

**RECOVER
TOGETHER**

Strengthen.

Invest.

Build.

Speech

The 2022 Manitoba Budget Address

Honourable Cameron Friesen

Minister of Finance

April 12, 2022

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that Manitoba is on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk peoples.

We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

This document is available on the Internet at: www.gov.mb.ca/finance

Information available at this site includes:

- Manitoba Budget 2022 Address
- Budget 2022
 - Summary Budget and Financial Updates
 - Fiscally Responsible Outcomes and Economic Growth Strategy
 - Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - Tax and Fee Measures
- Estimates of Expenditure for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2023

Available in alternate formats upon request.

Les documents offerts en français sur le site Internet www.gov.mb.ca/finance/index.fr.html comprennent :

- Discours du Budget 2022 du Manitoba
- Budget 2022
- Budget des dépenses pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2023
- Rapports financiers

Disponible en d'autres formats, sur demande.

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Introduction

Madam Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, I am pleased to rise in the House today to deliver the 2022 Budget.

I want to begin by addressing the appalling war in Ukraine that has shocked Manitobans and all Canadians.

The Ukrainian people settled on Manitoba farms as early as 1891 and then in Winnipeg's inner city neighbourhoods at the start of the last century.

They have strong roots in our province.

Today, we have the largest proportion of Ukrainian Canadians in the country. One in seven Manitobans are of Ukrainian descent, representing 180,000 people.

Over the last month, we have seen Manitobans of all backgrounds come together like never before to support the Ukrainian people, with thousands attending rallies, raising funds, and offering to open their homes to resettled families.

Madam Speaker, our government joins Manitobans in supporting the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom.

We have provided \$650,000 in aid through the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and an additional \$150,000 to the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation.

We have established our Ukrainian Refugee Task Force to welcome an influx of Ukrainians to our province, and provide a full range of service supports to rebuild their lives.

We have expedited Ukrainian applications through our Provincial Nominee Program, and we have waived all fees for the program effective February 22.

I want Manitobans to know that our government will continue these efforts.

Our hearts are open and our arms are outstretched.

We stand with the Ukrainian people.

Madam Speaker, this year's Budget is the product of extensive public engagement.

We heard from over 51,000 Manitobans who completed our online survey and participated in town halls and other virtual events throughout our province.

What we heard from Manitobans is that they want a government that will take action on their priorities.

They want a reliable health care system.

They want relief from rising costs.

And they want an economy that provides good jobs and opportunity for their children and grandchildren.

This budget produces real results for them.

It strengthens, invests, and builds our province.

It strengthens our health care system.

It invests in making life more affordable.

And it builds up our economy.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 implements our plan to Recover Together.

Strengthen

COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most difficult public health challenge the world has faced in over 100 years.

Across Canada, the pandemic strained our health care system, kept families apart, and hurt our economy.

Manitoba was no different.

Families lost loved ones, jobs were disrupted, students were sent home, and seniors were isolated.

But from the very beginning of this pandemic, our government acted on the best public health advice available.

When the health of Manitobans was threatened, we took appropriate action.

And when the time was right, we acted on evidence and took a balanced approach to give Manitobans their lives back.

Along the way, we provided unprecedented supports to Manitobans impacted by COVID-19 and impacted by the restrictions needed to contain it.

To date, our government has invested over \$3.1 billion in pandemic support to protect the lives and livelihoods of Manitobans.

We provided significant resources to individuals, businesses, health care workers, and the hospitality and arts and culture sectors.

And last year we made historic investments in our #ProtectMB COVID-19 Immunization Plan.

We prioritized Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba and urban areas and we worked in partnership with Indigenous leaders and organizations to respond.

We established supersites, focussed immunization teams, and pop-up community clinics to get as many vaccinations in arms as possible.

As of this month, we are proud to report that over 1.1 million Manitobans have rolled up their sleeves to receive two doses of the vaccine.

That means over 82% of eligible Manitobans are fully vaccinated; the highest rate among the Prairie Provinces.

