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2017 Manitoba budget: Arts, sports programs to see big cuts

Minister says funding 'haircut' can be managed by reducing administrative costs

By Kristin Annable, Donna Lee, CBC News Posted: Apr 11, 2017 2:40 PM CT | Last Updated: Apr 11, 2017 9:08 PM CT



The overall budget for sport, culture and heritage programs will decrease from \$71.6 million to \$68 million. (Gary Solilak/CBC)

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Manitoba's latest budget comes with unpleasant surprises for the province's arts, culture and sports sectors, with program cuts totalling more than \$3.5 million.

But Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister Rochelle Squires said it's just a "haircut" and no jobs will be lost or programs cut as a result of the decreases to several grant programs in Tuesday's budget.

"We are asking that they find the savings within," Squires said. "We are asking that they reduce their administrative costs."

The overall budget for sport, culture and heritage programs will decrease from \$71.6 million to \$68 million.

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Cultural organizations will see \$700,000 less this year in grants offered by the province — a decrease from \$9.8 million budgeted in 2016-17 to \$9.1 million in Tuesday's budget.

Meanwhile the provincial Arts Branch's grant assistance program will see about \$200,000 less in the 2017-18 fiscal year, with its budget slashed from \$4.3 million to \$4.1 million in 2017-18.

An additional \$300,000 is being cut from the branch's film and sound development program, which is now budgeted at \$3.9 million, down from \$4.2 million in 2016-17.

Arts groups have already cut administrators

Squires said letters have been sent to arts and cultural organizations such as the Manitoba Arts Council, asking them to find the savings from administrative costs, without any cuts to programming or front-line services.

But the Manitoba Arts Council, which will see nearly \$200K in direct cuts, says they have already trimmed from their administration in the past year, leaving six positions unfilled after vacancies.

"We've already tightened the corset as much as we can tighten it," said Akoulina Connell, Arts Council CEO.



Akoulina Connell says the arts and culture sector has seen flat funding for years, something she says is tantamount to a cut each year. She says hearing that there will be even less money is disappointing. (Holly Caruk/CBC)

Connell says the arts and culture sector — "a growth sector for the province" — has seen flat funding for several years and the industry was hoping for an increase.

"It could have been much worse, [but] it doesn't cushion the blow for everyone in the arts sector," she said.

Minister Squires suggested organizations could cut from travel budgets without impacting services.

But Connell says MAC is already cutting costs with conference calls and are in the process of moving much of their grant application process online, but those changes aren't yet complete.

"We're moving from 54 programs to five programs, but there is a cost to implementing that change," said Connell.

In addition to the Arts Council, the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation and Manitoba Film and Music will be affected, a spokesperson for Squires said.

No word on Inuit Art Centre funding

Tuesday's budget does not mention any funding for the Winnipeg Art Gallery's Inuit Art Centre, which had received a \$15-million commitment from the former NDP government in 2015.

- Manitoba announces \$15M for Inuit Art Centre at Winnipeg Art Gallery
- WAG Inuit Art Centre project gets \$5M boost from City of Winnipeg

On Tuesday, a government spokesperson told CBC News a decision has not been made regarding provincial funding for the centre, which has another \$15 million committed by the federal government plus private donations.



The proposed Inuit Art Centre at the Winnipeg Art Gallery is seen in this artist's rendering. The provincial government says it has yet to make a decision on whether to proceed with funding the centre. (Rendering by Michael Maltzan Architecture)

Premier Brian Pallister said it's "disappointing" that his government has to re-examine some of the previous NDP government's funding commitments in a bid to slay the deficit.

He cited as another example the \$6.7-million gymnasium upgrade project at Kelvin High School in Winnipeg, which will not be receiving provincial money that had been promised by the NDP in 2014.

- Kelvin school community fights for gym project funding

"There are so many worthwhile projects out there — and look, I'm going to put the Kelvin project in there — that people support and want to see go forward, and they've demonstrated that. But you can't say yes to everything or you're going to say no to the future for Manitoba, and you're going to say no to your children's future, too," Pallister said.

Film classification board to be cut

The budget also includes plans to eliminate Manitoba's film classification board in favour of using a ratings system established in British Columbia. That move is expected to save the government \$158,000 — half of the \$316,000 it spent on board salaries and other expenses in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Meanwhile, the province's public library services will have almost \$100,000 cut from its grant assistance program with only \$6.2 million being budgeted in this year compared to \$6.3 million last year.

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Funding for Sport Manitoba, a government agency that delivers all sport programming in the province, is also being cut from roughly \$11.6 million to \$11.4 million.

The province will be saving \$1.2 million by not having to put money into the Sport Participation Fund, which was set up specifically for the 2017 Canada Games in Winnipeg.

Sport Manitoba has been directed to apply the budget decrease to its operating and salaries budget, not to any of its funding to any provincial sports organizations, the spokesperson for Squires said.

The budget is earmarking \$68 million in overall investments in the sport, culture and heritage sectors, to be spent based on the PC government's return-on-investment analysis.

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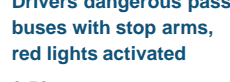
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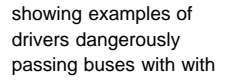
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