

Tuesday, November 21, 2017



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS No. 1

THIRD SESSION, FORTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE

1:30 O'CLOCK P.M.

This being the first day of the meeting of the Third Session of the Forty-First Legislature of the Province of Manitoba convoked by Proclamation of Her Honour Janice FILMON, Lieutenant Governor for the dispatch of business, and the Members of the House being assembled,

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, was pleased to open the session with the following gracious speech:

Madame Speaker and members of the Manitoba Legislature.

I welcome you to the Third Session of the Forty-first Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

Manitoba is the Home of Hope.

We have a long history of welcoming newcomers from all corners of the Earth who contribute to our shared vision of an inclusive, innovative community that is greater than the sum of our individual talents and ideas.

From the Indigenous peoples through the first settlers and to New Manitobans who continue to suffer through perilous journeys to reach our province, all have contributed to making our province a bastion of hope and opportunity.

In this month of Remembrance, we also acknowledge the great sacrifices our military personnel have made and continue to make every day here and around the world to protect the society and way of life we have created.

Here at home, your government remains committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. We are setting a new course; one that will focus on long-term, sustainable measures to fix our finances, improve the services relied upon by our citizens, and rebuild our economy.

It is not easy. It requires change and change can be unsettling.

But it is necessary.

Manitobans deserve better than to lag behind the rest of Canada in so many categories essential to our quality of life and the health of our population.

Fixing our Finances

Fixing our finances is essential to the province's future economic and social health.

Our government inherited an unsustainable state of affairs where our credit rating was being downgraded, our public assets had been allowed to deteriorate, budgetary targets were being missed year after year as deficits and debt were growing, and the growth in the size of our civil service, red tape and taxes were stifling private sector investment.

We have not continued on that path.

We were elected to right the ship.

We know we need all of Manitoba and all Manitobans to accomplish this.

So our task began with listening to Manitobans.

We embarked on the largest consultation process in Manitoba history. We consulted with Manitobans, both inside and outside of the civil service, for ideas about how to return to balance. Over two pre-budget consultations, we have heard from almost 60,000 Manitobans through on-line surveys, virtual town halls, letters and in person. We consulted experts through comprehensive value-for-money reviews of government spending that have been released as part of our commitment to open government.

Guided by this advice, we have taken a new direction towards sustainability. The audited public accounts released this fall show a deficit of \$764 million -- \$147 million less than what was projected in Budget 2016. For the first time in nearly a generation the government has not spent more than was planned. Budget 2017 continues on the path of financial recovery, improved services and economic prosperity.

There is more to do if Manitoba is to succeed. We spend nearly \$1 billion a year to service past debt, our fourth largest expenditure item. That is money not being spent on front-line services. Less debt means more and better services for Manitobans.

A new financial reality requires a new public service reality. Only with an empowered, modern public service can our government succeed in delivering improved outcomes to Manitobans.

That starts by setting the right tone at the top. We reduced the size of cabinet and political staff. We reduced senior management in core government by 15%. We are beginning the next step of reducing the spans and layers of senior management that add costs and get in the way of our front-line service providers.

A new public service transformation strategy will challenge public servants to better understand and meet the needs of citizens, question past practices and experiment with innovative ideas, and harness their collective talent. With a focus on outcomes and a strong vision in place, the Manitoba public service is moving forward in a unified way to deliver better outcomes for Manitobans.

We have developed a value-for-money protocol to guide our spending on capital projects, so that Manitobans receive more value from their hard-earned tax dollars. With expert advice we are

- Refining a framework for public-private partnerships to deliver public infrastructure, including new schools, on time and on budget.
- Developing a long-term capital plan to get more value from our plans to renew and build our strategic infrastructure.
- Modernizing procurement of goods and services
- Reducing the costly practice of project labour agreements that force unionization of workers and increase costs of major government projects.

We will undertake a review of current provincial and municipal service responsibilities where there may be overlap and duplication, in order to streamline service delivery such as road maintenance and renewal, snow clearing, water control and drainage at the most appropriate level of government.