Last June, we became the first province to roll out proof of vaccination cards to all fully vaccinated people in Manitoba.

With the use of these cards, our government was able to safely reopen our economy, allowing Manitobans to enjoy significant freedom in the summer and fall.

And when the Omicron variant hit Manitoba in December, we continued our balanced and scientific approach, implementing reasonable restrictions to contain the virus while encouraging all Manitobans to get the COVID-19 booster shot.

Our approach paid off – over 44% of Manitobans have gotten a booster, and our hospitalization and ICU rates have declined.

On March 15, all remaining public health restrictions were lifted, giving Manitobans their lives back.

And we remain poised and prepared to respond to new variants.

That is why this year's budget includes \$630 million to strengthen the fight against COVID-19 and prepare for other variants and pressures on our health care system.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans have their lives back.

Our government will work to keep it that way.

Strengthening Health Care

We all know that the global pandemic revealed systemic challenges in the Canadian health care system.

It revealed the need for greater flexibility and capacity to respond to a crisis.

The need to reduce surgical and diagnostic wait times.

The need to provide more compassionate care for Canadian seniors closer to home.

And it revealed the need to address the often silent epidemic of mental health and addictions challenges in our communities.

These challenges are not unique to Manitoba, but in Manitoba we are taking action to address them.

We are responding with \$7.2 billion for health care.

That is the most significant health care investment in the history of our province.

It is over \$1 billion more than the previous government ever invested in health care.

Madam Speaker, we are ready to strengthen our health care system, addressing the systemic issues revealed by the pandemic and left unaddressed by the previous government.

We are ready to Recover Together.

Improving Capacity

We thank all of the frontline health care heroes who worked tirelessly over the last two years.

Your compassion, dedication, and strength saved lives.

You have the enduring gratitude of all Manitobans.

Our doctors, nurses, and allied health workers know more than anyone that Manitoba needs more Intensive Care Unit capacity and we need more nurses to staff those units.

This year's budget starts to invest the \$30 million we have allocated to add 28 additional beds to our Intensive Care Units.

To help staff those units, we are investing \$11.6 million to add 400 permanent nursing seats to Manitoba's postsecondary institutions.

And we are streamlining the recognition of internationally educated nurses, helping newcomers build a life in Manitoba while building up our health care system.

We also need new and updated facilities to strengthen system capacity.

Madam Speaker, our health care capital plan invests \$2.3 billion in targeted health care capital projects.

That includes over \$100 million for the St. Boniface Hospital Emergency Room redevelopment, tripling the size of its ER.

And this year the new Acute Stroke Unit at Health Sciences Centre will open, providing stroke patients with the world-class treatment they deserve, saving and restoring lives.

Over future years, we are investing \$812 million to build, expand, and fix our health care facilities in all regions of our province in support of Manitoba's Clinical and Preventative Services Plan.

We are building new hospitals in Portage la Prairie and Neepawa.

And we are expanding existing hospitals – in Ashern, Brandon, Dauphin, Morden-Winkler, Selkirk, and Steinbach.

On top of these investments, we are hiring 35 more paramedics across our province.

And we are expanding dialysis services so Manitobans can access care closer to home, including through the home hemodialysis program.

Madam Speaker, this year's budget strengthens capacity, providing Manitobans with a stronger health care system as we Recover Together.

Surgical and Diagnostic Recovery Task Force

All of us know someone on a waitlist for surgery or a diagnostic test and we know how difficult it has been for them.

As resources were redirected to address COVID-19, wait times increased.

As a result of this backlog, we hear the stories of Manitobans.

From the senior waiting for cataract surgery.

From the parent struggling with chronic pain as she waits for a shoulder replacement.

From the worker in debilitating pain, waiting for spine surgery.

Madam Speaker, our government is listening. And we are getting Manitobans the care they deserve.

We are proud to announce that this year's budget includes \$110 million to address the surgical and diagnostic backlog.

It is time for Manitobans to STOP waiting and START living.

We have already made progress.

Late last year, our government established the Surgical and Diagnostic Recovery Task Force to lead this critical work for Manitobans.

