

Forward

United Way believes that regardless of who we are or where we come from, there are three basic essentials for a good life: a quality education that leads to a stable job, income that can support a family through retirement, and a healthy neighbourhood that encourages personal well-being. That's why we focus our strategies on helping children and youth achieve their potential, promoting financial stability and independence, and improving neighbourhood health and personal well-being.

At United Way we also recognize that many realities will affect the contribution that our strategies make toward the ultimate goal – all Winnipeggers having access to the basic requirements for a good life. Some of these realities exist in our environment (the economic, political, social, cultural, demographic and philanthropic realities) while other realities exist within each of us (our interests, attitudes, values, needs, and capacities).

This environmental scan looks at some of these realities to provide our volunteers, staff, partners and all interested Winnipeggers with a current and comprehensive body of relevant information. We will use this information to foster reflection, inform our planning and enhance evidence-based decision-making as we strive to advance the common good and create opportunities for a better life for all Winnipeggers. Additionally, realizing that United Way cannot do this alone, we will use the scan as a common starting point for working with others and stimulating collective action that will create long-term solutions and long-lasting and sustainable change.

The scan is available in two formats. One is a detailed, lengthy report that describes in some depth, though not exhaustively, key demographic, social, sectoral and economic trends. This full report draws on dozens of data sources to provide an overview of realities impacting our city, its residents, and organizations in all sectors. The second format is an abridged version.

Both documents may be accessed at www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca or by calling United Way at 204-477-5360.

John F. Kennedy said that: ***“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future”***. United Way hopes that the information in this environmental scan will help us ensure not only that we attend to the future but also that we work together to create the future we want.

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Introduction

Periodically United Way of Winnipeg prepares an environmental scan to provide its board members, volunteers, and staff with information to inform their thinking, planning, and decision making. Several years ago, other organizations began asking for copies of United Way's scans and United Way is pleased that they find this information useful. Accordingly, the topics included in this scan were selected because they relate to the social issues that United Way and others are working to address, highlight the positive work being done by organizations in all sectors to build a stronger community, and flag opportunities and challenges.

This environmental scan provides a brief look at topics that cluster into three sections: demographic and social trends (including the social issues that that most concern the 4,164 Winnipeggers who participated in United Way's first Urban Exchange survey), sectoral snapshots, and economic trends. Information has been drawn from a variety of sources such as newspapers, Census data, and reports produced by other not-for-profit organizations and government bodies.

An environmental scan is like a snapshot in that both are taken at a single point in time. Just as the subject of a photograph may change before the image is developed, new information may become available on a topic discussed in an environmental scan before the first copies are designed and printed. As this scan was written in the fall of 2008 and completed on December 3, United Way understands that it is a starting point for readers and encourages them to use it in conjunction with more current information as it becomes available.

Demographic and Social Trends

In 1986, the World Health Organization's *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* identified a list of prerequisites for health that has, over time, evolved and become known as the social determinants of health, which include income and social status, employment/working conditions, social support networks, and social environments. The determinants also include healthy child development, education, physical environments, and several other factors.¹

While these determinants of health affect the quality of life and even the length of the lives that individuals live, they also affect the quality of life for all members of a community like Winnipeg. For example, when a family lacks sufficient income to live above the poverty line, when a child does not start school ready to learn and eventually drops out and joins a gang, or when an inner city neighbourhood falls into decline, the results ripple outward from the individual, to the family, to the neighbourhood, and then to the broader community.

Canadians understand the cause-effect relationship between the quality of life enjoyed by individuals and families and the health and vitality of their social environments and communities. A 2006 Environics survey found that "almost all...participants acknowledged that growing

extremes of poverty and wealth do affect them in some way. Many worry that this could lead to a breakdown of the social fabric and increases in crime and social problems”.²

Findings of another survey, by the Canada West Foundation, suggest that crime and social problems in some Winnipeg neighbourhoods already affect the attitudes and behaviours of those living elsewhere in the city. Seventy-eight percent of the Winnipeggers surveyed said they strongly or somewhat agreed that they were scared of parts of Winnipeg.³

The demographic and social trends section of the environmental scan begins by looking at individuals and groups – the aboriginal community, seniors, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees – and some of their achievements and challenges. Then the scan looks at how these challenges have broader implications and contribute to the social issues that most concern Winnipeggers: poverty, crime and youth gangs, housing and homelessness, and neighbourhood decline.

