

Speech from the Throne

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*At the Opening of the
Second Session of the 41st Legislature
Legislature of the Province of Manitoba*

**The Honourable Janice C. Filmon, C.M., O.M.
Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba**

November 21, 2016

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Janice Filmon (Lieutenant - Governor of the Province of Manitoba):

Madame Speaker and members of the Manitoba Legislature.

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

Manitoba is the home of hope. A diverse and special place where people from all backgrounds and all regions of the world have chosen to make their home, grow their families and expand their opportunities in search of a better life.

We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 1 territory, in the heartland of the Metis people and at a crossroad of the world's cultures. Manitoba is an inclusive and welcoming community, strong in innovation and entrepreneurial spirit and unmatched in our citizen's willingness to give both of their time and their resources.

Manitoba's government is setting a new course, one that will focus on longterm, sustainable measures to fix our finances, repair the services relied upon by our citizens, spark the rebuilding of our economy and put our province back on a responsible fiscal track.

Our inherited challenges are significant, but they are no match for our collective capacity to adapt and affect positive change. For too long, Manitoba's potential for greatness has been hampered by a lack of vision, a propensity for unsustainable spending and rising debt. Good governments make difficult but necessary decisions, giving thoughtful consideration to both short-term benefits for their citizens and their ability to pay, to secure a sustainable and prosperous future.

Our government remains committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada. While we started from a challenging position, we have not shied away from an ambitious agenda, choosing to consult widely with Manitobans in order to begin building the bridges necessary for relationships based on respect and trust. We are listening to Manitobans and will govern with Manitoba values in mind, fighting for changes that will result in a stronger, safer and more prosperous province.

By working together, we have already begun to make progress that is evident today. And by working together, we will continue on our shared path to a better tomorrow.

Members of our government have travelled thousands of kilometers throughout this province in the last seven months, visiting communities in all regions, meeting with leaders, schoolchildren, and business owners, attending local festivals and cultural events, and in the process, speaking with and hearing from thousands of Manitobans about our shared vision for a better Manitoba. This is a government that listens.

Fixing our Finances

Our government will continue to engage Manitobans in focused discussions about the future of our province. Manitobans have told us that they want a government that includes the very citizens it was elected to serve. We welcome the input and advice of all Manitobans and will continue to pursue an open, transparent government deserving of the enduring trust of our citizens.

Our path toward a stronger economy has begun through the engagement of all Manitobans in the development of the 2017 provincial budget. We have heard from thousands of Manitobans through a process of in-person meetings as well as online and written participation. This has included input from

representatives of businesses, indigenous communities, non-governmental organizations and not-for-profit groups, municipalities and individual concerned citizens.

Throughout the pre-budget consultation process, we have heard recurring themes based on sustainability, efficiency, opportunities for growth and the need for northern economic development. And we have heard numerous references to our province's status as the highest-taxed jurisdiction in western Canada, our poor national rankings in education, social services and health care performance, our recent pattern of unsustainable increases in government expenditure and the increased size of administration within government.

Across Manitoba we have listened to these concerns and we have heard potential solutions too. We are grateful to those Manitobans who have offered their innovative ideas as we seek new and more effective ways of delivering services. Past levels of provincial government spending growth have far outpaced that of other Canadian provinces and have proven unsustainable in Manitoba, stealing funds from families and growing provincial deficit.

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The duty and responsibility to begin correcting our province's course has been left in the hands of our new government. We are honoured and humbled by the trust bestowed upon us by Manitobans and we are conscious that the decisions we make today, though never easy, are necessary in order to protect the services relied upon by Manitobans both today and into the future. This is sustainability.

Our pre-budget consultations have already received ideas from Manitobans of diverse backgrounds and circumstances - those who deliver services, those who fund them with their tax dollars, and those who depend upon their availability during times of need. Despite these differences, all Manitobans share a common interest in our province's future stability.

We have now completed the first phase of our government's Fiscal Performance Review. We will soon release the resulting review framework, which will include proposals to ensure progress towards our goal of making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada. Together with the results of this review, the input received from Manitobans during the pre-budget consultation process will inform the development of Budget 2017 and will advance our progress to a safer, more secure future.

Our government's commitment to prudent fiscal management and transparent, accountable budgeting will allow Manitoba to invest where it matters most to Manitoba families, while carefully returning our province to balanced budgets and economic growth.