Through their efforts, we are expanding Concordia Hospital's orthopedic surgery program with a \$4.9 million investment, building an additional operating room that will add 1,000 surgeries annually.

We invested in the Spine Assessment Clinic to increase the number of assessments for Manitobans, ensuring 900 patients receive their treatment or care plans sooner.

We expanded Misericordia Hospital's cataract program and entered into an agreement with Maples Surgical Centre to increase gynecological surgeries.

We entered into a master services agreement with Sanford Health in Fargo, North Dakota for spinal surgeries.

And we announced a new mobile CT unit and two new mobile MRI units, which will soon deliver nearly 12,000 CT scans and over 7,000 MRIs annually.

We have made progress, but there is still more to do.

This year's budget will strengthen the Surgical and Diagnostic Recovery Task Force so all Manitobans can access the care they need, when they need it.

Improving Seniors Care

Madam Speaker, we know the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our seniors more than anyone else.

Over the last two years, Canadians over the age of 60 comprised over 62% of all pandemic hospitalizations and over 92% of all deaths from COVID-19.

Tragically, we saw those impacts in our long-term care homes, where systemic issues contributed to seniors losing their lives across the country.

Our government responded with a comprehensive review of Manitoba's long-term care system conducted by Dr. Lynn Stevenson.

And this year's budget includes \$32 million to continue the important work to implement all 17 of her recommendations.

That includes increasing staffing within Personal Care Homes to ensure seniors get the quality care they deserve.

And it includes investing in new PCH beds.

Our seniors, who have worked hard, sacrificed for their families, and given back to their communities, deserve to age with dignity and independence.

We are consulting on a new Seniors Strategy on all aspects of care, helping ensure seniors can stay in the homes they love as long as they can.

We are proud to announce that this year's budget includes nearly \$20 million to implement the strategy through new and expanded care options.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2022 strengthens seniors care.

And it protects the dignity and independence of our seniors as we Recover Together.

Better Mental Health and Addictions Services

All of us have someone in our lives suffering with mental health or addictions challenges, and those challenges were made more difficult by a global pandemic.

Our son or daughter struggling with addiction.

Our friend with depression who feels crushed under the weight of isolation.

Our parents and grandparents, who are lamenting the loss of quality time with family.

Our spouse or partner who has been struggling quietly for years, with the pandemic only making life harder.

This year's Budget takes action to support them.

We are investing millions more in mental health and addictions services, bringing our total investment to \$390 million this year.

We are committed to results.

Our Mental Health Roadmap for Manitoba provides a comprehensive strategy to guide investments in core services for mental health, addictions, and community wellness.

And we are proud to announce that this year's Budget will invest \$17 million in new programs and services to help support the first year of the plan.

We are also investing nearly \$24 million to sustain a number of highly effective, evidence-based mental health and addictions programs. This includes 60 new supportive recovery housing units that have now opened their doors. This spring, an additional 40 units come online at Riverwood House in partnership with Winnipeg Supportive Housing Inc.

And for Manitobans in acute mental health crisis, we are adding six new crisis stabilization beds at the Crisis Response Centre in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we know that Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine Clinics save lives. They have been a key part of our government's strategy to treat addictions.

Since 2018, we have opened six RAAM clinics across Manitoba – two in Winnipeg, and one each in Selkirk, Brandon, Thompson, and Portage la Prairie.

This year's budget further expands the capacity of our two Winnipeg RAAM Clinic sites, investing nearly \$1 million to increase hours of operation, helping hundreds more Manitobans on their journey to recovery.

For all those Manitobans struggling with mental health and addictions challenges, there are supports available for you.

And our government is strengthening them.

Invest

Making Life More Affordable

Madam Speaker, families across Canada are feeling squeezed.

Inflation is driving up the cost of everything right now.

Interest rate increases by the Bank of Canada are driving up the cost of mortgages and other loans.

Supply chain challenges are increasing the cost of food and fuel for Canadians across the country.

Like all Canadians trying to make ends meet, Manitoba households are feeling the stress.