The Aboriginal Community

In 2006, a national poll of Aboriginal people living off reserve found that the majority rate the overall quality of their lives as good and improving and 25% believe that relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians are improving.⁴

A recent study by Michael Mendelson, a former Manitoba deputy minister of social services, found that Aboriginal high school graduates are just as likely to complete post-secondary education as other high school graduates but that almost 50% of working-age Aboriginals did not finish high school (in Manitoba 50.4%, in Winnipeg 39.4%). Based on these findings, Mr. Mendelson offers the following advice⁵:

“Concentrate on getting more aboriginal students to complete a good-quality high school education and graduate.”

“Worry about how to assist aboriginal people to obtain good, well-paying jobs or the skills and knowledge that lead to well-paying jobs.”

This focus on education is critical for individuals, communities, and the economy. Aboriginal Canadians who do not graduate from high school are twice as likely to be unemployed as those who do graduate. If Aboriginal people graduated from high school at the same rate as other Canadians, the Centre for the Study of Living estimates it would add \$71 billion to Canada’s economy by 2017.⁶

Tomorrow’s Seniors

Between 2005 and 2026, seniors aged sixty-five and older will increase from 14% to 20% of Manitoba’s population.⁷

A study by the University of Waterloo has found that only one third of Canadians hoping to retire in 2030 are saving enough to provide for their basic household expenses⁸ let alone for the rising cost of prescription drug deductibles, paramedic services, dentistry, and other healthcare products and services. Experts predict these costs will increase at rates exceeding the consumer price index creating a burden for many seniors who live on fixed incomes.⁹

Insufficient savings may prompt many of these seniors to delay retirement continuing a trend that is already evident: Between 1996 and 2005, the percentage of men aged fifty-five to sixty-four who were employed or looking for work increased 8.3 percentage points (from 58.4% to 66.7%) while the increase for men aged sixty-five to sixty-nine was 6.5 percentage points (from 16.5% to 23%).¹⁰

Despite this trend, aging Baby Boomers on the brink of retirement combined with a smaller cohort of young people entering the workforce has raised concerns about jobs going unfilled and a shrinking ratio of workers to consumers of private and public sector goods and services. To address these issues, policy experts are looking for ways to extend Canadians' productive years. Ideas include increasing the retirement age, creating incentives to delay retirement, and promoting volunteering.¹¹

Although seventy-seven per cent of seniors aged sixty-five to seventy-four and 68% of seniors seventy-five and older say their health is excellent, very good, or good,¹² even with healthy, active lifestyles, many seniors will reach the point where they can no longer live on their own. At that stage their options include living with a friend or relative, moving to a facility that provides assisted or supportive living or moving to a personal care home. With monthly costs for assisted living ranging from \$500 to \$5,000¹³, affordability is an issue for many.

People with Disabilities

One in seven Manitobans have a disability (147,590 people) and 43% of Manitobans with disabilities are over age sixty-five. Most people with disabilities classify their disability as mild or moderate – 64% for adults and 61% for children. Mobility, agility, and pain are the most common disabilities for adults while speech, learning, and a chronic health condition are the most common for children.¹⁴

Sixty percent of adults with disabilities use or need technical aids or specialized equipment (assistive technology) to perform daily activities.¹⁵ In Manitoba, 62.3% of disabled adults who need assistive devices have all of their needs met while less than half (43.6%) of children have all their needs met. The reasons for not having all needs for assistive devices met include cost (56.1%) and not knowing where to get devices (9.2%).¹⁶

Canadians with disabilities have lower education levels and lower incomes than those without disabilities. For the fifteen to twenty-four age group, 14.2% of those with a disability have a trade certificate or diploma or have attended college or university compared to 21.4% for those who do not have a disability. Among Canadians fifteen and older, 60.5% of those with disabilities had a 2001 annual income below \$20,000 compared to 43.3% of those without a disability. At higher income levels, people with disabilities are under-represented: 13.8% had 2001 income over \$50,000 compared to 27.1% of those without a disability.

The Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) predicts that the percentage of Manitobans with disabilities who are seniors will increase from 55.8% in 2001 to 68% in 2026. The organization also notes that regardless of age, people with disabilities face many of the same challenges as seniors: social isolation and the need for inclusion; the need for home care and affordable housing, and the need for technology and other supports. For these reasons, SMD suggests that government adopt what it calls a “double lens” approach that would combine into one system policies and services for seniors with those for people with disabilities.¹⁷

Immigrants and Refugees

For Manitoba, like the rest of the country, immigration is seen as the key to preventing a population decline and to filling jobs that would otherwise be vacant as the economy grows, workers retire, and the national birth rate of 1.5 children per woman remains below the 2.1 children required for population replacement.¹⁸

In 2007, Manitoba attracted 10,947 immigrants, an increase of 900 people over the record set the prior year.¹⁹ While this is double the annual number of immigrants that arrived less than ten years ago, it is just over half of the provincial government's target of 20,000 immigrants per year by 2016.²⁰ Since 2001, the majority (77%) of the 31,190 immigrants to Manitoba have settled in Winnipeg²¹

Most of Manitoba's immigrants have been sponsored by family members or have arrived in the province already possessing the skills required by specific employers and sectors. In 2006, only 12% (about 1,300) of the province's newcomers were refugees²² for whom the transition to life in Canada can be more difficult. Finding adequate and affordable housing is one of the challenges they face. There is a 50% gap between the \$500 per month rental allowance that the federal Resettlement Assistance program provides to a family of three and Winnipeg's \$746 average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment and some refugee families find themselves living in rundown apartments in unsafe neighbourhoods.²³

With 240,000 immigrants arriving each year, Canada has the highest per-capita immigration rate of any industrialized country. The *Globe and Mail* suggests that this may lead to "social tensions...with strains on schools and workplaces as newcomers struggle to adjust to a country that most believe does a poor job of helping them."²⁴

In a 2006 article for the Canada West Foundation, Tom Carter of the University of Winnipeg's Urban Institute, suggested that all three levels of government will need to coordinate their policies with each other and with other sectors to address challenges that "include residential concentrations and social exclusion".²⁵ Solutions include appropriate services, a supportive housing policy, English language training and education, and recognition of foreign credentials and work experience.

The Income Gap

Between 1980 and 2005, earnings for the poorest Canadians decreased 20.6% while earnings for the richest increased 16.4%.²⁶ In Winnipeg, the disparity in income growth was lower than the national average: low-income earners lost 0.3% of their income (median of \$16,083 in 2005) and top earners gained 6.1% (median of \$77,437 in 2005).²⁷

In 2007, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives invited four economists, a political scientist, a philosopher and a researcher to explain why income inequality matters.²⁸ Their explanations (pages 6-8) include the following points:

- "a more economically polarized Canada may be more fractious and less stable",
- "more economic growth isn't of much interest to the bottom half of the electorate if all the gains are going to the top half", and
- "inequality can undermine democracy and public spirit".

In addition to low minimum wages, economists identify several other factors that are behind income polarization: fewer unionized jobs, employers' efforts to control and cut costs, job losses related to new technology, high paying jobs being transferred from Canada to low-wage countries, government cuts to income support transfers, and tax cuts that benefit those with higher incomes.²⁹

Canadian Policy Research Networks suggests three strategies that governments can use to give "lower-income families a chance to achieve higher levels of education and skill development": (1) invest in universal, day-long education for three- and four-year olds so that they are ready for school, (2) refocus on elementary schools – in Ontario more than 40% of grade three students do not have the literacy skills they need to advance to subsequent grades on schedule, and (3) invest in workplace training – more than 40% of adult workers are functionally illiterate and Canada lags behind other OECD countries in workplace training.³⁰

Poverty

Statistic's Canada's low income cut-off (LICO) is the most commonly used measure of poverty. The LICO considers the size of the family unit, the size of the community where the family lives, and the income level at which point the family will spend "20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing".³¹ In 2007 the after tax LICO for a single person in Winnipeg was \$17,954. For a family of six, it was \$42,869.

While poverty reduction initiatives often focus on moving adults from social assistance to the paid workforce, working full-time does not always generate the level of income required to move out of poverty. In 2008, a Manitoban working full time (37.5 hours/week) at a minimum wage job would earn \$8.50 per hour or \$16,575 over the course of the year. This is

\$5,091 or 23.5% below the before-tax low income cut-off for a single person. Minimum wage would need to be 25.3% higher, \$10.65/hour, to provide an annual income equal to the low-income cut-off.³²

Some Facts on Poverty in Winnipeg and Manitoba

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|--|-------|
| Winnipeg: Percent of children living in poverty, 2005 | 22.1% |
| Manitoba: Percent of recent immigrant children living in poverty, 2001 | 51.2% |
| Manitoba: Percent of workers earning less than \$10/hour, 2006 | 19.4% |
| Manitoba: Percent of workers earning less than \$10/hour who are at least 25 years old, 2006 | 45.2% |