The identification of savings began at the top, with a reduction in the size of our provincial cabinet. It has continued with a focus on responsibly reducing the spans and layers of senior management within the core of provincial government, ensuring that changes do not impact upon the quality or availability of front-line services. The province's Crown Corporations and regional health authorities will also be expected to do their part to reduce administrative and senior management costs as they deliver services to Manitobans. Legislation will be introduced, following consultation and dialogue, to ensure that the province's public sector costs do not exceed Manitobans' ability to sustain the services they receive in return.

Our government will continue to review the function and purpose of each of Manitoba's more than 200 Agencies, Boards and Commissions with a goal of reducing the total number by twenty percent, eliminating those that duplicate work and oversight completed elsewhere and those that are inactive. We will reform the governance of major Crown Corporations, abolishing the Crown Corporations Council and redeploying its resources to support increased efficiency and transparency within the mandate of the Minister of Crown Services.

Burdensome regulations and unnecessary red tape create a drag on economic growth, costing our economy hundreds of millions of dollars per year in lost time and resources. Manitoba currently has no legislation regarding regulatory accountability - no system of measurement, no overarching central body, and no mechanism to advise stakeholders of pending regulatory changes.

Reducing red tape is part of our government's plan to grow the provincial economy. Our government is committed to making Manitoba the most improved province for regulatory accountability by 2020. Our Red Tape Reduction Task Force will consult with external stakeholders, identify regulatory barriers and develop options to eliminate them. Our government will also table legislation in the New Year to create regulatory accountability.

Our government will also eliminate the current legislation governing private public partnerships, which in its current form actually discourages the use of such innovative funding partnerships in rebuilding Manitoba's infrastructure. Similarly, our government's legislation eliminating the unnecessary, duplicate administrative body, the East Side Road Authority will be reintroduced.

As we continue our efforts to put Manitoba back on a path toward balanced budgets, we must restore the integrity and accountability that has been lost as a result of the steady erosion of Manitoba's balanced budget legislation under previous governments. The introduction of a stand-alone referendum law will restore Manitobans' right to vote on increases to major taxes and will complement other measure to ensure we stay on the path towards the elimination of our province's budgetary deficit.

Repairing our Services

Our commitment to repairing services will focus on improving the circumstances of our most vulnerable citizens while ensuring that all Manitobans experience better results from the programs and services they rely upon.

In the aftermath of tragedies within our province's child welfare system, our government is committed to addressing the needs of Manitoba's most vulnerable children. We will develop a comprehensive plan that acts upon the many outstanding reports and recommendations and which will achieve better outcomes for children - fewer children in care, stronger partnerships with families and communities, better coordination of services and greater public accountability. We anticipate that the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls will lead to additional work in these areas and while we look forward to the results of the inquiry, we cannot pause our own work. Our government will continue to take action in a way that ensures consultation with our indigenous partners so that together we might explore how best to allow children to maintain ties with their community and access traditional parenting within an environment that ensures their health and safety.

This work will build upon the passage of the Protecting Children Act, which we will continue to implement across all sectors of government service delivery to ensure the timely sharing of information amongst those providing services to children in areas as diverse as child welfare, justice, education, and mental health and addiction.

Our government will soon introduce legislation to reduce the excessive and unnecessary bureaucratic red tape that currently delays the provision of support services to children in need of care, allowing us to eliminate wasteful spending on administrative processes so that we may focus resources on

providing services. We will also introduce legislation to create a stand-alone Children's Advocate, thereby enhancing the independence of this office and increasing accountability within our province's child welfare services.

We are committed to improving access to justice and to reducing unreasonable court delays. In response to the Supreme Court ruling on *R. v. Jordan*, our government is undertaking a system-wide review focused on improving the efficiency of the entire system from initial interaction with law enforcement to the final court ruling and the last interaction with the corrections system. These efforts will be supported by amendments to the Provincial Court Act, which will increase the efficiency of the courts system.

Our government will take steps to increase protection for both investors and consumers by strengthening securities legislation and undertaking consultation on the topic of modernizing and enhancing consumer protections related to secondary ticket sales - so called ticket scalping.

Reforming Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance program is a priority of our government as we continue efforts to achieve better results. In line with our government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of children, a particular emphasis will be placed on reforms that will improve the circumstances of our youngest citizens.

Following widespread consultation, we will release a new provincial housing strategy to address homelessness, affordability, repairs to existing housing stock and to increase home ownership amongst those Manitobans in need of adequate housing.

A comprehensive assessment of Manitoba's entire health system has begun via the Health Sustainability and Innovation Review. This exercise will identify opportunities for the elimination of waste and inefficiency and will recommend measures to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of the entire health system including core government and the regional health authorities as well as Diagnostic Services of Manitoba, Cancer Care Manitoba and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. The review will also make recommendations on how to make health care costs more sustainable over the long-term, while setting out expectations for better results in the programs and services provided to Manitobans.