Our efforts to find and eliminate job-killing red tape continue. Manitobans are being provided with an objective detailed measurement of the regulatory burden imposed by government, which will serve as our yardstick to measure progress on further reductions.

Open Government

Open government breeds better accountability. We enhanced the mandate of the Public Utilities Board to review and consider capital spending as it considered the current Manitoba Hydro rate application. Building on this, the PUB's legislative mandate will be strengthened and improvements introduced to reduce the costs of the regulatory process and better protect ratepayers.

The Auditor General, Ombudsman and independent experts have recommended changes to enhance whistleblower protections.

Amendments will be introduced to the Public Interest Disclosure Act to better protect whistleblowers working in the provincial government, and expand its scope to include school boards.

Repairing Our Services

While costs and bureaucracy increased under the previous government, results and outcomes for Manitobans got worse.

Our mandate is to do better because Manitobans deserve better.

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We are pursuing a positive, proactive approach that looks to best practices in other jurisdictions and innovations and wisdom here at home to repair our services.

The social and individual realities are not hard to see.

Manitoba has the highest violent crime rate, highest rate of incarceration and highest number of people in custody awaiting trial. Our government recognizes that complex social problems like poverty, crime, homelessness, mental health and addiction are interconnected and that causal factors cannot be tackled in isolation. For far too long there have been too many children in state care. Many, too many, then graduate from being in care to being incarcerated.

This is unacceptable. Clearly, what we have been doing has not been working.

We need to do better for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. We will do so by focusing on individuals, families, and communities where it matters most.

We will engage and work with communities, experts and service providers, to support innovative solutions and better care, best practices, better outcomes, and better integration of programs. We will reduce the number of children in care and achieve better outcomes for children and youth.

Working with Indigenous partners, child welfare and community organizations, our government will introduce fundamental reforms to the legislation governing Manitoba's child welfare system. This will entail more community-driven prevention, more funding for results, more lifelong connections through reunification and permanence and fewer children and youth in care.

We will integrate existing resources to support the growth of innovative, community-driven prevention and early intervention. We will empower individuals, grassroots organizations, communities, businesses and social entrepreneurs who wish to contribute their time and resources to help tackle persistent social problems through new models for delivering services, including social enterprise, impact investing, and pay-for-performance models.

We will direct our government departments to work more seamlessly, and, where necessary, with integrated budgets and enhanced community oversight. The Healthy Child Strategy, Social Enterprise Strategy, the Non-Profit Strategy, and the Social Impact Procurement Strategy will be streamlined to make better use of research, promote best practices, engage community ownership and planning, fund outcomes and get better results for our children.

Legislation will be introduced this session to amend the Child and Family Services Act to remove barriers to guardianship. Moving children from government care to guardianship with adult caregivers has been shown to provide stable, healthy and lasting relationships that greatly improve the long term social, emotional and physical health of children and youth.

Our government has embarked on a new partnership with the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing, Canada's leading Social Impact Bond proponent.

Working together, we will launch Manitoba's first ever Social Impact Bond aimed at delivering better outcomes for children and youth within our child welfare system. Invitations for additional proposals will follow. We will harness the creativity and expertise of community changemakers and social sector innovators, and mobilize private investment to improve and enhance our services.

Better Health Care, Sooner

Better health care, sooner, remains our government's top service priority.

Manitobans face considerable challenges created by a legacy of neglect in addressing the real problems in health care.

Despite more emergency rooms per capita than any other province, Manitobans have had to endure the longest wait times of any other province.

Despite higher and higher health budgets, Manitobans suffered from a lack of key health-care professionals.

Previous governments knew our health-care system was sick and needed healing. Despite one expert review after another pointing out what needed to be done, little to nothing was.

Ignoring those challenges is not leadership. We are meeting the challenges facing our health-care system with reforms guided by expert advice and always with a view to better patient care.

This year our government has budgeted almost \$450 million more on health care than the previous government did in its last year.

But we must achieve better results for that enormous new investment.

