



TARIFF POLICY POSITION

Introduction

In a globalized economy, maintaining strong international trade relationships is essential to Winnipeg's economic success. After more than 150 years of operation at The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, we know disruptions—such as war, pandemics, and other global challenges—can create significant friction. With the ongoing threat of U.S. tariffs in place, now is the time to focus on strengthening our local economy while making the case to our allies that blanket tariffs harm all parties involved.

Our Business Impact Survey – [How Are Tariffs Affecting Your Business?](#) surveyed Manitoba businesses prior to tariff implementation and confirmed that escalating tensions already impacted businesses. Sixty-two percent of Manitoba businesses were already experiencing or anticipated negative effects from U.S. tariffs, with 72% expecting increased costs or reduced revenue. Top priorities for the business community include stronger advocacy (47%), faster dispute resolution (44%), and targeted tax relief (41%).

The economic impact of trade tension between the U.S. and Canada will be felt across industries, affecting supply chains, investment decisions, and long-term business confidence. Manitoba's business community has already demonstrated resilience through proactive strategies, but the escalating trade dispute demands swift, coordinated action from both businesses and government to mitigate risks and protect economic growth.

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce recommends



City of Winnipeg

1. Help Businesses Thrive and Expand in Winnipeg

- **Build Capacity:** Invest in essential infrastructure for prosperity, including roads, water, and sewer systems, with a focus on key economic hubs like CentrePort Canada—one of North America’s largest trimodal inland ports.
- **Easiest City to Do Business:** Attract new investment and promote expansion of local business through establishment of Winnipeg as the easiest city to do business. Elimination of the municipal business tax and streamlined permitting process for development through digitization and AI adoption are two priorities in achieving the desired brand.
- **Buy Canadian:** Prioritize Canadian suppliers in all procurement contracts.

Province of Manitoba

2. Building the Future Economy

- **Enhance Productivity:** Implement policies and incentives that support businesses in adopting AI and automation, easing tariff impacts. Targeted funding, tax incentives, and training can drive AI integration in supply chains, operations, and market expansion—boosting productivity, competitiveness, and economic resilience.
- **Workforce Adaptation and Retraining Programs:** Given the potential for layoffs and hiring freezes, workforce support programs should be introduced to upskill and retrain workers affected by trade shifts. This will help businesses retain valuable talent and pivot toward new market opportunities.
- **Buy Canadian:** Prioritize Canadian suppliers in all procurement contracts.

3. Removing Interprovincial Trade Barriers

- **Expand Mutual Recognition Agreements:** Advocate for a nationwide system of automatic recognition for professional certifications and business registrations.

- **Push for CFTA Reforms:** Reduce remaining provincial exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement to promote a true internal free trade market, such as the full liberalization of alcohol sales in Canada. This includes an agreed upon national approach and recognition of protections for public health, environmental standards, and consumer safety.

4. Market Diversification

- **Expansion of Export Development Initiatives:** Manitoba businesses require greater support in accessing new international markets beyond the U.S. Strategic enhanced activation of the World Trade Centre Winnipeg and its global network, as well as expanding export development programs and trade missions, will help businesses diversify their revenue streams and reduce vulnerability to future trade disruptions.
- **Supply Chain Diversification Support:** Develop programs that help businesses transition to alternative supply chains, reducing reliance on U.S. trade. Incentives for sourcing materials from non-U.S. suppliers and financial assistance can strengthen operational resilience and mitigate trade risks.

5. Financial Assistance

- **Prepare and Implement Relief Programming for Business:** In addition, the Province of Manitoba plays a key role in supporting businesses through targeted relief and financial assistance measures and prioritize Canadian suppliers. Short term measures such as tax deferrals must be complemented with business tax relief and needs-based/tailored business financial assistance that is responsive to evolving business needs and impacts.

Government of Canada

6. Diplomacy

- **Strengthened Advocacy with U.S. Stakeholders:** The Government of Canada, in partnership with business organizations such as The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, must intensify advocacy efforts with U.S.

policymakers and maintain continuous engagement with U.S. stakeholders to ease trade tensions, reduce uncertainty, and foster a stable trade environment.

- **Efficient Trade Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** Developing a more efficient and expedited trade dispute resolution process to help businesses adapt swiftly to changing trade policies.
- **Cross-Border Mobility:** Work with the United States Customs and Border Protection service to best ensure the continued movement of eligible and authorized persons and goods equitably, with safe, secure cross-border mobility processes, including but not limited to, honouring previously issued work permits (e.g. TNs, L1s, etc.) and supporting continued equitable adjudications for temporary business entry.

7. Empowering Businesses Through Challenges

- **Prepare and Implement Relief Programming for Business:** The federal government plays a key role in supporting businesses through targeted relief and financial assistance measures. Working with and aligning to provincial measures, federal programming must be at the vanguard of business assistance, notably tax relief and needs-based/tailored business financial assistance that is responsive to evolving business needs and impacts.
- **Improve Trade Infrastructure:** Investment in key trade corridors, including rail, highways, and border crossings, to strengthen Canada's supply chain—while also designating rail, air, and ports as essential services to ensure stability during labour disputes.
- **Buy Canadian:** Prioritize Canadian suppliers in all procurement contracts.

Business Community

8. Support Local

- **Procurement:** Prioritizing Canadian suppliers for products and services whenever possible to strengthen domestic supply chains.



The Chamber

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce