

GROWING MANITOBA

A Provincial Election Platform from the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce

This election is one of the more critical elections for our province and comes at a time when economists and think tanks peg Manitoba to be one of the few provinces to grow in the years to come. Yet, we remain mired in debt with no blueprint for how to get back to balanced budget. If the projections are correct and we will outpace a number of provinces in terms of growth, there needs to be a plan and vision for growth.

Over the course of the days leading to April 19, all three leaders will be asked to share their vision on these issues and the role the business community in the province can play in turning Manitoba into the best place to live and work. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce (MCC) will be holding the parties accountable on their platforms but, regardless of who comes out on top, we are looking for a specific focus in three key areas that we view as critical to future growth in our province.

These areas include:

- Economic Competitiveness
- Workforce
- Rural Economic Development



THE MANITOBA CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT - COMMUNITY VALUES

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

In today's globally competitive business environment, MCC believe it is imperative that government create a climate that attracts new business and allows existing businesses to grow and thrive in Manitoba. Business leaders have made it clear that they don't believe Manitoba's business climate is competitive with other provinces.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce calls on all parties to commit to:

- A provincial review of the tax structure (both personal and corporate) of Manitoba, focused on examining:
 - Implementation of long-term provincial strategies to provide the business community with confidence and certainty that tax reduction is a priority, and
 - Setting a target of having Manitoba's tax levels and provincial tax threshold levels in the top three most competitive when compared with other provinces.
- Raise the Basic personal tax exemption to become more competitive with other provinces.
- Evaluate government expenditures for efficiencies and effectiveness, establish a Commission on Efficiencies that will engage the public in determining if provincial services are being provided in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.
- Commit to the creation of an accessible venture capital fund and supportive tax credit policies to leverage investment in the growth of new and existing businesses.
- That the provincial government joins the New West Partnership Agreement, or enhance and improve a similar agreement.
- The Manitoba Government adhere to a commitment of returning to a balanced budget.

WORKFORCE

It is the number one concern raised to MCC from both members and local Chambers alike - workforce. While it remains the number one challenge, it also is the most complex and wide-ranging issues to address.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce calls on all parties to commit to:

- Adopt a collaborative approach to addressing the skills gap by establishing a formal dialogue framework with a defined process and governing principles. The mandate should include the incorporation of business perspectives in the development of provincial and federal actions and programs on skills development and training.
- Commitment to the creation of an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy to ensure inclusion and partnership in economic and labour growth policies.
- Support increasing the number of economic immigrants to this country to at least double the current rate; commensurate with need.
- Establish formalized partnerships between business, industry, academic institutions, and the public sector to share labour market data, avoid duplication and to collaboratively strategize on labour market challenges.
- Ensure Manitoba's annual labour force growth is competitive with other Western provinces.
- Invest in tools to provide better and more accurate Labour Market Information (LMI).

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Manitoba is a great place to do business – but no one will argue that there is more that we can do to create jobs, increase opportunities for business success and generate greater wealth and prosperity for all Manitobans. The potential economic development opportunities in rural and Northern Manitoba are not being fully captured and greater potential can be achieved.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce calls on all parties to commit to:

- Commit to a partnership with municipal governments that works to address the existing fiscal framework between the province and municipalities to meet the challenges of the future.
- Establish a northern commission to assess Manitoba's transportation infrastructure and its limitations on northern development, along with development of a strategy that addresses the Port of Churchill as a strategic transportation hub for Northern re-supply, arctic sovereignty, and as an Arctic Gateway to international markets.
- Continue to take a leadership role in bringing stakeholders together to place an urgent and high priority on water management issues in our province.
- Implement recognized service standards to the regional communities and provides internship programs to train people in the local community with consideration of the accessibility requirements of the users.