PREMIER CANDIDATES
DEBATE OUR DOWNTOWN
Manitobans value good public policies related to:

- Transportation
- Smart growth
- Historical preservation
- Fiscal responsibility
- Cultural awareness
- Celebrating diversity
- Safety
- Affordable housing
- Global competitiveness
- Civic pride and community celebration

Many governments across North America realize that downtown revitalization and renewal has to be central to these above strategies. Does your government agree with this statement, why or why not?

**NDP:** Thank you for your thoughtful questions and for all of the good work your organization does in helping to bring Winnipeg's downtown to life.

Downtown revitalization is critical and we should all be proud of the momentum our downtown has. A vibrant downtown in Winnipeg is a measure of the strength of Manitoba’s heartbeat. Great things are happening downtown, from large scale development, to new coffee shops and small boutiques.

We have worked together with the City, community leaders, business, and our downtown partners in order to help make Winnipeg all that it can be - and that means having a bustling downtown with more feet on the street and exciting new restaurants and retail. Our support is most evident in some of the major infrastructure projects that have become reality over the past decade like the MTS Centre, the new Hydro building, an expanded convention centre, the Alt Hotel and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Less obvious but equally important is the work we are doing to promote residential development, support storefront improvements and promote the Sports Hospitality and Entertainment District (SHED), in the heart of the city. More Manitobans now work and play downtown. We want more of them to live there too.

**Liberal:** I recognize that our downtown core is actually an economic engine, not only for the city of Winnipeg, but the entire province. The Winnipeg Convention Centre for example generates $47.5 million a year in direct and indirect economic spinoff and will be more with the new expansion. I would like to see increased business traffic not only in downtown Winnipeg, but in all communities across Manitoba, because this kind of economic activity is excellent for everyone.

**PC:** We believe that a renewed and revitalized downtown is an outcome of good public policy which fosters entrepreneurs and investments in our province, including downtown Winnipeg. To that end we are committed to a value for money review to examine the efficacy of current provincial programs, including those relating to downtown revitalization. We are also committed to reducing red tape, which we believe hampers investments in downtown. A new Progressive Conservative government will work together with municipalities and strengthen relationships with other levels of government to address local issues including downtown revitalization. We believe that a strong downtown is vital to the success of any city and working in true partnership with the City of Winnipeg we will make strategic investments that deliver results.

**Green Party:** Yes, the Green Party of Manitoba feels that downtown revitalization and renewal is fundamental. To create a sustainable world we need dense walkable urban centers, with more bike paths, and better mass transit. This requires investments in our downtown centers because these older neighborhoods were built with walkability in mind. It is also more costly for us to maintain an expanding infrastructure and services (roads, sewer, water, garbage and recycling pick-up, etc.) as we build our cities outward. Therefore it is often more fiscally responsible to upgrade older infrastructure in the downtown core rather than to build out new infrastructure for new neighborhoods. Downtowns also tend to be the cultural hub of the city, with numerous museums, concert venues, and other major attractions located in the downtown vicinity.
An economically growing, competitive, and environmentally sustainable downtown is one that is a hub for green transportation, with strategies that integrate automobile, transit (LRT, BRT, streetcars, other) and forms of active transportation like cycling and pedestrian travel. Do you agree with this statement?

If yes, would your party support the creation and make a financial commitment to the city’s long-term plan and capital strategy to get us there, and make this a priority with all levels of government?

**NDP:** We agree that a healthy downtown must include smart, strategic investments in transportation and that involves integrating various modes of transportation while supporting greener, healthier choices. We have a five-year, $250 million plan to help renew Winnipeg’s transportation infrastructure, with a focused plan to ensure that active transportation options are not only more available, but encouraged. We are also fully committed to Phase 2 of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and to the further expansion of rapid transit with additional routes. We also support the electrification of our transit system and a cleaner, greener, sustainable downtown.

But our vision should not stop there. We are the only political party that recognizes the role that Manitoba Hydro can play in transforming our transportation. With Manitoba’s affordable Hydro rates and expertise, we have a unique opportunity for all electric buses and to consider Light Rail Transit (LRT) in the future. We are open to working with the Mayor and the new federal government to move forward with LRT in Winnipeg. This can be a transformative development, however it should not be used to delay the expansion of BRT in our city. BRT, electric buses, and LRT must work together to provide more efficient and sustainable transportation options for Winnipegers.

**Liberal:** I am fully behind the growth of rapid transit and applaud the transit corridor that was partly spearheaded by the BIZ so many years ago. I look forward to the completion of Phase 2 to South Winnipeg. If we expect to attract more people to live, work and play in downtown Winnipeg we must make it accessible. This will be good for all Manitobans and show support for our retail and hospitality sectors/entertainment sectors.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government would invest in strategic infrastructure that will help grow Manitoba’s economy. We will focus on a return on investment (ROI) criteria to prioritize projects, and direct investment to have the most impact. This due diligence, in conjunction with predictable and dedicated investments of no less than $1 billion dollars annually, will help address Manitoba’s infrastructure deficit. Local governments are key partners in delivering infrastructure projects. We look forward to working in partnership with municipalities and providing them with more autonomy to address local infrastructure challenges.

**Green Party:** Yes, the Green Party of Manitoba believes strongly that we need to invest in environmental transportation, both because this will make a better downtown but also because transportation is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba. A Green Government will create a $166 million per year and growing Climate Action Fund to fund environmental infrastructure. We would use this money to make bus service fare-free, to convert diesel buses to electric buses, to build more segregated bike paths, and other initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
A fully revitalized downtown is one which is planned, district by district, and unique from one another, with proper development tools, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), that support developers to deal with the economic challenges of doing business downtown. Do you agree with this statement?

If yes, will your party sustain and broaden the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for residential incentives and district development?

**NDP:** Tax Increment financing (TIF) has been an important tool in our toolbox to support new housing, more downtown private development, and public spaces that will benefit and attract more downtown residents. Today’s NDP is committed to partnering to further develop surface parking lots that are scattered over our downtown. We have had much success with TIF supporting an expanded Convention Centre and taking incremental taxes from private development projects like the Alt Hotel and the Glass House and reinvesting them in the downtown. We are committed to expanding the use of TIF to support new housing, the redevelopment of surface parking lots, as well as commercial private development in the downtown. The $400 million True North Project is an excellent example of this. Developments such as the True North Square public park are at risk in this election given Brian Pallister and his Conservatives’ opposition to TIF as a development tool.

**Liberal:** I believe the TIF Program is a very important tool that you will support builders who are considering coming to build condos and other needed projects. We have seen its successful application in other cities and see first-hand all the good it has done for our core, the Avenue building and the Waterfront district as examples.

**PC:** We support the use of innovative financing tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) where there is an acceptable Return on Investment (ROI) for taxpayers. A new Progressive Conservative government would consult with affected stakeholders to determine the most effective way to use this funding mechanism to seize new opportunities to capture growth and support sustainable development in our downtown.

**Green Party:** Tax Increment Financing is certainly a tool that our party will continue to use if we form government, however we would also review the Community Revitalization and Tax Increment Financing Act to make Tax Increment Financing more available to social enterprises, and to require greater financial transparency from private developers.
It's time to end the despair of those less fortunate (the homeless and those at risk), who face social and mental health challenges, daily downtown. Some panhandle, scour for food, become intoxicated, become aggressive and pose safety concerns, to themselves and to others.

1. How will your party support the End Homelessness entity’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness?
2. How would ending homelessness create a more tolerant downtown?

**NDP:** Homelessness can be a significant problem in any major setting, but we are not afraid to face it head on. An NDP government will do its part to support the Plan to End Homelessness. We are committed to developing more social housing units and have recently introduced rent assist to ensure more Manitobans can have access to better housing. We are committed to expanding mental health and addiction services and recognize that these ongoing social problems require continued attention. Each improvement that is made, every Manitoban that is assisted in finding housing, overcoming mental health or addictions issues, or entering training for a new job, makes downtown that much more appealing to the public eye. Manitobans should be concerned about Rana Bokhari Liberals’ calls to privatize liquor sales. Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries supports social responsibility and addiction programming and privatization will lead to less support for valuable programs.