The 2001 Census (2006 Census data is not yet available) revealed that 123,040 people in the City of

Winnipeg, 20% of the total population, were living on incomes below LICO.³³

Source: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, *2007 Manitoba Child and Family Report Card*

According to Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "children from poor families have much higher illiteracy and (school) failure rates than their middle class peers."³⁴ Research conducted by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy confirms this. The research followed the progress of 13,500 children who were born in Manitoba in 1984 and 1985. The study concluded that a significant proportion of Manitoba's children are at risk for not reaching their potential and that this risk is closely tied to three risk factors:

- a family receiving income assistance at some point when the child was between the ages of ten and seventeen,
- the child's mother having her first child when she was a teenager, and

- the child being taken into care or the family receiving services from Family Services while the child was between the ages of ten and seventeen.

The study concluded that of the 11,703 youth born in Manitoba in 1984 and 1985 who were living in Winnipeg when they were seventeen, 3,622 (31%) had at least one of these risk factors, 997 (8.5%) had two risk factors, and 457 (4%) had all three risk factors.

Canadians are aware of the financial and other costs related to poverty. During focus groups conducted by Environics in 2006, “almost all...participants acknowledged that growing extremes of poverty and wealth do affect them in some way. Many worry that this could lead to a breakdown of the social fabric and increases in crime and social problems”.³⁵

There are ways to reduce the personal and societal costs of poverty. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy says that interventions can increase the likelihood that children from low-income neighbourhoods will succeed in school. Such interventions include pre-school initiatives, high quality child care, and literacy programs for students who have already started grade one.³⁶

In Winnipeg, two new initiatives are working to reduce poverty. The Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC) was established in 2007 when community leaders from all sectors joined together to develop a community-wide, integrated, cross-sectoral approach to reduce poverty. The council will complete its long-range planning early in 2009 and intends to build on the work already being done by non-profit organizations and community groups.

Make Poverty History Manitoba, a coalition of approximately thirty organizations, has conducted community consultations and drafted a discussion paper that “sets out principles and targets for a significant improvement and reduction in poverty and social exclusion”.³⁷ The paper presents outcomes and actions in seven areas: housing, income security, the labour market, education, recreation, transportation, and disability supports.

A report from the National Council of Welfare affirms that such poverty reduction initiatives are on the right track: “there is global evidence that poverty and security can be reduced, and that economies and societies are stronger as a result”.³⁸

Crime and Youth Gangs

Early in 2007, the Canada West Foundation surveyed 500 people in each of the six major cities in western Canada about urban and social issues. The survey found that Winnipeggers were the most likely to say they strongly or somewhat agree that they are scared of parts of their city (78.4%) and most likely to say that reducing crime is a very high or high priority (85.0%).³⁹

In 2007, crime rates fell in most of Canada's twenty-seven census metropolitan areas with crime in Winnipeg declining 13%, the third largest decrease.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Winnipeggers are concerned about youth crime. Fifty percent of the 4,164 people who participated in United Way of Winnipeg's first Urban Exchange survey ranked youth crime and gang activity as one of the top three social issues that concern them most.⁴¹

In its publication *Gang Awareness*, the Winnipeg Police Service lists nineteen risk factors leading to gang involvement. These include low self-esteem, peer pressure, parental neglect, poverty, a rundown physical environment, low academic achievement, dropping out of school, a perceived lack of opportunity, and lack of positive role models.

Some of the youth who engage in crime and gang activity are affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).⁴² A recent study by a researcher from the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine found that 10% of ninety-one inmates at Stony Mountain Penitentiary had some form of FASD. This is ten times higher than the incidence of FASD found in the general population.⁴³

Researcher Michael Chettleburgh suggests several ways to deal with gangs: research the nature of gang activity in the community, train and support parents, and provide more after-school programs and youth centres. He also recommends providing economic opportunities for at-risk and gang-involved youth, establishing mentoring and alternative school programs, implementing community policing, revitalizing social housing, and investing in mental health services.⁴⁴

The provincial government's \$2.2 million initiative to revitalize its largest public housing complex, Gilbert Park, incorporates many of the strategies recommended by the experts. The initiative includes renovations to the 254 units that are home to 1,000 people; improved outdoor lighting; a playground, basketball court, and skateboard park; an after-school and weekend drop-in program, and a team of four social workers to identify youth at high risk of joining a gang.⁴⁵

The new North End Wellness Centre, on the site of the North End YMCA-YWCA that closed in 1995, will also incorporate several strategies. The centre will be operated by Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the YMCA-YWCA and will include daycare spaces for forty-eight children, after school and weekend programs for children and youth, a gym, a playground, a community kitchen, and health services provided by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.⁴⁶

Housing and Homelessness

Several groups and initiatives are working to make home ownership affordable for low-income Winnipeggers. SEED Winnipeg's IDA (individual development account) Program combines financial management training with a matched savings program that helps people save to buy their first home or to renovate a home they already own. Since the program began in 2000, forty-five participants have purchased their own homes and thirty have used their savings for renovations.