What we did in the past wasn't working as our population and its health needs changed. So we will improve the system. We need to deliver health care differently.

While change can be unsettling, the end result of these changes will be a health-care system that achieves better outcomes and better meets the needs of Manitobans.

This is what Manitobans elected this government to do.

We are encouraged that our reforms to clinical services are showing early indications of reduced wait times at emergency departments.

Our physician recruitment efforts in rural and northern Manitoba have been rewarded with 89 new primary care physicians beginning to practice. We are reviewing the feasibility of a provincial on-call consultation service (PECS) to better support rural and northern health-care staff with emergency specialists.

We are making progress. But there is still much work to do.

Acting on the advice of our Health Sustainability and Innovation Review, we will move forward with governance reforms to better plan and coordinate health-care services across Manitoba. Guided by a provincial clinical plan, this will reduce management duplication and administrative functions that siphon resources from front-line care. Central coordination of medical services will ensure Manitobans receive better health care, sooner.

We are moving forward with improvements to our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) across Manitoba, acting on the recommendations of the 2013 EMS Review.

We hired 29 new paramedics this year to bolster the number of EMS stations staffed 24 hours a day across Manitoba.

We continue to reduce ambulance fees for Manitobans who need emergency care.

We will increase our commitment to self and family managed home care. It will give families more choice and say over their home-care services, and deliver those services in a more user-friendly manner. We are working hard to provide services to seniors where they need them, when they need them, such as the congregate meal program, which provides nutritious meals to Manitoba seniors in a social environment. A new Priority Home program will shorten hospital stays by providing patients with intensive at-home care and supports within the familiar surroundings of their home.

Over half of Manitobans suffer with a chronic health conditions such as arthritis, asthma, diabetes and heart disease. These chronic diseases represent the largest avoidable cost to the health-care system. We are working with our health-care providers and community organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to chronic disease prevention.

After meeting with family members and allies of those impacted by opiates we have increased access to suboxone, a drug that makes it easier for patients recovering from opioid addictions to access relief.

We look forward to hosting the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers in Winnipeg in 2018, and to further progress on coordinating procurement with our provincial, territorial and federal partners to find savings as we purchase goods and services for Manitobans, just as we worked together to find savings in pharmaceutical purchases.

Mental Health & Addictions

Mental health and addictions needs to be a core part of our health-care system. Our government has engaged a team of experts to develop a strategy to improve access to services and better coordination of mental health and addictions resources. This work is being led by Dr. Brian Rush, an expert in mental health and substance abuse system design and planning.

Our government is exploring the implementation of a peer support program in emergency rooms to assist Manitobans experiencing mental health crises who present at an emergency room. Peer support workers are proven to give people hope that recovery is possible.

Our government recognizes that access to quality care is the most important pillar in the delivery of health-care services for Manitobans, including those that live on-reserve in Manitoba. Since 2006, the Government of Canada has offloaded nearly \$40 million dollars in medical transportation costs. Despite the Federal Government shirking its responsibilities to Indigenous people on-reserve, our government is working to provide services in these areas and will continue to do so. This year we supported retinal screening and therapy services in on-reserve communities.

Kidney failure affects more Manitobans per capita than any other province. More than 1600 Manitobans currently receive dialysis, and that number is expected to grow by 5% every year. Recognizing the need to expand access and treatment space, our government recently added capacity to treat 75 additional dialysis patients.

To address the need for more organ donations, we have formed a dedicated legislative committee to consult with experts and those with lived experience to determine ways to increase the donation rates in our province. We are honoured that the MLA for Brandon West has agreed to lead this work.

This summer, Manitoba concluded a series of bilateral agreements with the Government of Canada around what the future of health-care funding will look like. Manitoba remains dissatisfied with a Federal Government that once funded health-care on a 50-50 basis. Today, the Federal Government sets 100% of the rules around what we must provide but pays only 19% of the cost of health-care delivery in Manitoba.

This is an arrangement that is wholly unsustainable for our province and we will continue to make the case for a true federal partnership in health care with a fair and just contribution by Ottawa to the growing health-care needs of provinces and territories.