**Liberal:** We must end homelessness and poverty for us to be seen as a real success story. We will be judged by how we treat our least fortunate citizens. That's why the Manitoba Liberal Party is committed to a pilot project on Basic Income and if it shows us the savings in health, justice and other departments that we anticipate we will bring it in across the province.

**PC:** Part of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness includes an emphasis on measuring progress and gathering data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of programming aimed at reducing homelessness. Our plan includes a comprehensive value for money review in order to gain an independent assessment of government spending to ensure better value for taxpayer dollars.

Our review will include the establishment of a robust evaluation of all government programming and a diligent tracking process that measures benefits and impacts. The ultimate goal will be smarter spending, smarter investments and better allocation of resources to support key government programming, including supports to end homelessness.

We have a plan for a better Manitoba that is based on the values of inclusion and teamwork and seeks to build not just on social partnerships, but also economic ones that recognize that equality of opportunity will only be realized when all Manitobans are given the chance to reach their full potential.

Providing housing to those in need is a foundational step towards giving those that find themselves homeless the opportunity to reach their full potential. When all Manitobans are given this opportunity Manitoba's downtown and every region of the province will be more inclusive and tolerant.

**Green Party:** Greens believe strongly in addressing poverty, we have unveiled our costed plan of how we would implement a guaranteed annual income in Manitoba that would cut poverty rates in half, and save the taxpayer money long-term. Yes, a Green government would be supportive of Winnipeg's End Homelessness plan. Greens support a housing first approach to addressing homelessness, as well as investing in prevention first and foremost whenever possible. Ending poverty will create a much better downtown because the simple fact is that many of Winnipeg's homeless live downtown already. Ensuring that we assist homeless people will make their lives better, but it will also make our downtown more welcoming.
Some single room occupancy (SRO) hotels in Downtown Winnipeg operate gaming, alcohol and vending sales, and can be the source of downtown safety issues. These hotels are also home to some people with social and/or mental health challenges. Under the Housing First model, and with the support of government, SRO hotels in other North American cities are often converted to supportive and/or affordable housing to improve downtown safety, and enhance the quality of life of those less fortunate living in the downtown.

How will you party deal with these SRO hotels / issues in our Downtown, and what role can Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries play, given their commitment to social responsibility?

**NDP:** Our record on downtown single occupancy hotel problems is strong. We aided in the conversion of the Occidental Hotel to alternative housing, the conversion of the Bell Hotel into supportive housing and assisted with the purchase of the St. Regis Hotel. We are committed to continuing work with the City and other partners to convert more single room occupancy hotels into supportive housing or new developments.

**Liberal:** We are aware of the Housing First programs being used in other provinces and will certainly consider that. Our first focus though is to studying Mincome or Basic Income and determining if that can work here. We are also committed to our mental health plan that covers psychological services under Medicare. Conversion of advertising dollars to addictions is part of our plan for the Crown under a Manitoba Liberal Liquor plan.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government would explore opportunities and work with stakeholders to determine how best to address the longstanding challenges posed by these facilities operating in the downtown. We believe that our Crown corporations have a significant role to play by only permitting advertising on socially responsible and specific business objectives.

**Green Party:** The Bell Hotel and the Merchant’s Hotel both serve as examples of converting hotels into needed social housing. We certainly need more of this in Manitoba. Liquor & Lotteries certainly has a role to play in terms of enforcing alcohol laws and regulations and ensuring that all establishments comply with those laws.
Prevalent social issues downtown, like panhandling, homelessness, and general poverty, make it difficult for many Manitobans to embrace their downtown. As a result, there is a strong perception that our downtown is unsafe, creating a negative image for our Province and City. Managing this issue through adequate policing is critical. Do you agree with these statements?

