

Tuesday, November 19, 2019



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS No. 1

SECOND SESSION, FORTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

1:30 O'CLOCK P.M.

This being the first day of the meeting of the Second Session of the Forty-Second 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,

His Honour the Administrator, was pleased to open the session with the following gracious speech:

Madame Speaker and Members of the Manitoba Legislature.

I welcome you to the Second Session of the 42nd Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

For a century and a half, Manitoba has been the home of hope - a place where people from all over the world have come - to build lives that were free in a place of peace, security and prosperity.

As Manitobans, there is no challenge that we have not faced and overcome together. From the founding of our province in 1870, we have endured two world wars, a depression and natural disasters. Throughout it all, we have come together as Manitobans, and as Canadians.

Next year, 2020, will be the 150th anniversary of Manitoba's birth as a province.

United in Celebration is the theme of our birthday. As we celebrate our 150th birthday as Manitobans, we invite all Canadians to join with us - to unite with us - in that celebration. For Manitoba's birthday is Canada's celebration too.

We are celebrating our history and our traditions; our accomplishments and our progress. But what we are celebrating most is who we are as Manitobans and Canadians. We are a free people with rights and freedoms; the envy of the world.

That is why, at its first opportunity, your government will introduce a resolution to this legislature that will affirm Manitoba's commitment to freedom of conscience and religion of public servants. That resolution will include affirmation of each citizen's right to wear religious symbols or clothing of one's choice, and it will express our opposition to the use of the state's authority to restrict those freedoms.

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Together, we are building a new Manitoba that will build on the success of the past century and one-half. A new Manitoba, where young people will stay and build their own dreams. A new Manitoba, where families and seniors will find peace and security. A new Manitoba, where entrepreneurs and risk takers will find opportunities to grow.

A new Manitoba where progress is always forward.

Your government will act upon this renewed mandate by implementing five key guarantees to Manitobans: lower taxes, new jobs, better health care sooner, new schools and a made-in-Manitoba climate and green plan.

These are the building blocks of a new Manitoba that will make our province stronger and more resilient. A new Manitoba that will be more compassionate and caring because of the reforms we implement. A new Manitoba that will be more prosperous, and more progressive.

In order to make life more affordable for Manitobans, your government will introduce legislation to begin the implementation of its 2020 Tax Rollback Guarantee that will put at least \$2,020 back onto the kitchen tables of Manitoba families:

- Beginning in the 2020 tax year, the Provincial Sales Tax on professional fees related to the preparation of wills and tax returns will be eliminated;
- The Provincial Sales Tax will also be removed from personal services over \$50, including salon services;
- Probate fees will also be eliminated as of July 1st, 2020; and
- Vehicle registration fees will be reduced by 10 per cent starting on July 1st, 2020.

Your government will also eliminate the education portion of property taxes. The phase-out will begin the first year after the budget is balanced, and will be completed over a maximum of 10 years. Once fully implemented, the average homeowner will save more than \$2,000 annually.

Manitoba is blessed with many natural advantages - its central location, rich agricultural and natural resources, and an abundant supply of clean, green hydroelectric power. Too often in the past, however, we have encumbered our natural advantages with high taxes, red tape and trade barriers.

Your government will continue its unprecedented efforts to reduce these burdens and make Manitoba an even more attractive place to live, invest and create jobs. In addition to lower taxes, your government's jobs plan includes reducing barriers to trade, cutting red tape, investing in infrastructure, balancing the budget, and transforming our public service.

Building on the success of the inaugural October 3 Jobs Summit, we will begin implementing the Manitoba Works 40,000 Jobs Plan.

Barriers to economic growth will be reduced: Manitoba will continue to lead the country in removing inter-provincial trade barriers, which continue to cost Canadians as much as \$130 billion per year in lost economic opportunities.

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Removing these barriers could increase national GDP by up to four per cent, putting \$1,500 back on the kitchen table of every Canadian family annually.

Your government is leading by example: we recently removed six more exceptions under the Canada Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) that open up our procurement process to all Canadians.

