programs and key services. This allows us to continue to support Manitobans, their families and their communities, providing both stability and new opportunities while we face economic challenges.

We remain committed to providing vital services while paying down our debt. However, we must do so in a responsible way by reflecting the current economic environment, slowing down some of our commitments and only implementing initiatives that are sustainable within a balanced budget framework.

**\*** (15:00)

Most jurisdictions in Canada will fund stimulus through deficits this year. In Manitoba, our stimulus will be partially funded through reducing debt repayments within the balanced budget legislation.

To balance these needs, amendments will be introduced to provide the government more flexibility in making the debt payment required by balanced budget legislation.

However, we will continue to address our unfunded debt, and have budgeted $20 million in '09‑10 for further debt repayment and pension liability reduction. We anticipate, at a minimum, making a payment of a similar level next year. The balance that would otherwise be used for debt retirement will be used to address infrastructure, stimulate the economy and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we have a solid record of reducing taxes for Manitoba families and businesses while keeping budgets in balance, reducing debt and pension liabilities and increasing support for key services, from social housing to health care.

Le Manitoba est l'une des provinces les plus abordables du pays, grâce à un coût de la vie raisonnable et une qualité de vie élevée.

***Translation***

*Manitoba is one of the most affordable provinces in the country, with a reasonable cost of living and a high quality of life.*

***English***

We have reduced personal taxes to ensure Manitoba remains an affordable place to live.

Despite tough times, Mr. Speaker, budget '09 lowers taxes. We are implementing all the '09 tax commitments made in earlier budgets. We are also introducing tax savings to help maintain the purchasing power of families and the financial strength of businesses. In '09, Manitobans are realizing $30 million in personal income tax savings.

Since 2000, the average Manitoba property owner has experienced significant tax relief. Statistics Canada reports property taxes have remained flat, while average growth in other provinces was 24 percent.

We continue to act on property taxes at a pace that reflects our current economy.  This year, we will increase our basic Education Property Tax Credit to $650. In future years, we will further increase this credit to fulfil our $700 commitment.

We are also increasing the Farmland School Tax Rebate to 75 percent.

Small and medium-sized businesses employ thousands of Manitobans, providing much of the entrepreneurship and vitality in our economy. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that we will become the first province to permanently eliminate the small-business income tax. This will ensure that Manitoba has one of the friendliest tax environments for small business in North America.

We remain committed to two previously announced business tax reductions: the general Corporation Income Tax rate will drop to 12 percent this coming July 1, and the phase-out of the general Corporation Capital Tax will continue, with final elimination by the end of 2010.

In the current economic environment, it is more important than ever to provide incentives for investment, innovation and skill development.

To do just that, we will:

·         double the funding for the Community Enterprise Investment Tax Credit, providing $17 million more in investment capital for small and medium-sized businesses;

·         double the value of shares a business can apply for under the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit, giving businesses increased access to capital;

·         expand apprenticeship tax credits to include advanced-level apprentices;

·         extend the co-op student and graduate components of the Co-op Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit, the most comprehensive credit of its kind in the country; and

·         we will parallel business tax changes announced in the '09 federal budget, including increased depreciation rates for manufacturing machinery and equipment, as well as computer systems.

The majority of Manitobans acting as primary caregivers are women. Those caring for family members or others may be eligible for the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit. We are now introducing changes to make it easier to access the credit for caregivers of people with disabilities.

We will also introduce tax initiatives focussing on the health of Manitobans and the health of the environment.

These include:

·         increasing tobacco tax rates, which will rise by 1 cent per cigarette to 18.5 cents at midnight tonight;

·         extending the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit to include solar thermal systems in addition to geothermal systems;

·         doubling the basic credit for agricultural producers who take action to protect riverbanks and lakeshore areas under the Riparian Tax Credit program beginning in '09;

·         making the retail sales tax exemption for manure slurry tanks and lagoon liners permanent to help livestock producers meet their environmental responsibilities; and

·         extending the Odour Control Tax Credit to the end of 2011.

To promote recycling, the Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy will be introduced on class 1 landfills, starting in '09. Revenues from this levy will be rebated to municipalities based on the amount of waste recycled. For example, the City of Winnipeg could expect to receive as much as $2 million annually.

Funds will also be used to expand e-waste and hazardous waste recycling throughout the province.

