

Tuesday, November 23, 2021



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS No. 1

FOURTH SESSION, FORTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

1:30 O'CLOCK P.M.

This being the first day of the meeting of the Fourth 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,

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 fourth session of the 42nd Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba, and acknowledge we are gathered here on ancestral lands, on Treaty One Territory and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Today marks the opening of a new legislative session and a new beginning for us all.

With a new Premier, our government is embarking with you on a path in a new direction.

Side by side, we will work together to build a better Manitoba.

A stronger, healthier, and more inclusive province with a brighter future for us all.

You will notice our style of government is one with a willingness to listen and an openness to engage.

We are committed to collaboration, cooperation and reconciliation.

We are here to consult and work in partnership with stakeholders, so we are a government that better serves all Manitobans.

This is a critical time to listen, to heal and to bring Manitobans together.

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We will work with all of you to move forward with our shared goals: to work through the COVID-19 pandemic, to create a stronger health-care system we and our families can rely on now and well into the future, and to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

We will implement policies and programs to incent investment, foster job creation, improve education and training opportunities and, as we emerge from the pandemic, get our economy back on track.

Our government has a new vision for a strong economic and social recovery, with a focus on the health and well-being of all Manitobans.

We are ready to get to work and we have established a number of key priorities and pillars that underpin our vision.

Our government embraces the values of equality, inclusivity and understanding. We are here to focus on respect, reconciliation and repairing broken relationships.

Our government affirms its commitment to working with Indigenous peoples to advance shared goals and promote truth and reconciliation.

We must rebuild this relationship on a foundation of meaningful dialogue and engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders to co-develop action plans.

Our government recognizes the deep damage caused by residential schools and colonization and is committed to help the healing.

Accordingly, we are fully committed to listening and learning from Indigenous leaders, elders and families as we work together towards true equality and putting reconciliation commitments into action.

The findings and recommendations of the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Murdered and Missing Women Inquiry reports, together with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are instructive on the work and actions needed.

We must transform intentions into actions to advance the important work of reconciliation, sort out evolving jurisdictional responsibilities and create real economic opportunities for Indigenous people.

On and off reserve infrastructure is wanting in many communities. With both senior levels of government having jurisdiction in these communities, it is essential we forge a renewed partnership to invest effectively.

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The global pandemic is the greatest health care crisis Manitobans have ever faced.

Together with other provinces and countries around the world, we are confronted with unprecedented challenges as we cope with COVID-19.

The difficulties it has imposed on citizens, on businesses, on governments are profound and unprecedented.

The pandemic has disrupted the lives and livelihoods of every Manitoban and impacted every corner of our province.

We know we cannot ease up yet on our fight against this deadly virus and we cannot lose sight of the best interests of Manitobans.

The collective efforts of Manitobans have helped us through this time of crisis, through hard work and sacrifice to keep us all safe.

From those working tirelessly on the front lines, to those who have done their part by following public health orders and getting vaccinated, thank you, from all of us.

We are encouraged by high and rising double vaccination rates in many communities showing a commitment to fighting this virus. Yet we remain concerned about differences across regions and the resulting strains on our health system and intensive care units.

Around the world, the pandemic has identified gaps and created new challenges in the health-care system.

It is our responsibility to take necessary measures to ensure the safety of all Manitobans and guarantee proper care is there when we and our loved ones need it.

Our government will take action in the coming weeks to remove barriers that currently delay Manitobans from getting the medical care they urgently need.

Our committed health care professionals have done notable work to improve processes and to improve capacity in our ICUs. However, so they can accommodate any public health crisis we face in the future, more needs to be done. We are setting up an inclusive task force. Doctors and nurses will be joined by other professionals to help determine a path on how to clear the backlogs for surgeries and diagnostic tests, the result of resources being redirected to the frontlines of COVID-19.

We know we need to shorten wait times for these procedures going forward and ease the suffering of patients, especially seniors and vulnerable Manitobans.

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Our nursing strategy targets the nursing shortage and increases training spaces with a goal of 400 additional nursing seats. While international recruitments help fill the gap, we cannot rely on that practice alone. Manitoba must have the capacity to fill the demand for nurses and retain them going forward. More nurses will be trained, developing their skills by working in institutions as part of their curriculum.

We have entered into a contribution agreement with University College of the North to deliver a one-time, two-year Diploma Practical Nursing training program for up to 20 students in Thompson. The Northern Health Region communicated a commitment to hire every graduate upon successful completion of training in 2022-23.

In addition, we will ensure every graduate receives a job offer here in Manitoba with further details to be announced. These are first steps as we develop a more robust and integrated approach to health human resource development.