That is why our government continues to advocate for federal action to ease the burden on Canadian families.

But we are also investing here at home to provide relief for Manitobans in this budget.

\$2,400 in Tax Relief

Since forming government, we have been working to make life more affordable for every Manitoban.

Our tax reductions have already put \$2,020 back in the pockets of Manitobans.

We reduced the PST from 8 to 7 percent.

We indexed the Basic Personal Amount and all income tax brackets to the rate of inflation, removing over 15,700 Manitobans from the tax rolls.

We exempted will preparation, property insurance, tax preparation, and personal services from the PST.

And we became the first province in Canada to end the death tax, saving grieving families \$8 million in probate fees each year.

But we are not done yet, Madam Speaker.

This year's budget increases the Education Property Tax Rebate from 25% to 37.5% for residential and farm properties, putting a further \$103 million back in the pockets of Manitobans.

That gives the average homeowner \$581 this year alone and brings total rebates up to \$350 million.

And we will continue to invest in affordability.

Next year, Manitobans will receive a 50% Education Property Tax Rebate on residential and farm properties, saving the average homeowner \$774.

Through these tax changes, we are set to exceed our \$2,020 tax rollback guarantee.

This year, the average Manitoba taxpayer will pay \$2,400 less in cumulative taxes than they did under the previous government.

That is \$2,400 back in the pockets of Manitobans.

And it is another promise made and another promise kept by our government.

Addressing the Price of Gas

Madam Speaker, gas prices are shockingly high.

The war in Ukraine and supply chain challenges have increased the price of energy by nearly 25% this year.

Manitobans can't afford \$2 a litre, and they know that the federal carbon tax is only making things worse.

Thankfully, our Premier is standing up for Manitobans.

She joined the Premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan to call on the federal government to temporarily suspend the carbon tax so Canadians can get some much needed relief at the pump.

We will continue to call on them to provide Canadians with the tax relief they deserve.

But we aren't waiting for them to act.

We are reducing the cost to drive a car right here at home.

Madam Speaker, in the last election our government promised to reduce vehicle registration fees by 30%.

We are proud to report that this year's Budget gets the job done, saving Manitobans another \$15 million and reducing the burden of registering a vehicle by a total of \$45 million.

And earlier this year, Manitoba Public Insurance issued \$312 million in rebate cheques, putting an extra \$328 back in the pockets of the average driver.

Over the last two years, MPI has issued three rounds of rebates worth \$500 million to help make life more affordable for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we know Manitoba families need relief as the price of fuel goes up. Our government is taking action as we Recover Together.

Relief for Renters

Manitoba renters are also struggling as inflation increases the cost of everything.

Our government has frozen the rent guideline for two years, but we know that low-income families need additional support.

To ensure that renters continue to benefit from credits, we are implementing the new Residential Renters Tax Credit.

This new Residential Renters Tax Credit saves Manitoba renters up to \$525 each and every year.

It also expands the credit to 11,000 low-income households on Rent Assist and 34,000 households living in social housing who were not previously eligible.

We are doing this while investing in new municipal housing projects and supporting more vulnerable Manitobans with the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit.

We also continue to invest to end homelessness, connecting marginalized people with the housing supports they need.

Since 2016, we have supported 4,200 more families through Rent Assist and built 745 more social housing units for low income Manitobans.

Unlike the previous government, we are investing in affordable housing for Manitoba families.

Affordable Child Care

Madam Speaker, we know that for too long many Manitoba parents have struggled to find quality child care close to home.

And when they have found a space, many parents have struggled to afford the fees.

This has kept too many Manitobans, especially women, out of the job market.

Our collaboration with the federal government is changing that.

It will see over \$326 million invested over two years to make child care more affordable and accessible for Manitoba parents.

And we are proud to announce this year's budget allocates \$82.7 million to expand the child care subsidy, reducing fees by 50% this year for low-income and middle class parents across our province.

This investment triples the number of children who are eligible for financial assistance and makes life more affordable for thousands of Manitoba parents.