**Enhancing Health Care**

Health care remains a top priority of this government. We will continue to move forward to make strategic investments and maintain quality of care for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the number of nurses and doctors in Manitoba has grown dramatically. Since '99, there are more than 1,800 additional nurses and 288 more doctors working today to meet the needs of Manitobans across the province. Budget 2009 invests funding to continue this work, including investments in the successful recruitment and retention of physicians, particularly in northern and rural Manitoba, and supporting training for advanced intensive care nurses.

Funding in budget '09 will expand the successful midwifery baccalaureate program to students in southern Manitoba.

Since '99, we have added more than 2,000 new drugs to Pharmacare, and the average benefit paid has risen from $1,211 in '98-99 to $2,542 in '08-09.

Since '99, the costs of Pharmacare have risen more than 220 percent. We remain committed to providing quality Pharmacare coverage while maintaining affordable deductibles for Manitobans. We are making changes to the program to reduce the effect of income increases on Pharmacare deductibles. This means that for more than 70 percent of recipients, increases will be less than $5 per month.

We are implementing additional improvements to the emergency care in Manitoba. Budget '09 also includes funding to hire more emergency room staff and add new ambulances to our provincial fleet.

Manitoba is recognized as a leader in reducing wait times. Significant investments have shown results for Manitobans. For example, the median wait for hip and knee surgeries was 31 weeks in January '07. Mr. Speaker, the median wait time was 15 weeks in January '09.

Nous continuons à investir dans des programmes innovateurs pour améliorer l'accès des patients aux soins de santé.

***Translation***

*We continue to invest in innovative programs to improve access to health care for patients.*

***English***

Budget '09 provides funding to expand the successful Advanced Access initiative, helping clinics reduce wait times by modernizing scheduling systems so patients can access their doctor in a more timely fashion.

Budget '09 provides more funding for capital investments in addictions and mental health. We are continuing the development of the Magnus Centre, a multi-agency facility in Winnipeg that will offer a comprehensive range of services under one roof.

We will continue our work with Aboriginal communities and leaders to enhance access to primary and acute health-care services, as well as healthy living programs.

**Stronger Families**

A strong and thriving province must work for the good of all its residents. Investments in education and training, economic development and job creation not only build our economy, but also support poverty reduction efforts and improve the well-being of Manitobans.

Since '99, we have introduced a number of measures to support Manitoba families and reduce poverty. Increases to the Education Property Tax Credit reduce the tax burden on low-income Manitobans, especially women. Increases to the minimum wage have strengthened the purchasing power of more than 28,000 minimum-wage earners and their families. Our investments in social housing and the Manitoba Shelter Benefit have also made a difference for Manitobans in need.

As well, today, 40 percent fewer Manitoba children are living in poverty than a decade ago, but there is still work to be done. We must ensure we create conditions for Manitobans at all income levels to have the opportunity to be successful.

We will create a new program called Rebound, to provide training and employment opportunities for Manitobans to support skill development and reduce the need for income assistance.

Today, we are also proud to announce further enhancements to the Manitoba Shelter Benefit, including raising income eligibility levels and additional support for some Manitobans receiving Employment and Income Assistance.

Through the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, the Province co-ordinates projects to promote nutrition and build capacity to access healthy foods. Our government will take further action on food security to ensure Manitobans have access to healthy and nutritious food.

We continue to act on recommendations to protect Manitoba children through the Changes for Children program, our multi-year plan of action to strengthen Manitoba's child welfare system. We are funding increased supports for children in care, as well as hiring more workers to focus on prevention and protection and an improved case management system.

Budget '09 also includes funding to:

·         continue support for the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Strategy;

·         expand mental health crisis stabilization services in Thompson and the Interlake to provide short-term intensive care and treatment for youth in the community; as well as

·         implement the second phase of Tracia's Trust, the Province's sexual exploitation reduction strategy.

**\*** (15:10)

Recent studies say that affordable child care is one of the top priorities for women. We continue to make child care a priority in budget '09, providing funding to support:

·         additional child-care and nursery school spaces;

·         wage increases for child-care centre staff of 3 percent, effective July 1;

·         investments in a record number of training spaces initiated last year;

·         new spaces this year; as well as

·         recruitment and retention initiatives.

Nous devons continuer d'appuyer les personnes handicapées au Manitoba en veillant à ce qu'elles aient accès aux services nécessaires pour réaliser leur plein potentiel.

***Translation***

*We need to continue to support people with disabilities in Manitoba, ensuring they have the services they need to reach their full potential.*

***English***

Budget '09 provides increases for community living supports for Manitobans with mental disabilities and will enhance access to applied behaviour analysis services for preschool and school‑aged Manitoba children living with autism.