In light of the health care challenges, we will re-examine the reforms and changes proposed for facilities in rural Manitoba to ensure Manitobans have access to health care regardless of geographic location.

Our government announced it will recognize that some cancers are the direct result of dangerous working conditions. Firefighters in particular are often exposed to a myriad of toxic chemicals as they serve and protect us. We will expand the list of presumptive work related cancers for firefighters. We will lead the nation with this groundbreaking step by recognizing these public workers should not suffer because of workplace conditions.

The pandemic exposed gaps in our long-term care system here and across Canada, and drew our focus to seniors who were not receiving the dignified care they deserve.

We put our long-term care under the microscope and acted, stabilizing the pandemic. We adopted a one resident per room policy for all new facilities and are committed to implementing every recommendation of the Stevenson Review.

And we will go even further.

Over the months ahead, we will consult with Manitobans to modify, enhance and implement a renewed seniors strategy so aging Manitobans are able to stay safe in their own homes and communities as long as they choose.

Different seniors require different levels of support, and we want to ensure appropriate resources exist across the continuum of care in all regions of the province.

Manitoba's seniors have contributed greatly to our province and have built our society. We owe it to them to recognize their efforts and afford them a good quality of life with the independence they seek.

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The last 20 months of living through a pandemic have also taken a toll on Manitobans' mental health, created additional stress in our lives and on our support systems, and revealed a greater need for resources and programs.

Family violence escalated during the pandemic as families found themselves under unprecedented pressures. We will be expanding funding for Family Violence Shelters and other key supports.

Earlier this year, a stand-alone government department was created, dedicated to Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery.

Since then, this department has engaged with thousands of Manitobans and hundreds of organizations, clinicians and front-line service providers, to discuss how to make the system more responsive and reliable to support Manitobans who are struggling.

These unique consultations will continue as we move forward with solutions to help those in crisis, reduce substance abuse, increase housing options, and end homelessness.

We recognize the dedicated efforts of community advocates who have proposed solutions to government to help vulnerable Manitobans.

Our government is committed to making significant strides forward in our community wellness and improving access and co-ordination of the mental health and addictions system, with appropriate and inclusive care available to every Manitoban who needs it at any point in their life.

To address homelessness we will introduce this winter a homelessness strategy emphasizing a whole of government approach for consultations with Manitobans.

As our province continues on a path of economic recovery we will be challenged to ensure all Manitobans are included. We will continue our work with our community partners to develop innovative approaches to meet the needs of single parents, Indigenous youth, and people with disabilities while also helping those unable to work through the new disability support program.

Our government wants to give all Manitobans the chance to succeed in their careers and lives, starting with children. First, we will expedite the implementation of the federal-provincial agreement on Early Learning and Child Care. Early childhood development is essential if children are to succeed in their kindergarten to Grade 12 years. New schools are being built with child-care facilities incorporated into the design.

Our goal is to build a fair, transparent and equitable public education system.

We have heard loud and clear Manitoba's education system must better prepare students. Much good work has gone into exploring solutions to improve our K to 12 education system, and that information will help guide our plans as we re-engage with stakeholders

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Economic recovery is a top priority as the pandemic eases into an endemic.

It is also critical to keep our economy going and position ourselves for future growth while we remain vigilant to protect the health and safety of Manitobans.

Organizations across the province, whether urban or rural, private sector or not-for-profit, have benefitted from pandemic assistance from all levels of government.

We will continue to support businesses so they can produce the goods and services we rely on and provide jobs to Manitobans.

A cornerstone of our economic growth strategy is to produce meaningful employment opportunities, as skilled Manitobans are the foundation upon which businesses build success.

Yet our businesses have told us it is difficult to attract talent, amid a national labour shortage aggravated by the pandemic.

To help address this challenge, we will increase our investments in education and training, and focus our work with business to attract workers from around the world to fill gaps in labour.

We also support closer collaboration between our advanced education and training institutions, and our employers in Manitoba. Stronger alignment provides Manitobans with the right skills to succeed and build careers here at home. To accelerate post-COVID economic recovery and advance our economy, we will continue with our recently launched Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy.

We will continue to ensure Indigenous and new Canadian students are given full opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training.

It is important our government and post-secondary institutions are also aligned on how we work together to encourage stronger outcomes for meeting Manitoba's labour supply demands. To that end, we will re-engage with the institutions to discuss how the proposed funding formula can encourage the desired outcomes.

Immigration helps drive our economy.