At the same time, we are creating 716 spaces in new child care centres and supporting 50 new home-based spaces this year.

Madam Speaker, since forming government we have created 3,200 new child care spaces and invested \$146 million more in direct support to help families afford child care.

We are investing in accessible and affordable child care close to home.

Build

Investing in Our Communities

Madam Speaker, as the cost of living rises Manitobans need a government committed to building up communities and building up our economy.

And they know the two go hand in hand.

We have heard from thousands of Manitobans about their priorities.

They want more quality schools.

They want supports for their loved ones with disabilities.

They want safe roads and reliable infrastructure.

And they want a growing and inclusive economy, with good jobs and opportunities for their children and grandchildren.

This year's budget delivers on their priorities.

It builds up our communities and it builds up our economy as we Recover Together.

Better Education

For years under the previous government our children suffered because of crumbling school infrastructure and portable classrooms.

That is why our government ran on a promise to build 20 new schools across our province over 10 years.

Madam Speaker, we are ahead of schedule on our 20 schools guarantee.

By 2027, 22 new schools will be open for Manitoba's children and youth.

That means new classrooms, new gymnasiums, and new playgrounds for thousands of Manitobans.

Since 2019, we have built six new schools, including new classrooms in Brandon, Niverville, and Winnipeg.

And over the next three fiscal years, we will be opening five more new schools in Sage Creek, Waverley West, Inkster Gardens, Steinbach, and Morden. Students in Waverley West will be enjoying their new classrooms this year.

Our government is also committed to ensuring students get a quality education that prepares them to succeed in college, university, and in the job market.

Budget 2022 invests \$1.7 billion in K-12 Education, over \$138 million more than last year.

And we are taking steps to get all Education funding where it belongs – in the classroom.

We have established an Education Funding Model Review to ensure equitable funding across our province so that all students receive quality education close to home.

And we are listening to teachers, educators, and parents to provide students with the supports they need to learn and succeed.

Better Supports For Manitobans With Disabilities

Madam Speaker, our government has heard from many Manitobans with disabilities and their family members asking to build up supports for them.

This year's budget provides \$5 million more to support over 6,000 children and families who access the Children's disABILITY Services program.

And it invests \$24 million more to expand programming for adults with intellectual disabilities.

This includes \$10 million to increase wages for workers in the Community Living disABILITY Services program.

And we are doing more than ever to help Manitobans with disabilities live independently in the community.

As promised, we are establishing the new Dignified Income Support Program for Manitobans with severe and prolonged disabilities.

And after decades of institutionalized care, we are transitioning over 130 people in the Manitoba Developmental Centre into the community through the construction of new purpose-built homes.

Better Community Infrastructure

Manitobans want us to build up our social services, but they also want us to build up their neighbourhoods.

Madam Speaker, we are proud to announce that this year's budget more than doubles funding for the Building Sustainable Communities Fund, providing \$25 million for non-profits and local governments.

From new playgrounds, to swimming pools and community club upgrades, this investment will help ensure our communities are thriving.

We also know municipalities are the backbone of healthy communities, which is why we are providing \$313 million in funding to municipalities this year, ensuring they have the support they need to build and sustain our neighbourhoods.

Arts, culture and sports are vital to our communities.

Building them back up after the challenges of the pandemic is critical.

That is why this year's budget commits \$34 million this year and \$100 million over three years for arts, culture, and sports grants.

Madam Speaker, we are building up our neighbourhoods and communities now and into the future.

Manitobans also understand the importance of safe and reliable infrastructure.

That starts with our highways, which is why this year's Budget invests over \$578 million in capital projects.

As part of that investment, we are building up major enhancements on the Perimeter Highway, including the St. Mary's Road and the McGillivray Boulevard Interchanges.

We are enhancing key trade and commerce routes, including the rehabilitation of Highway 23 in south western Manitoba.

And to safeguard our communities from flooding, we are committing \$101 million for the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels development this year.

Protecting Our Environment

Madam Speaker, Manitobans recognize the impacts of climate change on their communities, and they want us to build up our environmental protections.