Winnipeg has several initiatives to improve housing in older neighbourhoods and make home ownership possible for those living on low incomes. For example, the North End Housing Project has purchased and renovated approximately 150 old houses in the North End and then rented or sold the houses to local residents.⁴⁷ In 2008 the project entered into a partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation to build or restore five to ten affordable homes each year, mainly in the North End.⁴⁸ In 2008, the Manitoba Real Estate Association and the federal and provincial governments announced they would contribute a total of \$530,000 to provide up to forty Aboriginal families with the opportunity to purchase a home with a 5% down payment.⁴⁹

Winnipeggers who do not have sufficient assets or income to own a home face two significant challenges finding adequate rental housing. The first challenge is the lack of available rental properties – in August 2008, Winnipeg had a 1% vacancy rate for rental properties and zero vacancy for social housing.⁵⁰ Rental rates pose the second challenge. In November 2008, a single parent with one child would have received a total of \$416 to \$467 per month from basic employment and income and shelter assistance.⁵¹ This total is about \$300 less than the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Winnipeg as estimated by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.⁵²

Lack of available housing and lack of financial resources contribute to homelessness. According to Raising the Roof, a national organization working to eliminate homelessness, other contributing factors include chronic physical, emotional or mental health problems and alcohol and drug addictions.⁵³

Raising the Roof says that most “homeless people want to get off the street and into stable adequate housing”.⁵⁴ However, to make this transition, many homeless people require more than housing. They need housing support services (such as health care, mental health or addictions counselling, etc.) that address the root causes of their homelessness. A study conducted by BC’s Simon Fraser University found that it costs \$37,000 per year per person to provide non-housing support services to formerly homeless people who have addictions or mental health problems. This is 33% less than the \$55,000 average cost of providing homeless people with services in hospital emergency departments, emergency shelters, and the corrections system.⁵⁵

Neighbourhood Decline and Safety

The Canada West Foundation includes homelessness along with drug activity, prostitution, and panhandling in its list of social issues that affect quality of life and public safety. In 2007, the foundation asked five hundred Winnipeggers about these social issues and found the following:⁵⁶

All of the social issues included in the survey can be symptoms of, or contributors to, neighbourhood decline, which is a top-three social issue for 19% of the Winnipeggers who participated in United Way of Winnipeg’s first Urban Exchange survey.⁵⁷ Canada West describes two diverse approaches to address these issues:

On the one hand, there are individuals and groups who focus on helping people in need. Those approaching street level social issues from this perspective are likely to place priority on policy options such as support programs for people with addictions, sex trade workers, and the homeless, and on addressing root causes, such as poverty, mental illness, and discrimination. On the other hand, there are individuals and groups who see street level social issues as problems to be

“cleaned up” so as to reduce negative effects on businesses and residents.

Those approaching street level social challenges from this perspective are likely to place priority on policy options such as crackdowns on crime. Given these two divergent perspectives, policy debates about street level social challenges have the potential to be highly divisive and contested.⁵⁸

Research conducted by The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) found that one symptom of neighbourhood decline often causes another so that decline becomes “a complex, self-reinforcing phenomenon in which symptoms of decline themselves become causes”.⁵⁹

As a neighbourhood sinks further and further into decline, the people who stay are those who cannot afford to leave. The result is a concentration of poor people who are geographically, socially, and economically isolated. The effects – addictions, crime, violence, etc. – extend beyond the neighbourhood and affect the social cohesion, economic prospects, and vitality of the entire city.