Manitoba is proud of our provincial nominee program. We believe it is the strongest program of its kind in Canada, having brought thousands of talented, hard workers and their families to live here and participate in our economy and communities.

We will collaborate with the federal government to grow our immigration and provincial nominee programs, to maximize the number of people coming into our province every year, to fulfill our obligation of producing a welcoming new home for refugees and to enhance recognition of foreign credentials to match professionals with meaningful work.

Not only do we want to attract new people to Manitoba, but we will work to retain workers and encourage Manitobans to stay here by investing in communities to make Manitoba an even more vibrant place to live.

To grow our economy, we must also make Manitoba more attractive as we compete for investment and trade opportunities around the globe. Access to capital continues to be a challenge for too many businesses at all stages of their development. We will proceed with a venture capital framework and work with other provinces and territories to ensure investors and business are served effectively by our regulated capital markets.

We are committed to a renewed partnership with the Government of Canada, as we pursue our mutual economic objectives. We will only succeed as a nation if we work together.

Our shared priorities include transportation, strategic climate resilient infrastructure, agriculture and food production. Water strategies and investments not only combat droughts but ensure safe water for communities and enable more investments. Our Manitoba Protein Advantage Strategy will not continue to attract investment unless we guarantee water for our producers and processors. Further investments are needed in our dynamic tourism and cultural sectors.

As we emerge out of the pandemic, many sectors will continue to require some support as businesses re-establish operations.

Investments in roads and bridges, and water and waste systems are the underpinnings of our economic growth strategy and improve our quality of life. Proposals for much-needed municipal investments are now before federal and provincial governments. Timely decisions are critical to post-COVID economic recovery and our ability to attract investments. In particular, we are seeking early agreement on the needed investments to modernize and expand the City of Winnipeg waste-water treatment system.

Northern communities and First Nations have abundant mineral resources on their doorsteps, yet mining activity is not what it could be. We are committed to strengthening our efforts to make Manitoba more attractive for investment with expanding job opportunities.

Community infrastructure projects will enhance training opportunities and create vibrant neighbourhoods where people choose to live, rich with arts, culture, museums and modernized parks.

We will work to preserve our nature and heritage spaces, promote tourism and arts, and culture in our province and provide Manitobans with more opportunities to explore, participate and enjoy.

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As we grow our economy, we also know it is imperative we do our share to address climate change. Manitoba is committed to working with our federal government on a mutually agreed national approach based on cooperation and consultation with the provinces and respect for the economic and cultural attributes of the provinces. We will each do our share to meet our Canadian obligations coming out of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow.

We will create a greener Manitoba with an energy policy framework that focuses on opportunities to use innovative technologies, including those developed here in Manitoba, to reduce emissions while stimulating our economy.

Our government has a bold agenda with investments targeted at critically important areas, such as health care, infrastructure and the economy.

In order to provide those services, we have to be mindful of our government's expenditures and spend wisely in the best interests of all Manitobans.

A strengthened provincial economy will generate the revenues that benefit our government and citizens, allowing us to invest in important areas, reduce taxes, and bring our books into balance.

As we move forward, we will continually look for ways to improve our government programs and services, health-care and education systems and to increase inclusivity through all areas.

Our government and Manitobans are well served by civil servants and public sector workers. Too often, their contributions are taken for granted. We know they are critical if we are to succeed in fulfilling our priorities, implementing our programs, and achieving our vision for the benefit of all Manitobans. We will recruit and retain the best possible talent to continue to serve Manitoba.

Our government is here to listen to Manitobans, to engage and collaborate on many levels: with Indigenous leaders, with all levels of government, with business leaders and business owners, with people throughout the public sector, the private sector and not-for-profit organizations.

We are here to work with all Manitobans so we can emerge from this pandemic, together.

As we do so, we should not lose sight of the tremendous province we call home and the opportunities it affords Manitobans.

The vision that drives our economic activities and investments in our province is to ensure a prosperous, inclusive, and safe future for all Manitobans.

We want to see businesses and producers in every corner of our province rebound and thrive, along with the downtowns of our capital city and other communities.

We still face difficulties, but we are ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead of us with a renewed sense of openness.

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Estimates for the requirements for the public services of the province for the next fiscal year and the public accounts for the last fiscal year will be placed before you for your consideration.

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

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

PRAYER

The following Bill was read a First Time:

(No. 1) – An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office/Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction

(Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON)

On motion of Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON:

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

Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON moved:

THAT this House do now adjourn.

And the Question being put. It was agreed to.

The House then adjourned at 2:13 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 24, 2021.

Hon. Myrna DRIEDGER,
Speaker.