The review will measure Manitoba's spending on health against three criteria: 1) whether services are being implemented and delivered at a reasonable cost; 2) whether the provision of services is achieving expected outcomes; and 3) whether the results achieved represent value for the money expended.

Our government is also developing a focused strategy to improve accessibility to and the coordination of mental health and addictions services across Manitoba. This will include a renewed focus on public education measures to counteract the current serious Opioid crisis facing Manitoba and other provinces and to warn Manitobans about the dangers of fentanyl-laced drugs.

Our government has been working for months to prepare for the federal government's move to legalize marijuana. Through close consultation with stakeholders and necessary collaboration with our federal, provincial and territorial partners, we will develop a legislative and regulatory framework that will protect children and youth from exposure to marijuana and its use, minimize harm to users and address the dangers of drug impaired driving.

Our government will create a provincial agency for doctor recruitment that is aligned with the province-wide priorities related to doctor recruitment and retention. The Manitoba Healthcare Providers Network has already been established as a precursor to the creation of such an agency and is responsible for ongoing medical recruitment and credentialing, health labour relations and health and safety initiatives.

We will also establish a Wait Time Task Force which will include frontline health care professions and will conduct in-depth analysis to identify opportunities to improve access to emergency rooms as well as surgical and diagnostic procedures.

Work is already underway through a consultation process to identify the best path toward self-regulation for Manitoba's paramedics, including the establishment of uniform standards and requirements for practice and registration. This process will ultimately enhance inter-professional collaboration between paramedics and allied health professionals.

Manitobans are among the most generous people in the world, boasting a long history of volunteerism and philanthropy. Our province's private and charitable sectors are rich in creativity, innovation and capital and our citizens are engaged and motivated to assist with the delivery of services and the development of Manitoba's economy. We will harness that devotion to community through the development of Social Impact Bonds that will explore new and innovative solutions to our province's social challenges including in the areas of poverty and crime.

Our government remains committed to increasing accessibility for Manitoba families to early learning and child care options through a broadbased strategy that includes support for licensed family child care spaces, reduced barriers to the creation of new child care spaces in home-based facilities, expanded programs for Early Childhood Educators and a continued partnership with Family Dynamics. We look forward to working with our partners in the federal government and other provincial and territorial jurisdictions towards a national Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Building upon commitments made in Budget 2016, our government's Building on Abilities Initiative will modernize and improve services within Community Living disABILITY Services. This work will ensure that adults living with an intellectual disability have access to appropriate supports within a flexible framework that allows for services to be tailored to their unique assessed needs.

We look forward to proclaiming The Sexual Violence Awareness and Protection Act, which will require post-secondary institutions across Manitoba to enact policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence affecting Manitoba students.

Ensuring Manitobans have access to adequate retirement savings is a primary concern of our government. Work with our federal and provincial counterparts continues to strengthen existing proposals designed to improve the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Manitoba has embarked on a consultation process to engage Manitobans on proposals made by our government and supported by Canada's Premiers to index the CPP death benefit, undertake a comprehensive review of CPP survivor and disability benefits, and eliminate the claw back of guaranteed income supplements for widowed seniors' CPP survivor benefits.

We remain committed to increasing the financial literacy of all Manitobans and we recognize that while the CPP is a key pillar to retirement security for Manitobans, it is not the entire solution. Beyond the enhancements we have proposed to the federal CPP, we will provide Manitobans with a new option to save for their retirement years which will offer investment and savings opportunities at low administrative costs. Our Pooled Retirement Pension Plans will offer a new deferred income plan designed to provide retirement benefits for employees and self-employed individuals who do not currently have access to a workplace pension.

The world is more connected and prosperous than ever before and advances in technology create unprecedented opportunities for the innovative delivery of services, yet inequality and challenges remain. Left unaddressed, these circumstances will threaten our province's future prosperity and

impede opportunities for the educational and economic advancement of our most vulnerable citizens.

Our government will address the challenges we face through measures that focus on improving social service and educational access and outcomes for Manitoba children, indigenous communities and low-income families. Economic inclusion and opportunities for growth go hand in hand. When combined with investments in education, training, infrastructure and research, these efforts will create the kind of sustained growth and opportunity that will make our province a richer place, not only through the impact on our economy but also on the future we are creating for generations to come.

Rebuilding our Economy

Manitoba is once again open for business, offering a diverse economic base with undiscovered potential for the expansion of existing opportunities, development of our province's entrepreneurial talent and attraction of investment from within our province, across Canada and around the globe.