Child Care and Early Years Education

Our Government will launch a new Early Learning and Child Care strategy with initiatives to create new child care spaces, reduce wait times, eliminate red tape and foster better outcomes for families with young children. Legislation will reduce red tape for early childhood educators, focus on partnerships with other levels of government, traditional and home-based service providers, businesses/employers, schools, rural and northern communities. It will introduce new incentives for private investments in child care spaces.

Our early years education strategy will focus on achieving better educational outcomes by supporting early learning initiatives, enhanced early childhood educator (ECE) training and securing greater alignment with a 'cradles to careers' approach.

Our work will continue to improve outcomes in early years literacy and numeracy by refocusing resources and enhancing the programming during this critical period of development.

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Our government will introduce a new provincial housing strategy for affordable and social housing, working in partnership with non-profit groups, the private sector and government to deliver affordable housing solutions for Manitobans.

While we remain of the view that the federal deadline for cannabis legalization is too short, we are preparing for July of 2018. Our overriding goal remains the safety of Manitoba families, those who choose to use cannabis and those that do not.

We are implementing a hybrid retail and distribution model that puts health and safety as the top priority and allows government and the private sector to each do what they do best. The Liquor and Gaming Authority will regulate the industry and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries will purchase and distribute the supply while the private sector will market and sell the product.

We will work with partners in the private and public sector to educate Manitobans about the risks associated with cannabis consumption by our youth. We are also reviewing measures to further protect non-smokers from the effects of second hand smoke.

Reform of the criminal justice system is an essential complement to the prevention of the incarceration of more vulnerable Manitobans. We will be tough on crime and tough on what causes crime. We will focus our resources on the most serious criminal cases, and eliminate redundancies that cause unnecessary delays in prosecutions.

We are reforming our family law system to better protect parents and children. Manitoba is putting families first with changes that will make family law more accessible and less adversarial for those who interact with the system.

We will build on efforts to deal with cases through restorative justice where appropriate, to prevent future harm and to foster the successful transition of offenders from custody to the community.

Services to Women

Gender-based violence is a plague on our society and Manitoba has some of the worst rates in Canada. We must do better.

We will transition the Family Violence Prevention Program from the Department of Families to Manitoba Status of Women to achieve better outcomes for those affected by family violence. The minister responsible for the status of women will chair the Ending Gender-Based Violence cabinet committee that will look to integrate government services in this area and collaborate across departments to better meet the needs of Manitobans in critical situations.

We look forward to engaging Manitobans on ways to ensure that women are better represented at decision-making and influence levels within community and corporate sectors.

We are leading by example. Since it formed, more than half of this government's appointments to agencies, boards and commissions have been women.

Services to Francophone Manitobans

We have also increased our bilingual capacity on these bodies, with more than 10 per cent of our appointments having capability in both French and English.

This past year also saw significant increases in the number of bilingual positions across government, with more staff able to provide enhanced support to our Francophone community.

We were pleased to introduce The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act, which was adopted unanimously by this Legislature. All of our provincial government bodies have been working on the creation of their multi-year strategic plans for the provision of French-language services, which will come into effect as of April 1, 2018.

Our government has been delighted to support the "Repositioning of Francophone Tourism" initiative, spearheaded by Entreprises Riel in collaboration with Travel Manitoba. This visionary project, which places Manitoba's historic Francophone community at the heart of a new tourism strategy, will have far-reaching effects for economic and cultural development within the French-speaking community and for all Manitobans.

Rebuilding our Economy

After a decade of stagnation, optimism is returning to our business community:

- Manufacturing sales are increasing at their fastest pace since 2011
- We are averaging the lowest unemployment rate in Canada so far this fiscal year.
- Merchandise exports are increasing at their fastest pace since 2014
- Wholesale trade sales are increasing at their fastest pace since 2014
- Farm cash receipts are increasing at their fastest pace since 2013
- Investment in non-residential building construction is increasing at its fastest pace since 1998
- Housing starts are increasing at an unprecedented pace, and
- Building permits are increasing at their fastest pace since 2012

Despite these encouraging signs, there are storm clouds on the horizon. The continued upward pressure on interest rates threatens to impose added costs on individuals, businesses and governments struggling to manage debt. Uncertainty about trade agreements is creating hesitation amongst investors and costing us jobs.