1. If yes, how many additional Cadets and or Police (currently 40-50 Cadets, city wide) will the Province fund over the next 4 years?

2. What else will your party do to address this issue?

**NDP:** The socio-economic health of the inner city is a priority of the NDP. Public perception concerning the safety of the downtown is a critical issue. Social issues like panhandling and homelessness make downtown appear less safe, but the perception can also be exaggerated. We are committed to working with the police and downtown organizations to address these issues, while also working to change the perception. Our government partnered to introduce Cadets to downtown Winnipeg and we will ensure their good work continues to support a strong and safe downtown. Our support, with partners, helped take Central Park from a neglected, unsafe park to a bustling multicultural community hub that families now enjoy year round.

**Liberal:** The BIZ has done a terrific job in helping reduce overall crime rates in our city core, innovative ambassador program, parking lot patrols and the excellent CHAT (Community Homelessness Team) are examples that I would like to see continue.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government will continue to work in partnership with the City of Winnipeg and police boards to ensure resources are allocated based on the operational requirements determined by the police service.

A new Progressive Conservative government believes in a province that is more prosperous and caring. A province that is fairer and more inclusive. A province that is more ambitious and optimistic with a government you can trust. Our plan includes a comprehensive value for money review in order to gain an independent assessment of government spending to ensure better value for taxpayer dollars on government programming.

**Green Party:** Although we believe that policing the downtown is important, and we are not looking to reduce the number of cadets and police in the downtown area, we feel that the primary focus on root causes such as poverty and homelessness will yield better long-term results.
World class public institutions in our city attract and keep citizens engaged and improve our quality of life. Do you agree with this statement?

If yes, what are some of the strategic investments that will be required in our Province over the next 4 years?

**NDP:** World class attractions are important for any capital city, as they attract visitors and help ensure that there is a buzz in the air and feet on the ground. We recently partnered with the Forks and Travel Manitoba to build a new modern Travel Manitoba kiosk. Our museums, theatres, concert halls and other major venues in the downtown make Winnipeg a great place to live and we are committed to further supporting the downtown’s cultural renaissance and promoting development.

**Liberal:** We totally agree and will work with the City of Winnipeg to ensure we are investing in the kinds of attractions that make us a more vibrant centre. This includes our commitment to spend on social infrastructure in the areas of the arts to make sure our facilities are in great shape.

**PC:** As referenced earlier, a new Progressive Conservative government believes will work together with municipalities and strengthening relationships with other levels of government to address local issues. We believe that a strong downtown is vital to the success of any city and working in true partnership with municipalities we can make strategic investments that deliver more effective results.

Infrastructure has too often been used by the Selinger NDP government to serve short-term political convenience rather than long-term economic necessity, building projects where votes are needed rather than where a road is required. Infrastructure is too important to jobs, growth, and our future prosperity to be used to buy votes at election time, or as a desperate attempt to explain away broken promise tax hikes.

The Progressive Conservatives are starting the conversation and consulting with municipalities to develop a new approach that will provide a more efficient, effective and predictable funding model for our municipal partners.

**Green Party:** Yes we need to keep making strategic investments in public institutions in Winnipeg. We have seen MTS Centre, the Human Rights Museum, and the RBC Convention Centre to name a few big projects. Certainly we want this to continue, and hopefully the dream of the Canada’s Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum in Winnipeg will happen one day. At the same time we need to think not just about big capital projects but smaller projects as well. Incentives to get more housing built downtown, thereby increasing downtown density. Incentives to get more and better grocery stores downtown. These small investments are as important as the big capital investments, and can often yield more results for less money.
There are very real economic challenges that developers face when deciding to build new housing downtown. As a result, the Residential Housing Incentive Program was recently developed by the Province and City to stimulate more housing.

If the financial gap subsidy (the grant) currently provided is insufficient to stimulate sufficient affordable housing, what else will your party do to achieve this important downtown housing goal?