**Building Manitoba Communities**

Manitoba's urban communities are centres of economic development and growth. Over the last decade these communities have grown, taking possibilities and turning them into opportunities.

Budget '09 continues to support urban communities.

For services such as affordable transit, road maintenance and repair, and public safety, the City of Winnipeg will receive more than $213 million in funding, an increase of $10.5 million over '08 levels.

We have examined the issue of funding for ambulance services in the city of Winnipeg. As a result, the city will receive $4 million in new funding, reducing costs to the city and taxpayers and increasing our commitment for emergency care.

As part of our commitment to reducing the effects of climate change, budget '09 includes close to $3 million in additional operating funding for Winnipeg transit services.

Often the best ideas for neighbourhood revitalization come directly from the communities themselves. Neighbourhoods Alive! helps community organizations in designated areas rebuild their neighbourhoods.

In budget '09, funding will continue the expansion of this successful program in seven Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods: Daniel McIntyre, St. Matthews, Centennial, West Alexander, North Portage, Dufferin and St. Johns, as well as five other centres across Manitoba: Dauphin, Flin Flon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk and The Pas.

Lorsque de nouveaux arrivants débarquent au Manitoba, il est important de faciliter leur intégration dans la vie économique et sociale de la province.

***Translation***

*When newcomers arrive in Manitoba, it is important we ease their transition into our province’s social and economic life.*

***English***

Budget '09 continues to encourage immigration and help people make Manitoba their home. Our investments will continue to foster welcoming and inclusive communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, budget '09 includes funding to support communities outside Winnipeg today and build the foundation for growth in the future. In '09, Manitoba's municipalities and communities will receive $84 million, a more than $4-million increase in funding over '08 levels for roads, transit, public safety and other municipal infrastructure and service priorities.

In addition, we are increasing funding for rural economic development initiatives by 8.7 percent over last year.

A key government priority is ensuring the food that Manitobans eat is safe. New legislation was introduced last fall to strengthen food safety systems as food moves from our farms to the forks of Manitoba families.

Budget '09 includes funding to expand our food safety programs, including:

·         increasing inspections of provincially registered food processing and manufacturing facilities;

·         introducing on-farm food safety programs for livestock producers;

·         developing and implementing a food safety database; and

·         creating a food safety strategic plan.

We are investing in value-added food processing in Brandon and Neepawa, which will help position Manitoba during ongoing negotiations regarding country-of-origin labelling.

We are enhancing the Rural Entrepreneur Assistance Program for full-time, small and home-based businesses, by making more businesses eligible for it.

We continue to support producers with our business risk management programs, including increased funding for our AgriStability program, and providing enhanced coverage for forage crops and soybeans through our AgriInsurance program.

We continue to work with livestock producers as they invest in improved nutrient management technologies and systems.

We will invest in resources for the Province's animal welfare program, as well as enhancements to laboratory capacity to help producers with diagnosis and treatment of animal diseases to maintain Manitoba's high-quality livestock and processed livestock exports.

We are also working with our partners from Aboriginal organizations and communities on development initiatives, local and regional infrastructure projects and new opportunities to build strong, vibrant communities.

Budget '09 includes support for technology training through the Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation, which supports 13 communities in northwestern Manitoba.

We will also establish a GO Centre in Northern Manitoba to support the production of local healthy foods.

Seniors in our rural and northern communities will have continued access to community-based programs that provide support services, such as congregate meal programs that keep seniors in their communities longer.

**Supporting Safety**

When it comes to safety, Mr. Speaker, people need to feel safe in their homes and their communities, at work and at play. We have worked with communities, organizations and local neighbourhood groups to reduce crime. In fact, Mr. Speaker, auto theft in Winnipeg has decreased by approximately 66 percent since 2004.

Total costs for police, prosecutions, courts and corrections have increased $24 million since budget '08. To enhance the safety of Manitobans and offset these costs, we are increasing court costs, small claims courts filing fees and fines for speeding by a total of $4.3 million.

Police officers lead our efforts to prevent and address criminal behaviour and work hard to keep Manitoba communities safe. Mr. Speaker, we are supporting hiring 10 new police officers for the city of Winnipeg and one new officer for Brandon.

Manitobans have also been asked to provide input into changes to The Provincial Police Act, to ensure the legislation will meet the needs of both the police and the citizens they protect.