It takes many years for a neighbourhood to decline. Because the causes are complex and inter-related, it also takes many years to reverse the process. CMHC stresses that reversing decline requires partnerships among all levels of government, the private sector, and community organizations and suggests a framework for action that includes policies that promote economic growth and increase prosperity, subsidies to encourage businesses to locate in inner city areas, crime prevention, infrastructure improvements, home ownership programs, subsidies for home repairs, social housing, and building and zoning codes.⁶⁰

In addition to the home ownership and renovation programs mentioned earlier, several government and community initiatives are focussed on revitalizing Winnipeg’s oldest neighbourhoods and addressing concerns about safety. For example, the chief of police and the city’s director of community services are working with community leaders to develop LiveSAFE Winnipeg, a strategy that the *Winnipeg Free Press* described as “a broad crime-prevention strategy that would address issues beyond policing and consider the social and economic causes of crime.”⁶¹

For the Common Good

The social determinants of health – education, income, healthy child development, social support networks, physical and social environments, etc. – are the building blocks for healthy and productive lives, strong and healthy families, and successful, vibrant communities. Several of these determinants were mentioned in the demographic and social trends section of this scan because they are causes or symptoms of many of the social issues that most concern Winnipeggers.

Some researchers view these building blocks as financial capital, human capital, social capital and physical capital. In Winnipeg, every sector is involved in some policy, program, or initiative that is building capital to improve lives and create a more inclusive community:

- To increase financial capital, the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce has advocated for higher EI rates and the Province has targets to employ more people with disabilities.
- To increase human capital, the Business Council of Manitoba is partnering with the federal and provincial governments to provide scholarships that encourage and support

Aboriginal students to attend college and university. The provincial government has passed legislation that will result in more immigrants and refugees having their foreign credentials recognized and being able to work in their chosen fields.

- To increase social capital, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the YMCA-YWCA are collaborating to establish and operate the North End Wellness Centre, which will become a recreation and learning centre for inner city residents and a place where they will develop friendships and social networks. Residents in Point Douglas, William Whyte and elsewhere have formed associations to make their neighbourhoods safer and to influence government decisions on how their areas will be developed.
- To increase physical capital, SEED Winnipeg's IDA Program has made it possible for seventy-five families to purchase or renovate their own homes and members of the Pollack's Hardware Co-Op saved a North End retailer to preserve local ownership and control and ensure that household products are accessible to area residents who may not have ready transportation to big box outlets in the suburbs.

These are just a few of many examples of what is being accomplished to address Winnipeg's social issues and what individuals, organizations, and sectors can achieve when they work together to advance the common good.

More can and needs to be accomplished in Winnipeg because

Ultimately, it is an extraordinary waste of human potential to relegate members of our community to the social and economic margins. Providing support to meet basic needs, respecting human rights, promoting the active participation of community members in social economic, cultural and political life, and affording opportunities to learn over the life course are the key building blocks of a new social architecture for the 21st century.⁶²

Sectoral Snapshots

In recent years there has been a growing understanding that Canada's health, social, economic, and other issues are complex and interrelated and that addressing them effectively will require long-term strategies and coordinated effort. This section of the environmental scan takes a brief look at the four sectors targeted by the many calls to agree on priorities and advance common strategies to achieve success at both the community and national level: the government, corporate, nonprofit, and labour sectors.

Government of Canada

In the introduction to his February 2008 budget speech, the federal finance minister announced that his government recognizes “the coming challenges” and had been “preparing for the prospect of slower growth; laying stronger economic foundations; and keeping our eye on core federal responsibilities”.⁶³

While the Canadian Council of Chief Executives commended the government for doing “everything it can to reduce tax rates within the boundaries of prudent fiscal management”,⁶⁴ the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was concerned that only 40% of unemployed Canadians collect regular EI benefits compared to 80% in 1990, that Canadians’ personal savings are down to \$1,000 from \$7,500 in 1990, that Canada’s public spending on early learning and child care programs is the lowest among fourteen OECD nations, and that the federal budget did nothing to address homelessness.⁶⁵

In its November 2008 throne speech, the federal government acknowledged the likelihood of the deficits that some observers had predicted months earlier before the credit crisis, stock market declines, and global economic downturn became daily headlines by stating that “it would be misguided to commit to a balanced budget in the short term at any cost”.⁶⁶

Government of Manitoba

The Government of Manitoba’s 2008 budget projected spending at 3% more than the level forecast for 2007-2008 and included an additional 8% for the City of Winnipeg plus \$900,000 for the city to hire ten more police officers.

Under the banner “Strong Families”, the budget provided \$5 million for childcare, \$16.6 million to provide affordable housing for people living on low income, and \$12.4 million to support community living for people with disabilities. Under the heading “Building Manitoba”, the budget included funding for work on 1,300 kilometres of roads as part of a ten-year, \$4 billion plan for highways and bridges.