Acting on the advice of an external review and the Premier's Enterprise Team, we will restructure how we attract investment and identify those primary sectors that have the strongest potential for growth.

We will restructure our economic development efforts so they are more effective in delivering new investments in the City of Winnipeg, the capital region and rural and northern Manitoba.

We will protect investors by introducing amendments to the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act to strengthen and clarify provincial oversight in the wake of withdrawal of federal oversight.

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Our 96/4 Tourism investments are showing early signs of positive outcomes, with both international and domestic visitation and spending on the increase.

We are working closely with the City of Brandon and Provincial Exhibition to create a sustainable funding and governance model for the Keystone Centre so it can continue to attract national and international events, such as the 2019 Tim Horton's Brier.

A key priority of this government is working with Northern Manitobans to unlock the economic potential this region holds. The Look North Economic Task Force presented its report and action plan to government, focused on helping advance economic growth and prosperity in the region. Building on the report's recommendations, our co-chairs will continue to work on the priority areas identified by Northern Manitobans including realizing northern mineral and resource development and creating a mining protocol to guide consultations and create jobs in indigenous communities.

Our government knows that freer trade means jobs and prosperity for Manitobans. We will re-introduce legislation this fall to fully implement the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement and engage the business community and other stakeholders to identify regulatory barriers to trade that can be resolved at the interprovincial Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table.

We are fully engaged in working with the Federal Government and our provincial/territorial partners on the current NAFTA negotiations with the United States and Mexico.

We will continue to work with the Federal Government to ensure that newcomers to Manitoba are given the supports they need to find homes and jobs in their new country of Canada and expect to announce an agreement soon. We will streamline our application procedures for immigrants who want to establish new economic opportunities in Manitoba.

Our ongoing commitment to making strategic infrastructure investments on the basis of real value for money, as we continue to make progress on inherited fiscal challenges, will continue. It includes making maximum use of available federal funding under Phase 1 of the Investing in Canada Fund and committing our full provincial allocation under the established Building Canada Fund. And it enables our ability to effectively leverage funding support for shared provincial and municipal priorities, and for the protection and development of vital provincial assets

We remain committed to the path of Fair Say for municipal governments, and giving them more decision-making over the operational funding we provide. We will continue to make services available more efficiently, including a single portal for local programming. Our community partnerships are resulting in historic infrastructure projects such as Bus Rapid Transit in Winnipeg and the Lake Manitoba Outlet.

We will report on what we heard from Manitobans during our cultural policy review, and bring forward a renewed cultural policy framework to enhance this important sector of our economy.

Community foundations are critical partners in supporting the sustainability of cultural and community infrastructure across rural and northern Manitoba. In partnership with The Winnipeg Foundation, we will enhance their ability to attract public and private support for important local projects.

We will continue to work with our post-secondary institutions to ensure their programs remain innovative and aligned with the needs of today's rapidly evolving labour market, to better position our graduates to find jobs. Our Sector Councils will be reviewed to ensure they are focused on the key sectors identified in our economic development strategy.

We look forward to the forthcoming report of the Manitoba College Education Review, and will bring forward improvements to make our college system more coordinated and responsive to our students and the demands of the marketplace.

Our enhanced Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative is attracting more public and private support for students seeking higher education and training. We will ensure this support is accessible and aligned with the diverse needs of our labour market.

Agriculture

This government respects and understands the importance of agriculture to the provincial economy.

Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), Manitoba and Canada are collaborating to invest \$176 million in the Manitoba agriculture industry over the next five years. We will also invest a significant portion of CAP resources in research to capture emerging market opportunities and improve environmental outcomes.