**NDP:** The recent Residential Housing Incentive Program was developed to stimulate more housing in the downtown. We are prepared to extend the rebate timeframe if needed. These programs help leverage more dollars to reinvest in housing and to support the SHED.

When it came time to look at a new headquarters for Manitoba Hydro we rejected the Brian Pallister Conservative approach which was to move government jobs to cheap land in the suburbs. We directed that the new Hydro Building be built downtown, and it is now signature building in Winnipeg’s downtown skyline. Our government is now committed to ensure the new Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries headquarters will also be located downtown, bringing 400 good jobs to the downtown and supporting businesses. The Manitoba Liberal leader has opposed bringing Liquor and Lotteries jobs to the downtown and the Conservative’s leader record speaks for itself. The last time Brian Pallister was in government building cranes disappeared from our downtown and property values plummeted. His current plans for cuts are wrong at a time when governments across Canada recognize that stimulus and infrastructure spending are needed to keep people working.

**Liberal:** We support all the downtown residential construction that is occurring including downtown condos, Waterfront and Assiniboine condos. Downtown business is tied to accessible affordable downtown living, but those must be serviced and that is why we support a downtown grocery store and are happy to learn that it is in plans for the True North complex. The food ‘desert’ in downtown Winnipeg is unacceptable. The SHED (Sports Hospitality entertainment District) is a great innovation and speaks to the great work not only by the BIZ, but also Centre Venture.

**PC:** The development of a prosperous downtown that includes residential housing, retail outlets and community and green spaces is a priority. We are committed to reviewing all government expenditures to ensure investments are achieving desired results, including a review of subsidies that are in place to support the development of affordable housing in downtown Winnipeg.

**Green Party:** We absolutely need more residential houses in the downtown, if the current grant proves insufficient to stimulate the development of affordable housing then we would look at alternatives models, based on best practices elsewhere to see if we could find a model that would work.
The socio-economic health of the downtown, is directly related to the health our inner-city.

How will you increase support for inner city renewal; housing, infrastructure and other capital investments especially for older neighbourhoods that are adjacent to the downtown?

**NDP:** The socio-economic health of the inner city is a priority of the NDP. Public perception concerning the safety of the downtown is a critical issue. Social issues like panhandling and homelessness make downtown appear less safe, but the perception can also be exaggerated. We are committed to working with the police and downtown organizations to address these issues, while also working to change the perception. Our government partnered to introduce Cadets to downtown Winnipeg and we will ensure their good work continues to support a strong and safe downtown. Our support, with partners, helped take Central Park from a neglected, unsafe park to a bustling multicultural community hub that families now enjoy year round.

**Liberal:** We must build a Manitoba for all Manitobans and that means ensuring we create a business climate focused on opportunity. The money generated by growth will allow us to help those in need.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government believes in efficient and effective government with a credible fiscal plan to ensure the long-term success and viability of essential services. We will undertake a review of all program spending to ensure money being spent on the part of government is achieving intended outcomes and providing for those in need of services, such as quality and accessible housing options and opportunities.

One of the ways we have committed to improve quality of services and programming for Manitobans, including those in need of supportive housing, is to eliminate the waste in government so that all funds support frontline services that Manitobans depend on.

**Green Party:** Through our climate action fund we want to invest in initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this includes helping home owners to better insulate their houses including in older neighbourhoods that are adjacent to downtown. We feel that this would in part also help to increase property values and spur renewals in some of these areas.
Students are a big part of the downtown economy and this has grown substantially over the past decade. Campuses have been expanded and student spending is an important part of the success of downtown.

With over 24,000 students in the downtown what is your party's future position on supporting educational facilities and students?

**NDP:** The student population in the downtown has grown substantially over the past years. We will continue to support housing options for downtown students, including new housing at the University of Winnipeg. We will work with Red River College to develop additional options that would benefit students, our downtown and ultimately our province.