Less red tape means more jobs. Your government will act quickly to speed up the permitting system at the regional and municipal levels. Doing so will boost new investments representing \$5.1 billion per year -- approximately seven per cent of provincial GDP.

Your government recognizes that Manitoba must have a coordinated approach to economic development and private sector investment. As a result, The Partners in Economic Growth (PEG) initiative will be launched with regional and sector partners selected to focus on the province's areas of economic strength, including agriculture, aerospace and technology.

Manitoba's food industry is expanding. Your government will eliminate provincial regulatory barriers that restrict the ability of our farmers to produce food for local markets, and free consumers to connect directly with local producers.

Legislation will be introduced to eliminate Sunday and holiday shopping restrictions while preserving the right of municipalities to maintain retail hour restrictions in their communities if they so choose.

Your government will continue to promote job creation in the north. A new \$20 million Manitoba Mineral Development Fund will be established to encourage resource development in northern Manitoba. In addition, a review of abandoned and orphaned mines will be launched in order to ensure the private sector is held accountable for environmental damage, and that remediation measures are rapidly implemented.

Your government recognizes the importance of the tourism industry, and will build on the success it has achieved in turning Manitoba into a major tourist destination. Funding for tourism promotion will be increased by 25 per cent, with five per cent of tourism related revenue devoted to promoting Manitoba tourism and investments, including a strategy to attract more major events to our province.

Your government will also begin work with the film and TV industry to boost production through an enhanced Manitoba Film and Video Tax Credit.

Building roads, bridges and highways go hand-in-hand with economic development and job creation. That is why the highway construction budget will be increased from \$350 million to \$400 million over the next four years. Billions more will be invested annually by your government as we launch an ambitious program of infrastructure development including hospitals, schools, universities and crown corporations.

To that end, your government will develop a dedicated fund for infrastructure projects that stimulates private sector investment and job creation for inclusion in Budget 2020.

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Your government will work with key partners such as the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association and other groups to develop a plan that provides a more meaningful role for the private sector in the delivery of infrastructure, so that more kilometers of highways and roads can be constructed for each dollar of taxpayer investment.

To further help our highways budget build more, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act will be re-introduced to level the playing field so that contractors are not forced to hire unionized labour, and each tender receives fair and unbiased consideration.

Your government will continue to work with the federal government to complete the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel. This vital project cannot be delayed any longer. Given the high moisture conditions we are experiencing, the federal government will be asked to help accelerate the construction of this project in advance of the coming flood season.

Your government knows that modern, effective emergency communications services are critical to protecting Manitobans. That is why it will implement a new Public Sector Communication Services system that will better equip our front-line emergency service personnel who keep Manitobans safe. The City of Winnipeg and City of Brandon will be engaged to develop an appropriate regulatory framework to introduce Next Generation 911 services based on inter-operability with other levels of government and provinces.

Financial accountability and transparency are important guiding principles. The previous government understated asset values and underprepared provincial liabilities. Your government will continue to clean up the financial mess that was left behind after seventeen years of fiscal mismanagement.

The Summary Budgeting Act will be introduced to integrate summary government budgeting and financial reporting to Public Sector Accounting Board standards so that the rules of financial accountability and transparency are clear.

Fiscal arrangements for IG Field will be restructured to become more transparent and sustainable for taxpayers and the Winnipeg Football Club.

Your government will finalize a Balanced Scorecard reporting process with departmental measurements in order to provide timely information to Manitobans about the progress being made in enhancing services.

Restoring stability, confidence and trust to our public finances remains a priority for your government.

That is why another \$407 million has been added to the province's rainy-day fund to help with unexpected disasters and emergencies. Your government will continue efforts to restore the Fiscal Stabilization Account balance to its legislated target level of five per cent of core government expenditures.

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Changes recommended by the Pension Commission of Manitoba will be made to The Pension Benefits Act in order to provide more flexibility, protection and financial sustainability to pension plan members and their sponsors.

New processes, based on sound financial accounting principles, will be established to streamline the rules relating to the sale, leasing and disposal of Crown assets. The Department of Finance will also conduct an inventory of land and property owned by the government that is no longer usable or required for the delivery of public services. As well, an auction system for Agriculture Crown Lands will be introduced, with the first auction to be conducted over the next few months.