Recognizing the significant impact of orphaned and abandoned mines in Manitoba, we are investing \$50 million in rehabilitation programs to improve human health and environmental safety in these areas.

We are investing \$6.4 million in our Climate and Green Plan, advancing innovative initiatives to create a greener province for all.

And we are increasing contributions to the Conservation and Climate Fund to support a cleaner environment, climate adaptation, and low-carbon economic growth.

This is on top of strategic partnerships with the federal government and Manitoba municipalities, including investments to date of over \$182 million in provincial contributions alone to upgrade the City of Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre.

We have committed to working with the Government of Canada to meet international climate change targets.

And we are jointly investing in public transportation, accelerating the conversion to zero emission fleets.

We are also taking steps to preserve our pristine Prairie landscape, especially the beautiful provincial parks all Manitobans cherish.

From tubing and fishing, camping and hiking, and everything in between – Manitoba’s parks have so much to offer all year round.

Our new Provincial Parks Endowment Fund continues to roll out investments in accessible trails and picnic tables, more yurts, and upgrades to Manitoba’s campgrounds and beaches.

Manitoba parks will benefit from a new multi-year parks capital strategy, to modernize and enhance our campgrounds, roads, trails, and other key infrastructure.

Overall, our government is investing over \$14 million in our provincial parks, over \$2 million more than last year.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

Madam Speaker, today we are building on our commitment to working collaboratively and meaningfully with First Nation, Metis, and Inuit peoples to put reconciliation into action.

The tragic knowledge of unmarked graves at former residential schools is a grim reminder of the cruel impact these schools have had – and continue to have – on the lives of Indigenous children, families, communities, and survivors.

Our government remains committed to working collaboratively with residential school survivors, families, Indigenous leadership, elders, and knowledge keepers to support the very important and necessary process of truth-telling and healing that will move us toward truth and reconciliation.

Over the last year, we provided \$2.5 million to support Indigenous-led and community-based approaches to identify, investigate, protect, and commemorate burial sites at former residential schools.

We invested in the Clan Mothers Healing Village, helping victims of multi-generational trauma, sexual violence, exploitation, and human trafficking.

And we invested in a new Healing Lodge for youth offenders in Thompson, working in partnership with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak to provide healing and support to Indigenous youth.

This year’s budget continues this important work as we build up our province and Manitoba’s economy together.

We have committed \$5 million to support a whole-of-government approach to advance innovative reconciliation projects throughout Manitoba.

We have invested in critical water and wastewater projects for Northern Affairs Communities.

And we are investing in First Nations policing, supporting Indigenous-led community safety initiatives and programs.

Moving forward, we will work with Indigenous leaders, communities, and the private sector to increase Indigenous participation, advance key partnerships, and ensure shared economic benefits in all sectors of Manitoba's economy.

And we will continue to build on our relationships with First Nation, Metis, and Inuit peoples, leaders, and communities to realize our shared priorities based on respect, cooperation, and collaboration.

Fiscal Responsibility

Madam Speaker, Manitobans elected us to fix the finances.

In 2019, we kept our promise to Manitobans, balancing the budget after years of mismanagement by the previous government.

But the COVID-19 pandemic needed a strong response, and our government responded. That came with an increased deficit.

We have heard clearly from many Manitobans concerned about how debt and deficits will impact the quality of life for our children and grandchildren.

Budget 2022 addresses those concerns, forging a clear path back to balance.

From a pandemic high deficit of \$2.1 billion, our government has steadily reduced the deficit.

This year, we are projecting a deficit of \$548 million, and we are on schedule to return Manitoba's books to balance in the next seven years.

Unlike the previous government, we know that fiscal responsibility is critical to building up our economy as we Recover Together.

Building Our Economy

Madam Speaker, the last two years have been hard on Manitoba business owners and workers.

But we are happy to report that total employment surpassed pre-pandemic levels in December, and our businesses are recovering and growing.

Over the last year, we experienced an historic rebound in retail sales, manufacturing sales, and farm cash receipts.