To ensure “More Opportunities for Young Manitobans”, the budget provided funds to increase the number of apprenticeships by 4,000 over four years, \$1 million to improve high school graduation rates, and \$100 million over two years for capital projects at post secondary institutions. The budget also extended the tuition freeze for one more year and mentioned a

post-secondary education strategy that would be based on three pillars: affordability, accessibility and excellence.

City of Winnipeg

In March 2008, when the City of Winnipeg froze property taxes for the eleventh year in a row, Mayor Katz stated that the city had “now hit the wall” in terms of cutting costs and suggested that a tax increase was likely in 2009.⁶⁷ Research conducted by the Canada West Foundation affirms the mayor’s opinion that money is tight. In a comparison of western Canada’s six major cities, the foundation found that after adjusting for inflation, Winnipeg is the only city where per capita municipal taxes and per capita spending on municipal programs and services declined between 1990 and 2007.⁶⁸

While the Canada West Foundation believes that Canadian cities are “under-funded and that this contributes to infrastructure shortfalls and other challenges”,⁶⁹ individual Canadians do not share this view. In a 2007 survey, the foundation asked people in the six largest western cities and Toronto whether “the local government has enough, too much, or too little money to fulfill its current responsibilities”. Winnipeggers were the most likely to believe that their government has too little money with 47% of respondents selecting this answer. Sentiments in other cities ranged from a low of 33.6% in Vancouver to 44.9% in Toronto.⁷⁰

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is based on the premise that in addition to having a responsibility to its shareholders, a corporation has a responsibility to its customers and employees, to the environment, and to the communities where it operates.

A poll conducted by the Conference Board of Canada found that 77% of Canadians are most likely to invest in, 81% to purchase from, and 79% to work for companies they view as socially responsible and research conducted by the Schulich School of Business found that nine out of ten Canadians think CSR should be a top corporate priority.⁷¹

When Imagine Canada surveyed 2,200 Canadian companies about their support for charities and non-profits, it found that 76% of the corporations donate cash, 51% provide goods and products, 43% provide services, 43% encourage employees to volunteer, and 22% raise funds from their customers and suppliers.⁷² A Probe Research survey of Manitoba’s business leaders found that their most common reasons for supporting community causes included the desire to “give back to the community” (38%), because it is “good for business” (28%), and because it is the “right thing to do” (24%).⁷³

The Voluntary, Non-Profit Sector

Canada’s voluntary, nonprofit sector is the second largest in the world, includes 161,000 organizations, employs more than 2 million people, and contributes 6.9% of the country’s GDP.⁷⁴

In a 2007 address, Tim Brodhead, president and CEO of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, suggested that the voluntary sector continues to be strained by government funding that is harder to secure, comes with conditions attached, is designated for specific projects, and does not cover core operating costs. He also identified two other challenges. First, that organizations try to meet growing demands for service even when their revenue does not increase, and second, that fewer

Canadians are donating to nonprofits/charities creating a growing dependency on fewer donors who are making larger contributions.⁷⁵

Partly because their funding is uncertain, many nonprofit organizations are finding it difficult to attract and retain staff and volunteers even for the leadership positions that are becoming available as the Baby Boom generation of executive directors, CEOs, and presidents retires.

There are also indications that fundraising may become more difficult. In 2007, Manitobans claimed \$387.68 million of charitable donations on their tax returns. This was 4.9% below the amount claimed for 2006 and reversed a steady trend of year over year increases. Since 2007, stock market values have dropped and the economy has entered a recession. This has led some experts to predict that charities may see reductions in the size of the annual gifts they receive, that fewer Canadians will be motivated to donate public securities to benefit from capital gains exemptions, and that foundations may respond to the declining value of their investments by reducing the grants they make to charities.⁷⁶

Between 2001 and 2005, fundraising expenses for large charities increased 48% to \$627 million while their fundraising revenues increased at half this rate – 24% (from \$3.805 billion to \$4.728 billion) and their cost to raise a dollar increased 19% (from 11.16% to 13.26%).⁷⁷

A charity's fundraising costs are affected by several factors including the popularity of its cause and competition, and whether it factors in costs such as salaries and overhead. To eliminate differences in the way charities record and report fundraising costs and to increase the comparability of the data that charities report on their T3010 information returns, the Canada Revenue Agency drafted a new policy statement called Policy on Fundraising and invited interested parties to provide comments by August 31, 2008.