**Liberal:** Universities and colleges are so very important to the vibrancy of downtown and the current rapid transit routes that link the University of Manitoba with downtown Winnipeg are key investments. We want a vibrant downtown and working post-secondary institutions is essential to this end.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government believes education is the key to finding everyone's potential, and we understand and support the important role that post-secondary institutions play in Manitoba in general, and in downtown Winnipeg in particular.

**Green Party:** Students will be major beneficiaries of our guaranteed annual income proposal. We are also firmly committed to supporting the Manitoba's numerous educational facilities, such as the University of Winnipeg, and Red River College.
How will you support ongoing heritage building preservation and conversion?

**NDP:** Winnipeg's downtown is as rich in history as it is in contemporary vibrancy. It is an important part of our City’s character and the preservation of heritage buildings, including their conversion to alternate uses, is a priority that we will continue to support with grants and TIF programs. Partnerships with Red River College have infused new life into the Exchange with the Princess Street campus and Union Tower redevelopment. We have plans to continue this momentum with exciting new developments for the Exchange. And as opportunities arise, we will also continue to explore options for using heritage building conversions for government services and employees.

**Liberal:** We must protect our heritage, but with a focus. Too many heritage buildings are sitting empty due to the cost to repair them being more than building new. We must address this to ensure our history is preserved.

**PC:** We believe in working collaboration with industry, agencies, other levels of governments and all affected stakeholders, to identify opportunities to strengthen heritage building preservation and conversion. We have made a commitment to investing no less than a billion dollars on strategic infrastructure and believe that meaningful consultation with local governments and agencies are key to maximizing that investment. We are also committed to examining ways to reduce red tape that may hinder investments in these projects.

**Green Party:** Yes, it is vital that we preserve our historical heritage, as this is a major attraction and economic driver for Winnipeg.
Developing Winnipeg horizontally (sprawl) leads to increased city operating expenses and less taxes generated per hectare, as compared to developing our city vertically (density). How would you reconcile this dilemma?

**NDP:** Urban sprawl is a formidable challenge for all major cities that is best countered by ensuring that the heart of the city is vibrant and strong and by taking advantage of infill development and all opportunities to push development density upwards at the centre. We will work with all of our downtown partners to find new and innovative ways to make sure our downtown is bustling and remains the centre of gravity for our great city.

Our support for the MTS Centre, in the face of critics, helped bring the Jets back. We led the way in difficult times to keep the construction of Canadian Human Rights Museum on track. We are the only provincial political party committed to partnering with the Winnipeg Art Gallery to bring the biggest Inuit Art collection in the world to downtown. We’ve committed millions to renew the Concert Hall and brought a provincial park downtown with the new Upper Fort Garry Provincial Heritage Park. We led the way in redeveloping the Manitoba Museum with expanded halls and a major gallery refresh, invested in the development of the new Sport for Life Centre and helped reinvest in the Exchange. We are the only provincial political party committed to the Manitoba Chamber’s call to invest more dollars for Travel Manitoba to bring more tourists to our great province.

This election is about an important choice. The NDP’s commitment to downtown is to keep building. The other parties’ plans for cuts puts all our downtown progress at risk.

**Liberal:** We are committed to continuing to build rapid transit to bring our city into the 21st century. We are also committed to spending infrastructure dollars on fixing our current roads as a priority. This is not to say other road projects are not important, but our focus must be on renewal especially in and to the core.

**PC:** A new Progressive Conservative government will focus on a strong capital region model that encourages partnerships and collaboration between municipal governments and the provincial government. We are starting the conversation and consulting with municipalities to develop a new approach that will provide a more efficient, effective and predictable funding model for our municipal partners.

**Green Party:** Greens are firmly committed to preventing further sprawl. It is more costly for us to maintain an expanding infrastructure and services (roads, sewer, water, garbage and recycling pick-up, etc.) as we build our cities outward. Therefore it is often more fiscally responsible to upgrade older infrastructure in the downtown core rather than to build out new infrastructure for new neighborhoods. We would utilize provincial planning law to implement smart growth principles to limit sub-urban and ex-urban sprawl of Winnipeg.