



MEDIA Release

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CAs Say Post-Secondary Education Needs Further Attention

WINNIPEG – The *MB Check-Up*, an annual study by the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba that assesses the province as a place to live, work, and invest, shows that Manitoba faces challenges in post-secondary education.

The first section of the *MB Check-Up* assesses the province as a place to live and considers the five areas of post-secondary education, income, health, poverty, and safety. Manitoba's numbers are compared against BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and the national average.

“Not only does Manitoba have a low post-secondary participation rate among its 18 to 24 year old population but growth of this population segment is declining, which will result in a smaller pool of potential students to draw upon,” said Gary Hannaford, chief executive officer of the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba.

Despite the fact that Manitoba had the highest increase in full-time post-secondary participation of the studied jurisdictions between 1993 and 2001, rising 16.4 per cent, its post-secondary participation rate in 2001 was 24.9 per cent, tied with BC for the lowest position.

“The study shows it is increased college enrollments in combination with a slight decline in the 18 to 24 year old population that contributed to the participation rate increase,” Hannaford said. “The fact of the matter is that our nine-year high is still amongst the lowest in western Canada.”

Hannaford noted that the province has seen consistent inter-provincial net out-migration in the 18 to 24 year old population (a 3 per cent decrease as compared to a national increase of just over 3 per cent in this age group) and that overall population growth actually outstripped that of the 18 to 24 age group by close to 6 per cent between 1993 and 2000.

“Beyond participation rate, you should also consider post-secondary attainment when assessing education,” Hannaford said.

Post-secondary attainment is the percentage of the core working-age population that has a post-secondary certificate or higher. Post-secondary attainment in Manitoba from 2001 - 2002 held steady at 53.6 per cent, but again was the lowest of the studied jurisdictions.

While provincial funding of post-secondary institutions has increased in overall terms and on a full-time student basis, operating costs have outpaced provincial funding increases. Tuition fees increased substantially in the first half of the decade but have been frozen since 1999.

“High education levels are proven to be powerful contributors to a country’s standard of living and its opportunity for growth,” Hannaford said. “Manitoba’s chronically low post-secondary participation rate relative to other provinces and declining student population pool present challenges to Manitoba’s pressing need to increase post-secondary education participation and attainment to meet job market demands and achieve economic growth.”

“Initiatives such as opening the new Red River College campus in downtown Winnipeg and the possible establishment of a university in Northern Manitoba are positive steps, but even more will be needed to deal with this important challenge,” he added.

A quick look at the other four factors in the *MB Check-Up* used to assess the province as a place to live (from 2001-2002):

- Income: real personal income increased by 2.2 per cent in Manitoba while the national average increased by 1.1 per cent.
- Health: Manitoba’s physicians per capita has decreased slightly, bringing the average down to 180 doctors per 100,000 people.
- Poverty: Manitoba also had the strongest performance in reducing poverty as the percentage of families living in poverty decreased for the fifth year in a row, dropping by 2.3 per cent to reach a ten-year low of 13.7 per cent.
- Safety: The property and violent crime rate decreased by 2.1 per cent. However, when the property crime rate is separated from the violent crime rate, there is a decrease in property crimes contrasted with an increase in violent crimes in the province.

“Collectively, trends over the last decade were positive but unremarkable. More importantly, Manitoba’s current standing in absolute terms in all five indicators point to continuing challenges,” Hannaford said. “The province will have to not only continue, but pick-up the progress it has shown over the past year to narrow its gap with the other jurisdictions.”

Today’s release of the *MB Check-Up* looking at Manitoba as a place to live is the first of three sections. Next week, the CAs will release their assessment of Manitoba as a place to work. The report is available on the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba’s website at www.icam.mb.ca.

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