Your government will continue to find the best value for taxpayers by shopping smarter and will explore ways to improve the procurement processes of other government entities, including Crown corporations, agencies and boards.

And as part of our Manitoba 150 celebrations, your government will work with the Legislative Assembly to support its efforts to repair the beautiful Legislative Building and surrounding grounds. Manitoba Sport, Culture and Heritage will coordinate Manitoba 150 activities with all ministries and reporting entities to celebrate and commemorate the province's sesquicentennial.

Your government desires a high-performing public service that is innovative and nimble; a civil service that focuses on outcomes and results. To that end, an updated progress report will be released on the public service's Transformation Strategy which aims to build a culture of innovation and a results-based approach to programs.

Legislation will also be introduced to replace the outdated Civil Service Act with The Public Service Act, reflecting modern workplace standards and values. In addition, the highly successful Learning Fund will be expanded into reporting entities across summary government to implement better services based on ideas from front-line service providers.

Delivering better health care sooner remains one of your government's key priorities. The \$2 billion Health Care Guarantee will reinforce front-line services as work with nurses, doctors and patients continues to develop innovations to improve patient care and reduce wait times.

Your government has asked health care providers to identify the gaps and recommend opportunities for positive reforms, and over 3,000 responded -- including front-line doctors, nurses, managers and health-care providers of all stripes.

The result of those responses is the new Provincial Clinical and Preventive Services Plan. This plan will guide the investments made through the \$2 billion Health Care Guarantee to provide better patient care -- care that's closer to home, based on the needs of where Manitobans live.

To help our seniors age-in-place, we will build safe places with better home care, more supportive housing, and more personal care beds.

The process of reconstructing the St. Boniface Emergency Department will commence immediately, another important step in efforts to reduce wait times with bigger, better and faster emergency rooms.

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Work will continue with Shared Health and the Regional Health Authorities to create 200 new nursing positions by 2023 and reduce waiting lists for cataract, knee, and hip surgeries with targeted investments. An additional 80 rural paramedics will be hired to achieve a customer service standard of 24-7 access to care within 30 minutes for 90 per cent of Manitobans, 90 per cent of the time.

Your government will also re-introduce The Health System Governance and Accountability Act in order to reduce overall administration and provide enhanced service delivery of health services across Manitoba.

The \$40 million Front-line Idea Fund will be established for healthcare workers to support innovative solutions to streamline and improve patient care, with successful applicants announced in 2020. Planning will commence to make bulk purchases of medical equipment with other Canadian provinces to save money better spent on front-line service providers.

A \$3.4 million women's health initiative will be launched, including enhanced community supports for women who have suffered childhood sexual abuse, more help for high-risk sexually exploited girls, expanded treatment for eating disorders, and the establishment of a four-year Bachelor of Midwifery program at the University of Manitoba.

And pharmacists will be consulted to develop a framework allowing them to write prescriptions for uncomplicated urinary tract infections, rather than requiring a doctor's visit.

Your government is deeply concerned about the escalating rates of crime in our communities and is determined to combat the increase of gang violence and disorder.

The Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan will be implemented in order to crack down on drug dealers victimizing our communities and make downtown Winnipeg safe again.

The recommendations of the Manitoba Police Commission to improve public safety in downtown Winnipeg will be responded to, and its advice will be applied where it can help reduce crime in other communities.

Your government will also invest an additional \$10 million in a comprehensive strategy that includes stepped up enforcement, increased coordination between police and business owners, and enhanced resources for the Public Safety Investigations Unit to bring drug dealers to justice. Additional investments will also be dedicated to RCMP Crime Reduction Teams across rural Manitoba.

A Crime Stoppers advertising campaign will be launched in Winnipeg, Brandon and rural Manitoba, including more cash for drug tips. Steps will also be taken to improve the sharing of criminal intelligence between the RCMP and municipal police forces, including joint forces operations and greater support for tactical enforcement by the Winnipeg Police Service.

In order to support these enhanced enforcement efforts, your government will make it easier to seize and liquidate drug money and drug dealers' assets by expanding the civil forfeiture process.