Organized Labour and Wage Inequality

In Canada, organized labour takes an interest in a wide range of political, social, and economic issues such as health and safety, workers compensation, Aboriginal issues, early child education, and the status of migrant farm workers.

In a 2006 presentation titled *Organizing Low Wage Workers Performance and Prospects*⁷⁸, Andrew Jackson, the Canadian Labour Congress's director of social and economic policy, stated that about 25% of Canadian workers earn less than a poverty-line wage, which he defined as less than two-thirds of the median wage or less than \$11 at that time. More than half of these workers earn low wages over an extended period.

Among OECD countries, only the United States has a higher proportion of low wage earners. According to Jackson, most low wage earners work in the service sector in jobs that cannot be transferred to developing countries and in industries that compete based on price. Because competition is based on price, unionization and the higher costs that result, can lead to lay-offs and bankruptcy.

To overcome this challenge, Jackson believes it is important to target union density within an industry and within a defined labour market so that wages rise throughout the sector, a practice called "taking wages out of competition".

Economic Trends and Projections

The Economy

In mid November 2008, the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) announced that its group of thirty member countries had entered a recession and predicted that the economic recovery would begin in the second half of 2009.⁷⁹ A week later, the governor of the Bank of Canada suggested that Canada could be entering a recession and agreed with the OECD's forecast that growth would return in the second half of 2009.⁸⁰

The Conference Board of Canada, TD Economics, and others predict that because Manitoba's economy is diversified, it will outperform the Canadian economy in 2009. Early signs support this: in December 2008 Manitoba's employment rate was 4.3%⁸¹ compared to 6.6% for Canada.⁸²

A November 2008 public opinion survey conducted by Ipsos Reid found that 57% of Canadians have started to reduce their spending.⁸³ Given that consumer spending generates more than half of Canada's economic output, declines in consumer spending could contribute to economic decline. On the other hand, most Canadians are now spending more than they can afford. In the 1980s, the Canadian savings rate was 13%; in 2007 the savings rate was negative.

While Canadians and their governments focus on the immediate challenges presented by a shrinking economy, the Conference Board of Canada has identified several concerns that have long-term implications for the country's economic performance and quality of life:

- seven million Canadians lack basic literacy skills,⁸⁴
- Canada's health care spending ranks fifth out of sixteen countries while its health outcomes rank tenth.⁸⁵
- not enough Canadian innovations are converted into products that sell in the global marketplace,⁸⁶
- Canada's low productivity contributes to a \$6,400 income gap with the United States,⁸⁷ and
- Canada's environmental record ranks fifteenth out of seventeen developed countries.⁸⁸

Manitoba's Labour Force

In 2006, 24% of Winnipeggers between the ages of 25 and 64 were university graduates.⁸⁹ This is lower than most of Canada's large urban centres: in Ottawa-Gatineau, 35% of adults in this age group had a university degree; in Vancouver and Calgary, 31%; and in Toronto, 34%.⁹⁰

The 2006 Census found only 10% of Canadians aged twenty-five to thirty-four was certified in a trade compared to 13% of the fifty-five to sixty-four age group⁹¹ leading to fears that current skills shortages will worsen. In its March 2008 report⁹², the Manitoba's Apprenticeship Futures Commission noted that employers "believe that the inability to attract and retain qualified workers is negatively impacting the growth of their businesses" and attributed this in part to "a perception that occupations in the skilled trades areas are still considered to be jobs, not careers".

The Commission suggests that engaging Aboriginal people and new Canadians in the trades will be an essential strategy for alleviating skills shortages. This strategy is also recommended by

researchers who are concerned that labour shortages will extend to a broad range of occupations as Canada's workforce ages and the Baby Boom generation moves closer to retirement.⁹³

As they compete for Baby Boomers, employers will also be competing to attract and retain young Generation X and Y workers. In the spring of 2008, David Aplin Recruiting conducted an online survey of 3,000 Canadian workers and 1,000 hiring managers to learn more about Generation X, (those born between 1965 and 1982, Wikipedia) and Generation Y (those born between 1980-1994). According to an Aplin vice president, the survey found "a huge disconnect between what these employees want and what employers think they want".⁹⁴ While employers most commonly offer support for local charities and casual dress codes, neither of these are on Gen X and Gen Y's list of top employment incentives. Their top five incentives are advancement opportunities, performance-based bonuses and salary increases, an excellent benefits package, new challenges and a variety of interesting projects, and a pension or retirement savings plan.⁹⁵

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