For too long, our province's true potential has remained untapped, burdened by the weight of over taxation and limited by a lack of vision for long-term, sustainable economic growth.

Our government recognizes the need for economic diversification across our province and acknowledges the unique challenges associated with the economies of more remote and rural communities.

Northern Manitoba is a prominent example of a region forsaken by policies aimed at short-term fixes rather than sustainable development. This region's potential is unparalleled, offering unique tourism experiences and unexplored investment opportunities in key sectors like mining and minerals, forestry, and fishing. Our government recognizes the impact that a strengthened northern economy will have on the entire province of Manitoba and remains committed to the development of the north.

We are continuing work on the development and implementation of Manitoba's Look North initiative which will create jobs, increase investment and ensure long-term stability for the region's people and economy. Our Northern Economic Development Strategy will engage community and business leaders in a series of northern summits that will create the lasting partnerships needed for long-term and sustainable solutions.

Work is ongoing on the development of a clear protocol for consultations with our Indigenous partners. Our Ministers will continue to meet regularly with individual community leaders and with leadership from Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak (MKO), the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), the Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC), and the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO). Together, we will create jobs, seize opportunities and forge a path of healing and hope. And together, we will create a legacy of common effort and purpose which will endure for the lasting benefit of our children and for our children's children.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that rural Manitoba remains vibrant and sustainable for generations to come. In recognition of the important contributions made to our province's economy by sectors located primarily outside urban centres, our government will renew focus on the economic development of rural Manitoba, working toward a shared vision in partnership with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Economic Developers Association of Manitoba, Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Communities, Indigenous communities and rural stakeholders.

Manitoba's new Premier's Enterprise Team will offer its vast entrepreneurial expertise to the development of each of these economic development efforts within the framework of a new provincial strategy for growth and diversification. This forward-looking and inclusive plan will take Manitoba beyond the status quo, incorporating elements of our government's work on red tape reduction, increased access to venture capital, and expanded trade and workforce training. Our new strategy will seek to capitalize on Manitoba's strengths and build our capacity to innovate and create jobs in sectors including aerospace, value-added processing of our agricultural commodities, and industries attracted by our clean hydroelectric energy.

This strategy will guide future activities and provide a framework through which policy and funding decisions will be made to ensure that long-term, sustainable growth remains the primary focus. Youth, immigrants and our province's Indigenous population are integral to the future growth and vibrancy of all regions of Manitoba, including our diverse, inclusive and growing capital, Winnipeg.

Our government will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation at special events and activities taking place throughout the province during 2017. Manitoba's rich cultural and linguistic diversity, unique geographic landscapes and tourism destinations, and unmatched commitment to volunteerism will be on display to the nation and to the world as we partner with the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Canada to host the 2017 Canada Summer Games. A multitude of community events, festivals and cultural showcases across our capital city and throughout our province will celebrate what makes Manitoba so special.

Building on the passage of the Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act in our last session, we will move forward with the strengthening of the Francophone Affairs Secretariat and the continued preparation of a multi-year strategic plan for the provision of French language services.

Our province's greatest asset is its people. Hard-working and innovative, the only limits to what Manitobans may accomplish lie in the education and training they are able to access to prepare them for their future economic success. Poor performance by Manitoba students in recent provincial, pan-Canadian and international assessments has highlighted the need for all educational partners to focus on improving student achievement.

Education and training form fundamental building blocks for Manitoba's future economic success. Our government will focus on the fundamentals of a quality education, and will embark upon the development of a comprehensive long-term literacy and numeracy strategy that will provide Manitoba children with the skills they need to succeed and prosper.

This initiative will recognize the unique and diverse makeup of Manitoba's student population and will include a focus on education through the early years, investments in professional development for educators, support for school divisions and the development of curriculum that includes targets so that we are able to both measure and report upon our students' improvements in literacy and numeracy. It will involve consultation with educators and educational partners from across the province whose feedback will be instrumental in the development of the strategy.

We will introduce improvements to the financial supports available to Manitoba's post-secondary students by increasing the amount of provincial support overall and leveraging more private sector matching funds. Improvements will be made to the Manitoba Bursary program, converting it into a new student grant targeted at lower income and Indigenous students and we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of many Manitoba women being granted the right to vote through the creation of a new scholarship in partnership with the Nellie McClung Foundation.

Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program has been a contributor to Manitoba's economic growth and progress since its introduction in 1998 and our government is committed to its renewal. We will develop closer partnerships with our post-secondary and industry partners that will enable us to better match skilled workers, including international students, with opportunities to succeed and thrive in Manitoba. We are committed to the immediate elimination of the backlog of applications and will work with the federal government to improve the speed with which visa applications are processed. A cost recovery model will be introduced to make these improvements without increasing the cost to Manitoba taxpayers.

Our aerospace and advanced manufacturing industries are world-class, employing thousands of Manitobans both directly and indirectly in these and related sectors. Diverse and on the cutting edge of technology and innovation, the outlook for Manitoba's aerospace, advanced manufacturing and machine learning economies is extremely positive.

The decision by the federal government to establish the National Research Council's (NRC) new "Factory of the Future" facility in Winnipeg is a significant boost to an already strong and growing industry and will be a competitive edge in our province's ability to attract and retain new investments and their associated spin-off economic and employment benefits. Manitoba is committed to working with the federal government to move forward on the establishment of this project in the near future.

Our government is committed to ensuring value for money as we rebuild our provincial infrastructure and will implement a return on investment test to prioritize government investments in highways, bridges, water management infrastructure, as well as social and cultural projects. We have expedited the release of our list of planned strategic investments for the 2017/18 season, allowing the construction industry to plan for another season of building, grading, paving, repairing and improving our roads and highways.

Manitoba Infrastructure has been building roads in northern and remote communities for decades with proven success in training and employing local residents. Along with our federal partners, our government will continue to engage indigenous communities from the east side of Manitoba and Shoal Lake with the ultimate goal of building roads and ensuring that communities actually benefit from training and capacity building.

We will apply these principles of inclusion and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities as we move ahead with the Lake St. Martin / Lake Manitoba flood outlet channel, the largest construction project undertaken in our province since the expansion of the floodway a decade ago.

We stand at a pivotal moment for Manitoba and our partners throughout Canada and around the globe. Climate change is a serious and growing issue and our province is already feeling its impacts through unpredictable weather patterns and increased challenges with water management, including changes in the incidence and severity of flooding.

Manitoba will do its part within Canada to help fight climate change. We will introduce a Made in Manitoba carbon pricing and climate change plan that both addresses our unique environmental circumstances and meets our province's economic realities. Our goal is to prosper as we fight climate change by investing in clean growth opportunities and building resilience so that we may adapt to climate change impacts now and into the future.

As a first step, we will introduce legislation creating a stand-alone energy efficiency agency to help households and businesses reduce their energy needs, saving Manitobans money now and into the future. Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and enabling our Manitoba households, businesses and farmers to adapt to the effects of climate change while continuing to grow and thrive, are goals that all Manitobans must embrace for our province to become Canada's clean, green leader.

Manitoba's hunters, anglers and trappers are key partners in the conservation and sustainability of our fish and wildlife resources. Our government shares the concerns of all Manitobans regarding the dangers of unsafe and unsustainable harvesting practices and the decline of some provincial wildlife populations.

Respectful relationships, productive consultations and collaborative efforts are all vital to the effective management of our province's precious natural resources. We will engage stakeholders and rights-based harvesters in the management of our fish and wildlife resources, to develop comprehensive co-management strategies aimed at securing the long-term sustainability of our wildlife and fish populations, reduce unnecessary regulations and enhance public safety through enforcement efforts by Manitoba's conservation officers with the assistance of tips from the public to crack down on unsafe hunting practices.

Our government will continue efforts to stop the spread of Zebra Mussels and other Aquatic Invasive Species that threaten the health of Manitoba's lakes and rivers and which pose a significant challenge to our native fish and wildlife and a costly threat to essential power and water-based infrastructure if left unchecked.

Much progress has been made toward making Manitoba's government more open, accessible and accountable but much work remains and we are committed to building upon amendments made to elections legislation with further action to strengthen electoral laws. We will introduce reforms to the existing laws governing lobbying and conflicts of interest for elected officials.

In the course of this session, members of Manitoba's cabinet will lay before this Legislature a number of specific proposals for review. Members will also be asked to consider estimates for the requirements for the public services of the province in the next fiscal year, as well as the most recent Public Accounts.

Our Commitment to Manitobans

Our mandate and future course are clear and we remain steadfast in our determination to make Manitoba our country's most improved province. In order to achieve results, we must work together. We are listening to Manitobans and we will continue to be responsive to the innovative suggestions made by our province's greatest asset - its citizens.

What we may accomplish alone pales in comparison to the bright glow of what we might achieve together. Our love for this province unites us and our collective will to create a better tomorrow is strong. We know that only by asking great things of Manitobans will we be able to deliver great things for Manitoba.

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.

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