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Your government will engage with Indigenous leaders and communities to identify proactive programs, such as the Outland Youth Employment Program, that could provide restorative justice opportunities for youth. Doing so will ensure that young offenders are held accountable while enabling them to receive an education, work experience, and learn critical life skills.

Many youths who are in trouble with the law are in need of help. A cross-government hub of expertise will be developed, to direct youth in trouble with the law to appropriate community programs and services, including mental health and addictions. The objective is to ensure that the justice system is a last resort for youth in care.

Your government will improve and enhance mental health and addictions services based on the recommendations made in the VIRGO report, and by the Illicit Drug Task Force and the Community Wellness and Public Safety Alliance.

New measures include a new acute medical sobering facility staffed with mental health professionals capable of treating up to 20 patients at a time, supportive recovery and a 24/7 drop-in centre, and enhanced flexible-length withdrawal services in Winnipeg.

In addition, the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre will be expanded to include 12 new treatment and waiting spaces for those suffering meth psychosis and other serious addiction and mental health issues.

Finally, a modernized drug prevention curriculum will be introduced in our schools in the next school year. A public awareness campaign will also be advanced to address the federal government's legalization of cannabis edibles.

Improving education outcomes is critical to our province's future. Our children deserve good schools with real classrooms, not portables. Your government's 20 New Schools Guarantee will mandate the construction of 13 new schools over the next ten years in addition to the seven schools already committed.

And 1,510 additional school-based child-care spaces will be added as part of the 20 New Schools Guarantee.

Teachers are at the heart of our education system, and their dedication and enthusiasm are critical to improving education outcomes. That is why your government will initiate the \$25 million Teachers' Idea Fund to support innovative solutions brought forward to streamline operations by teachers, and improve educational outcomes across the province. Successful applicants will be announced in 2020.

In anticipation of recommendations from the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade Twelve Review, Manitoba Education has been directed to undertake a mandate review to prepare to implement reforms that will achieve better outcomes for our students.

In order to reduce waste and duplication in our education system, mandate letters will be sent to all post-secondary institutions that receive provincial operating funding outlining expected students' outcomes and financial accountability.

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Your government is concerned about the vulnerable in our society and ensuring that they are properly provided for. With that goal in mind, consultations will begin for the development of a new program to support Manitobans with disabilities that is distinct and separate from existing Employment Income Assistance program supports.

Your government will also amend The Employment Standards Code to extend leave protections to all survivors of sexual violence, regardless of whether or not they were in a domestic relationship with the perpetrator. Survivors will be able to access 10 ad hoc days, and a continuous period of up to 17 weeks, to obtain victims' services, seek legal assistance or relocate.

The Department of Families will also expand private sector investment to increase the number of child-care spaces in Manitoba. Legislative amendments will facilitate the payment of capital grants to private early learning and child-care centres to spark the development of new spaces.

The child-care centre development tax credit will continue to be funded, and a new Portable Child Care Benefit will be developed that offers parents more options by following children to their family's child-care option of choice. This new program will extend the benefit of up to \$500 per month to 3,000 lower-income families.

Your government will implement 'Clare's Law' in Manitoba, ensuring that women can access information about their partner's past history of domestic violence and empowering women to leave potentially abusive situations. Police, women's shelters and privacy experts will be consulted to develop a protocol for the disclosure of this information to women.

Your government will continue to introduce civil justice reforms to bring fairness and equity into our courts and legal system. The remaining portions of the Family Law Reform initiative will be implemented in order to allow more families to benefit from new family law processes that are self-guided, support children and reduce red tape. Amendments to Limitation of Actions legislation will also be brought forward to bring Manitoba in line with the rest of the country.

Your government understands the importance of working with our Indigenous and Métis partners. Work with First Nation communities to formalize new resource development agreements and develop new opportunities for northern tourism will continue, as will work to create a northern airports authority.

Your government will also move forward with the principles of shared management with First Nations and Métis people in order to ensure sustainable wildlife and fish populations. Work will continue with all of our partners to conserve moose populations in the Duck and Porcupine Mountains and sustain regional fish and wildlife populations for future generations.