Recently, construction has been completed on the expansion of the Milner Ridge Correctional Facility, and this year construction will begin to replace the Women's Correctional Facility.

We will continue to expand the successful Lighthouses program, which helps prevent crime by supporting youth and providing community-based recreation opportunities.

The SafetyAid program will be further expanded to support seniors in rural and northern Manitoba, as well as enhancing a program to help victims of crime obtain restitution ordered by the court.

Réduire la violence familiale et offrir des lieux sûrs aux victimes est une autre façon de veiller à la sécurité des femmes et des enfants manitobains.

***Translation***

*Reducing family violence and providing safe places for victims is another way to ensure the safety of Manitoba women and children.*

***English***

Budget '09 includes increased funding for shelter renovations, improved shelter security and expanded services for children in Winnipeg, including the expansion of a low-conflict access program.

Increased funding for the ice jam mitigation program, along with the addition of a second Amphibex, will further protect Manitobans from floods. We are expanding hydrologic services to further support flood protection efforts.

**Renewing Environmental Resources**

Investing in the emerging green economy today will position Manitoba to be an economic leader in the future.

Manitoba's green strategy is already benefiting our province. We continue to support the development of hydro-electric projects in northern Manitoba to create clean energy sources that fuel the economy and reduce the effects of climate change.

Manitoba Hydro is a key partner in our fight against climate change. Arrangements have been made for sales of clean hydro-electric power into Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Manitoba Hydro has partnered with Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation on the construction of the Wuskwatim generating station, development work continues on Conawapa dam, and talks are currently under way for the hydro-electric development of the Keeyask generating station.

The governments of Canada and Manitoba, along with Manitoba Hydro, have committed more than $60 million for northern Aboriginal pre-project training related to hydro-electric development in northern communities. To date, 2,000 Aboriginal Manitobans have received skills assessments and training for employment on new dam projects.

Manitoba Hydro is also in negotiations to develop a new 300-megawatt wind farm project, further diversifying our energy resources. And we are continuing to invest in expanding geothermal power. These continuing investments in wind, geothermal and other alternative energies are an important part of our climate change action plan.

To further support Manitobans making energy efficient improvements to their homes, Manitoba Hydro will reduce the interest rate on its popular Power Smart Residential Loan program from 6.5 percent to 5 percent.

Our green strategy includes programs to ensure Manitobans can access environmentally responsible options for recycling unwanted electronic equipment and household hazardous waste.

Mr. Speaker, we are increasing support to our recycling initiative for electronics recycling. We are also expanding funding to continue the collection and disposal of household hazardous waste to keep products out of Manitoba landfills.

The office of the Fire Commissioner will research and develop ways to incorporate more environmentally friendly and safer practices for building construction in Manitoba.

**\*** (15:20)

We will continue to invest in our natural resources by:

·         working with Manitoba fishers to establish a new governance framework for Lake Winnipeg; and

·         undertaking more scientific research to support nutrient reduction options;

We are also:

·         developing long-term objectives for nutrient reduction in the Lake Winnipeg basin;

·         investing additional resources for the inspection of livestock manure storage facilities and on-site waste-water facilities;

·         investing in the growth and development of conservation districts to deliver more effective land and water management; and

·         funding the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect natural environments in Manitoba.

We are developing a new wetlands protection and restoration initiative, including the restoration of the province's largest marshes, including Delta Marsh. This will help reduce greenhouse gases, improve drought resistance and water quality, enhance flood protection and restore wildlife habitat.

Healthy forests are important to the ecosystem. To protect the environment and support our recreation and ecotourism industry, we have introduced legislation to prohibit logging in 80 out of 81 provincial parks and all future parks.

Les parcs provinciaux et terrains de camping du Manitoba offrent d'excellentes occasions de loisirs dans l'ensemble de la province.

***Translation***

*Manitoba's provincial parks and campgrounds provide tremendous opportunities for recreation across the province.*

***English***

The new Duff Roblin Park Reserve in St. Norbert is part of our commitment to support recreational and economic opportunities along an expanded floodway.

In tough times, families may look for recreation opportunities close to home. To encourage Manitobans to see more of their magnificent province, there will be no entrance fees to provincial parks for the next two years.

Budget '09 also commits to the development of a new provincial campground, as well as recreation and infrastructure upgrades to current parks and campgrounds, such as bicycle paths in Birds Hill Provincial Park. And we continue to support east‑side Manitoba First Nations communities in their bid to develop a UNESCO World Heritage Site by investing in research and management planning.

