

March 25, 2009

BUDGET 2009 - INVESTS IN LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE: SELINGER

Budget 2009 invests in education and training and skills development to continue developing a knowledge economy Finance Minister Greg Selinger said in unveiling the budget today.

“Education and training is the cornerstone of our economy,” said Selinger. “To keep moving forward and building our province’s future, we will continue to invest in our greatest resource which we know is the people of Manitoba.”

Budget 2009 strengthens the province and grows the economy in new and knowledgeable ways, focusing on education investments including:

- providing a 5.25 per cent, a \$53-million increase, for public schools, the biggest increase ever, while strengthening the Tax Incentive Grant to encourage divisions to hold the line on property taxes;
- increasing base operating grants and strategic program investments by six per cent for universities and colleges;
- funding a new, multi-million, four-year capital program to construct new schools and renovate existing facilities;
- investing in post-secondary capital improvements at the University College of the North, Brandon University, Assiniboine Community College, Red River College, University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba;
- increasing funding for the Bright Futures Fund and Career Trek to encourage and support youth to pursue post-secondary education; and
- increasing funding for adult learning centres.

For the last 10 years, new measures have resulted in more health-care providers being trained in Manitoba to support a strong health-care sector, the minister said. Physician training seats have increased to 110 from 70 and more medical students are staying in Manitoba. Since 1999, there are over 1,800 more nurses and 288 more doctors working with Manitobans. Budget 2009 is:

- doubling the available scholarships for Aboriginal medical students; and
- expanding training for nurses at the University of Manitoba, Brandon University and the University College of the North.

Budget 2009 also makes significant investments in apprenticeship programs to ensure Manitoba industries have the skilled labour needed to grow their companies and create new opportunities. Key investments in apprenticeship include:

- introducing additional training seats for apprenticeship training;
- establishing a new bursary fund for prospective apprentices in financial need;
- providing a new financial incentive to encourage youth to pursue careers in the skilled trades; and
- continuing support for the Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative for lower-skilled, unemployed and under-employed people who need to upgrade their skills to enter apprenticeship programs and help address skill shortages in the north.

Budget 2009 also extends the co-op student and graduate components of the Co-op Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit and broadens eligibility to include higher level apprentices. This tax credit is the most comprehensive credit of its kind in the country.

Additional investments in Budget 2009 that further develop the knowledge base of Manitobans include:

- increasing funding under federal/provincial labour market agreements to support training and new skills development for workers affected by the economic downturn;
- creating Rebound, a new program to provide training opportunities to reduce the need for income assistance; and
- supporting technology training through the Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation which supports 13 communities in northwest Manitoba.

The Manitoba government in partnership with the federal government and Manitoba Hydro have committed more than \$60 million for northern Aboriginal pre-project training related to hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba. To date, 2,000 Aboriginal Manitobans have received skills assessments and training for employment on new dam projects.

The minister also noted the commitment to continue working with Aboriginal communities and organizations on development plans and local and regional infrastructure projects. Efforts to establish a Métis economic development fund and support for other opportunities including education will also continue.