

REDUCING SPENDING, PROTECTING SERVICES

In uncertain times, families look for creative ways to cut expenses. Budget 2012 offers responsible, innovative ways to reduce administrative spending to protect the things that matter most to Manitoba families.

Core government spending is decreasing by 3.9 per cent this year. Budget 2012 reduces or freezes the budgets of 10 departments and, where there are spending increases, they are focused on key front-line services for families including health, education and training, infrastructure and public safety.

This year, the provincial government will find the equivalent of an additional one per cent reduction in program spending.

There remains uncertainty in economies everywhere but, with practical solutions that put the priorities of families first, Budget 2012 will keep Manitoba moving forward.

Reducing the number of regional health authorities (RHAs)

Ensuring every Manitoban can get the care they need when they need it is a priority, as is getting the best possible value from health-care funding. That's why the government has worked to eliminate unnecessary spending, streamline administration costs and find efficiencies, to ensure more money is going directly into the front lines of care. Today, Manitoba has among the lowest hospital administration costs in the country and the Winnipeg Regional Healthy Authority, Manitoba's largest, has reduced corporate spending costs to less than 2.99 per cent.

There's been a lot of progress, but more needs to be done. This year, the provincial government will reduce the number of RHAs by more than half, to five from 11, as part of a plan to protect the front lines of health care and ensure there will be a sustainable public system for generations to come.

By merging RHAs, the government expects to eliminate 30 to 35 executive positions and more than half of the RHA boards, directing more money into supporting Manitoba's hospitals, QuickCare Clinics and access centres.

The new health regions will include:

- a new Western Health Region will be created by merging the Assiniboine, Brandon and Parkland RHAs;
- a new Northern Health Region will be created by merging the Burntwood and NOR-MAN RHAs;

- a new Southern Health Region will be created by merging the Central and South Eastman RHAs;
- a new Eastern Health Region will be created by merging the Interlake and North Eastman RHAs; and
- the Winnipeg and Churchill RHAs will also be merged as the regions are already closely connected.

Merging Crown corporations

Manitoba families expect good services from the province's Crown corporations and value for their tax dollars. Budget 2012 merges Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation to create a single streamlined Crown corporation.

The new Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation will eliminate one full board of directors and deliver more efficient administration under a single president/CEO. Once the merger is complete, purchasing procedures and office-space consolidations will help realize further savings.

Liquor regulation will also be combined with gaming regulation, creating the new Manitoba Gaming and Liquor Control Commission. This will reduce red tape for Manitoba businesses by bringing inspection and other regulatory services into a one-stop shop.

Reducing the cost of government

Reducing the cost of government means making more money available to go directly into schools, hospitals and roads. Government departments, ministers and all MLAs will do their part to help manage spending and protect the things that matter most to families.

Budget 2012 will:

- work with municipal governments to encourage more regional co-operation;
- continue a 20 per cent rollback on salaries for government ministers;
- defer wage increases and reduce office expenses for members of the legislative assembly;
- reduce travel costs in all government departments; and
- reduce the number of government-appointed agencies, boards and commissions by 20 per cent.