Operation Return Home will be concluded for the people of the Lake St. Martin First Nation who have been separated from their traditional lands long enough.

Your government will continue to work closely with our municipal partners to provide efficient, cost-effective local government. In doing so, a collaborative process with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) will be established to strengthen provincial-municipal growth and partnership opportunities through a balanced discussion of both revenues and expenditures.

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A Municipal Audit and Accountability Program will also be established to provide third party value-for-money audits for municipalities that desire to improve services without raising taxes.

Our veterans deserve our gratitude and respect. Building on the recent commitment to enhance revenue sharing to veterans' organizations, your government will introduce legislation to exempt all veterans' organizations from municipal property taxes throughout the province.

Climate change represents one of the great challenges to our future prosperity, and that of our children. Your government knows that Manitobans want to do their part when it comes to protecting the environment and conserving our natural resources and that is why it is continuing to implement the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

As part of that plan, a long-term energy strategy will be developed that builds on Manitoba's significant renewable electricity assets, including greening of transportation, new bio-fuels standards and energy conservation measures.

Your government will also introduce a \$25 million energy efficiency retrofit program for existing homes and commercial buildings. This initiative will reduce Manitoba's cumulative greenhouse gas emissions by 135,000 tonnes over the next three years -- the equivalent of taking 27,000 cars off the roads.

The Climate and Green Plan Expert Advisory Committee will be asked to investigate and provide recommendations to electrify Manitoba's transportation infrastructure which will further reduce our carbon footprint.

The ethanol requirement will be increased to 10 per cent, and the biodiesel requirement to five per cent, of fuels in 2020. By displacing fossil fuels, these measures will reduce emissions by 375,000 tonnes over three years - or the equivalent of planting 25 million trees. These fuels will be based on Manitoba-grown corn and canola, a win-win for our agriculture industry and the environment.

Your government will implement The Sustainable Watersheds Act to support the most comprehensive provincial water conservation strategy in Canada. As part of that \$204 million plan, our government is doubling its \$52 million investment in the GROW trust to support landowners who wish to conserve temporary wetlands not protected by regulation.

There is growing concern over increasing amounts of plastic in our environment. The federal government has indicated it will provide a regulatory framework to ban single-use plastics. In Manitoba, we will begin consultations with the private sector on the elimination of plastic bag use as well.

Manitoba's conservation efforts must also include better wildlife and fisheries management. Cruel and inhumane night hunting practices were banned in the government's first mandate. Enforcement and prosecution under The Wildlife Act will increase against individuals who endanger public safety and wildlife populations by illegal night hunting. Eight additional conservation officers will be hired to enhance efforts to protect and preserve our wildlife.

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Manitoba's Crown corporations provide essential services to Manitobans. Your government wants Crown services to be cost-effective, efficient and responsive. Accomplishing this work will begin with the Crowns to reduce layers of management and red tape wherever possible.

Legislative changes will be developed to allow restaurants to deliver wine directly to customers. Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries will be directed to exempt Manitoba craft distillers, cideries and brewers from product mark-ups for craft products produced and sold on-premises.

Your government recognises the important role that smaller political parties play in our democratic system. That is why the previous government's annual allowance or "vote tax" was eliminated, and that is why measures will be introduced to eliminate Manitoba's overly-generous election expense rebate system that favours large political parties.

Manitobans have chosen to move forward; forward to a future of where life is affordable, communities are safe and secure and prosperous. The next 150 years will prove that there are no limits to our potential as a people and a province.

I now leave you to the business of the session, knowing that you will faithfully discharge your duties and responsibilities.

May Divine Providence continue to bless our province and guide this Assembly in all of its deliberations.

God Bless Manitoba.

God Bless Canada.

And God Save the Queen.

His Honour, the Administrator 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 Greg NESBITT, Member for the Electoral Division of Riding Mountain, be Deputy Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House.

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On motion of Hon. Mr. PALLISTER:

ORDERED that the Speech of His Honour, the Administrator 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 2:22 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 20, 2019.

Hon. Myrna DRIEDGER,
Speaker.