**Vibrant Culture**

Manitoba's cultural spirit brings energy to our communities and enjoyment to our lives. Our artists use their creativity and immense talents to celebrate our diversity and our achievements. Investing in the arts builds our cultural strengths, and we support the production, exhibition and publication of art across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are increasing operating grants to major agencies and other arts, recreation, heritage and sports organizations by 2 percent in budget '09, effective this July.

We continue to invest in recreation opportunities to ensure Manitobans have access to activities that support healthy lifestyles and enhance social connections in communities around the province. This year, we will provide funding for several initiatives, including constructing a new community hall in Grandview and the completion of an aquatic centre in Arborg. We are also continuing to fulfil our commitment to fund the development of bicycle paths in the city of Winnipeg.

Manitoba's filmmakers and musicians produce extraordinary works of art, and we continue to support their efforts. We are increasing our grant assistance to several organizations, including On Screen Manitoba and the Western Canadian Music Alliance, to support their continued success.

The Manito Ahbee Festival celebrates Aboriginal culture: We will continue to provide operating grants to ensure the festival showcases the talents of Aboriginal Manitobans for many years to come.

Nous devons aussi protéger le riche patrimoine du Manitoba. Pour ce faire, nous fournissons des fonds pour la conservation des ruines dans le parc provincial du Monastère-des-trappistes à Saint-Norbert et pour la célébration du centenaire de la naissance de Gabrielle Roy, l'un des plus grands écrivains du Manitoba.

***Translation***

*Manitoba's rich heritage must also be protected. To do so, we are providing funding for the preservation of the ruins at the Trappist Monastery Heritage Park in St. Norbert, as well as celebrating the centenary of Gabrielle Roy, one of Manitoba's greatest writers.*

***English***

Major sporting events are another opportunity to promote our province. We are pleased to support the '09 Allen Cup in Steinbach, the '09 National Aboriginal Hockey Championships in Winnipeg and the Memorial Cup in Brandon in 2010. We are also a key participant in planning a bid to host the World Fire and Police Games in 2015.

Next February, the Olympic Games are returning to Canada for the first time in more than 20 years. Budget '09 includes funding to tell Manitoba's story to the world at this event.

**Modernizing Government**

When it comes to a modern government and an effective civil service, which is vital to the economic stability and future success of Manitoba, government must embrace different ideas and perspectives, reach out and listen to the needs of the people we serve and act in the best interests of Manitobans.

Since '99-2000, Manitoba's total per capita expenditure growth has been among the most moderate of all provincial governments. We continue to strive to provide better services without increasing the cost of government.

Prudent control, management and use of public resources are key to making government more efficient, accountable and transparent, while delivering results that matter to Manitobans.

In tough economic times, it is especially important for government to make the best use of public resources. To do this, we will manage our staff vacancies and reduce overhead costs.

It is also important that information is easy to find and understand. We continue to reduce red tape and make it easier for people to find information and streamline access to government services.

We have used technology to develop innovative ways of providing services to Manitobans. Through our Web site, manitoba.ca, people can now apply for child-care assistance, book a campsite at a provincial park or apply for a student loan, while businesses can manage their tax accounts.

Government is also streamlining and improving services for businesses. This includes the Manitoba Business Portal, a user-friendly, Web-based gateway for a wide range of information and services for businesses and entrepreneurs.

The provinces and the federal government have agreed to reduce the red tape on infrastructure projects by making application processes easier. This results in more efficient environmental and regulatory reviews and ensures we get shovels in the ground sooner.

Recently, all provinces signed amendments to the Agreement on Internal Trade to ensure effective dispute mechanisms and establish full labour mobility across the country.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Speaker, budget '09 is planting the seeds today for growth tomorrow.

This is a balanced budget, with a strong plan to focus on the priorities of Manitobans and address economic uncertainty, including:

·         planning for long-term prosperity with investments in infrastructure, education, training and job creation, while increasing access to credit and investment for businesses;

·         supporting vital services and enhancing the environment; and

·         modernizing government.

Le budget 2009 présente un plan qui nous permettra d'affronter directement ces défis et de placer notre province dans une position qui lui garantira un avenir solide et prometteur.

***Translation***

*Budget 2009 has a plan to confront challenges head on and position our province for a strong and promising future.*

***English***

Mr. Speaker, this plan supports our vision of Manitoba as a place where all can live and prosper with dignity.