Our Gross Domestic Product continues its upward trajectory and is projected to increase by 3.6% this year.

We are starting to see unprecedented new investment and job creation in our province.

Vale Canada Limited announced a \$150 million investment to extend mining activities in Thompson by 10 years, maintaining good jobs for northern Manitobans.

Maple Leaf Foods announced a \$182 million expansion of their Winnipeg facility, creating 350 new jobs.

And just a few weeks ago, Ubisoft announced it will triple the size of its Winnipeg studio, creating 200 new jobs for Manitobans.

Roquette, Simplot, and McCain Foods have also made significant investments in agriculture and food processing in the Manitoba market.

But while Manitoba's economy is on the rebound, there are still underlying challenges that we must address as we build up our economy.

According to the Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association, from 2018 to 2020 less than 1% of the value of venture capital investments in Canada occurred in Manitoba.

That is despite our province representing 3.6% of Canada's population and 3.3% of its economic output.

We are taking action to ensure our businesses can thrive.

We are investing \$50 million to create a new Venture Capital Fund to give Manitoba companies exactly what they need – access to equity, funding for innovation, and support to expand and grow.

And we are committed to increasing government contributions over the next three years.

This year's budget also makes the Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit permanent and will allow Manitobans to claim investments in new venture capital funds that provide capital to Manitoba entrepreneurs in concert with the new Venture Capital Fund.

While our economy is recovering, we recognize that the pandemic created labour shortages in key areas.

According to Statistics Canada, Manitoba is experiencing labour shortages in the resource extraction, manufacturing, food services, and agricultural sectors.

Madam Speaker, the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax Levy has been an irritant to businesses and an obstacle to growth.

We are listening.

For the third consecutive year, we are increasing the total exemption threshold for this tax from \$1.75 million to \$2 million, and increasing the lower rate threshold from \$3.5 million to \$4 million. These thresholds are now 60% higher than what had been in place from 2008 to 2020.

These changes reduce the payroll tax for 970 businesses and ensure nearly 200 employers will no longer get penalized for hiring more employees.

These are important steps, but we are taking others.

It was a Progressive Conservative government that built Manitoba's flagship Provincial Nominee Program.

Our government's Immigration Advisory Council is working to enhance that program while recommending improvements to all immigration policies and programs to make Manitoba a dynamic destination for immigration and business investors.

And this year's budget invests \$2 million in the Newcomer Integration Support Program to find newcomers good jobs in the community.

We are also focused on training Manitobans, with our Skills, Talent, and Knowledge Strategy creating greater alignment between Manitoba's postsecondary institutions and the labour market.

Under the leadership of our Premier, all of these efforts, from attracting investment and bolstering skills training to creating better jobs and growing the economy are now coordinated through the Economic Development Board that she chairs.

Madam Speaker, our government believes in the incredible power of the private sector to create prosperity and opportunity.

We also believe the private sector can help us solve social challenges, creating a better and healthier province for Manitobans.

My colleagues the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness recently announced a new partnership with Pharmacists Manitoba and Shoppers Drug Mart, creating a social impact bond to reduce smoking rates.

It is just one more example of how partnerships with the private sector can create better outcomes for Manitobans.

There are many more projects to come, and many more opportunities for Manitoba to grow and thrive as we build up our economy and Recover Together.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, we built this Budget to take action on the issues Manitobans care about.

The COVID-19 pandemic.

Surgical and diagnostic wait times.

Inflation, rising gas prices, and interest rate hikes.

We know these issues are hard, and we know how much they matter to Manitobans.

This budget addresses them.

It strengthens, invests, and builds our province.

It strengthens our health care system.

It invests in making life more affordable.

It builds up our economy.

And it implements our plan to Recover Together.

Madam Speaker, we created Budget 2022 for Manitobans.

To give them hope and optimism in the future.

Because when we work together, anything is possible.

Madam Speaker, this is our plan.

This is Manitoba's plan.

Now let's get to work.

Let's Recover Together.

Thank you.