Manitoba is attracting attention in Canada and beyond as a great place for new investments in protein processing from plant, livestock and dairy sources. Recent investments - including the \$400 million Roquette pea processing plant, the largest single private-sector investment in Manitoba history -- totalled nearly three quarters of a billion dollars.

The growing world demand for protein provides our livestock industry with tremendous opportunities in new production and processing jobs, new facilities and enhanced municipal revenues. Manitoba is encouraging responsible growth in the livestock industry by modernizing regulations for agricultural Crown lands, investing in Manitoba Beef and Forage Initiatives; and enhancing biosecurity from the farm level through to industry service providers.

Green Plan

Our government recently released the most comprehensive, long-term Climate and Green Plan in Manitoba history covering climate, jobs, water and nature. It sets out a made-in-Manitoba approach to climate change that respects clean energy investments already made by Manitobans and actively reduces carbon emissions while growing our economy.

Steps will be taken this session to begin implementing our Made-in- Manitoba plan by naming an expert advisory commission of Manitobans, introducing legislation to strengthen conservation at the watershed level, creating a new licensing regime for water management, and working with private landowners to conserve wetlands and natural habitats.

Our Made-in-Manitoba carbon pricing plan will come into effect during 2018. An online survey is now open for Manitobans to make their choices on our made-in-Manitoba plan together with their choices on carbon revenue recycling through investments in families, green growth, and climate adaptation.

A task force will be appointed to review and strengthen our current recycling program, including the scope of materials and effectiveness.

Duty to Consult Framework

Our government remains committed to establishing a renewed and strengthened Duty-to-Consult Framework for respectful and productive consultations with Indigenous communities that will provide clear direction to government departments about the Crown's duty to consult and where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous communities. Engagement is on-going with Indigenous communities and key stakeholders and a renewed framework will be finalized in the coming months.

We have made significant progress with our initial engagement with the Indigenous community towards our goal of eliminating unsafe, unsustainable and unfair hunting practices. We look forward to consultations on night hunting, shared regional wildlife management, and other initiatives to enhance safety and conservation of our fish and wildlife resources.

Reconciliation

Our government is committed to advancing reconciliation by fostering mutually respectful relationships between the Crown and Indigenous peoples. The Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations will soon report on our progress, and lead our government's participation in the development of a Reconciliation Strategy.

The Strategy will build upon meaningful engagement with Indigenous nations and peoples. Over the next year, Manitoba will begin a public engagement process in collaboration with Indigenous communities and all Manitobans, to develop a comprehensive Reconciliation Framework and Action Plan for advancing Indigenous priorities.

Our government will continue to make progress on Treaty Land Entitlement, recognizing the importance of these lands for economic and employment opportunities. We will work with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba to implement the treaty education initiative.

In order to more effectively deliver services and strengthen governance structures, we will continue to engage northern communities and stakeholders towards the modernization of the Northern Affairs Act.

Conclusion

This is an ambitious program.

But the challenges we face are many. Many have been ignored or mishandled too long. Others are emerging and international in scope.

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These times call for ambition. And they call for courage. The courage to make the changes that was lacking in the previous government.

We need to tap into the bravery and ingenuity of all our ancestors who created the prosperous society we enjoy today. We need their inspiration, we need their ability to think big, we need their capacity to see opportunity where others just saw overwhelming challenges.

Manitobans understand the need to address these challenges.

We are up for the task and together we will build a better place for all of us, for generations to come.

I leave you now to the faithful performance of your many duties and trust that, in meeting them, you may benefit from the guidance of Divine Providence in all your deliberations.

Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor was then pleased to retire.

PRAYER

On Motion of Hon. Mr. PALLISTER, Bill (No. 1) – An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office/Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, was read a First Time.

On motion of Hon. Mr. PALLISTER:

ORDERED that the Speech of Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Hon. Mr. PALLISTER moved:

THAT this House do now adjourn.

And the Question being put. It was agreed to.

The House then adjourned at 2:20 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 22, 2017.

Hon. Myrna DRIEDGER,
Speaker.