

Second Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 20, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m., the Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying the mace shoulder high, followed by the Speaker, the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Clerk Assistants, entered the Chamber.

The Sergeant-at-Arms returned to the north doors and met His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor with the mace.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Blake Dunn):
His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, preceded by the mace and accompanied by the Premier, military and civil aides and officer escort, entered the Chamber and took his seat on the throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms made obeisance with the mace and retired to the side of the Chamber.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Peter Liba (Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba): Please be seated.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Manitoba Legislature:

Je vous souhaite la bienvenue à la deuxième session de la trente-huitième Législature de la Province du Manitoba.

Translation

I welcome you to the Second Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

English

It is my privilege to open the first full session of the Legislature following the general election held June 3 of this year.

Your Government is honoured to have received a renewed mandate from the citizens of

Manitoba, and mindful of the commitments made to Manitobans: to continue improving our health care system; to lay the foundations for future growth in Manitoba by building on our economic partnerships and continuing to expand education and training opportunities; and to preserve the Manitoba advantages of a healthy environment, clean energy, safe communities and affordable living.

To fulfil those commitments, your Government will build on the shared successes of its first mandate and the important lessons to be drawn from them: to listen with respect to the views of the citizens of our province; to work hard to find common ground; to encourage cooperation and build consensus; to unite our province and not divide it; and to govern fairly for all citizens and all regions of Manitoba.

Since the election last June, Manitobans have faced a unique set of economic challenges. An exceptionally dry summer led to increased pressures for some farm families and one of the worst forest fire seasons on record. Manitoba lost a total of 430 000 hectares of forest this summer, the highest loss experienced by any province.

The closing of the U.S. border to Canadian cattle and beef last spring will cost Manitoba an estimated \$117 million in livestock receipts. Our entire economy has been affected by the border closure. In response, your Government has made available low-interest loans and direct support to Manitoba cattle producers. To date, \$60 million has flowed to producers. The federal government has contributed \$11 million, with the rest coming from the Province.

A 21% increase in the Canadian dollar since the start of the year has also presented a significant and ongoing challenge to the Manitoba economy. Our manufacturing and resource sectors, in particular, are striving to maintain their export markets and employment levels in the face of this sudden rise in our dollar's value.

The Manitoba economy is projected to grow at a reduced pace of 2.2 percent in 2003,

compared to 2 percent for Canada as a whole. Despite the nationwide slowdown, consumer spending and investment have remained strong in Manitoba. Forecasters project a significant increase in provincial growth in 2004, in line with the strong performance of the past four years.

Economic challenges have had an impact on provincial revenues this year, and have raised the need for temporary programs to help bridge affected industries. Despite these pressures, your Government has maintained its balanced budget policies of the past four years, which included debt reduction payments totalling \$384 million. These policies have earned two successive upgrades in Manitoba's credit rating.

Notwithstanding the current challenges, your Government will also continue the progress made on affordability for families and transparency of public finances. As committed in the last Budget, the middle income tax rate will be reduced 6 percent on January 1, 2004. This will bring to \$220 million the total income tax reductions introduced by this Government.

A law will be passed requiring that all provincial revenues raised through gas and diesel taxes are spent on highways, roads and infrastructure. The new law will ensure that your Government is accountable, on an annual basis, for the revenues raised and invested. It will also guarantee that any new share in federal gas taxes will be invested in municipal infrastructure.

Water Stewardship

Manitoba's lakes and rivers are our greatest natural assets. Stewarding those assets is an obligation we owe to ourselves and to future citizens of our province. Household, industry, farmers, municipalities, every one of us, has a role to play in protecting our water quality.

The creation of a new Water Stewardship Department will bring together the offices of government dedicated to water protection and water management. It will also gather together, in a focussed strategy, the efforts that have been taken in the past four years to improve water standards and infrastructure across Manitoba.

These efforts include more effective regulation of livestock operations, septic fields and

urban waste treatment; incentive programs such as the Riparian Tax Credit and restored subsidies for water testing; and substantial investments to improve flood protection, drainage networks and clean drinking water service to Manitoba communities.

Special attention is being given to Lake Winnipeg, which is Manitoba's largest lake and a major destination for fishing, recreation and tourism. Lake Winnipeg is also a repository for watersheds that extend across the central plains of North America. The health of the lake is an indicator of water protection efforts within and beyond Manitoba's borders.

* (13:35)

Au printemps dernier, votre gouvernement créait le Conseil de gestion du lac Winnipeg, un groupe composé de représentants des collectivités riveraines et de l'industrie, ainsi que de spécialistes de l'environnement. L'on visait alors la réduction de la quantité des éléments nutritifs nuisibles dans le lac Winnipeg à un niveau comparable à celui de 1970. Cet objectif sera au cœur du mandat du nouveau ministère de la Gestion des ressources hydriques.

Translation

This past spring your Government appointed a Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, with representation from Lake Winnipeg communities, industry and environmental experts. The target announced at that time is to reduce harmful nutrients in Lake Winnipeg to 1970 levels. This target will be central to the mandate of the new Water Stewardship Department.

English

A water protection act will be introduced, setting standards for sustainable practice and establishing new targets for water quality across Manitoba. The act will be backed up with changes to livestock approvals and a provincial commitment to meet the Clean Environment Commission's recommended standards for waste water treatment in Winnipeg and Brandon.

The Water Stewardship Department will also co-ordinate Manitoba's continuing opposition to North Dakota projects that would drain water, nutrients and foreign biota into the Red

River. Manitoba's opposition is supported by the states of Minnesota and Missouri. Our ultimate goal is to address water quality issues in a collaborative way, following the model of the Great Lakes Commission.

Effective water management is a counterpart to water quality programs. A trend towards more volatile weather patterns has led experts to predict that the Prairies will see both more drought and more flooding in years to come.

Throughout Manitoba, investments in drainage and flood protection works have been increased significantly. Improvements to the Winnipeg Floodway over the past four years have upgraded control structures and increased the floodway's capacity. Supported by a joint federal-provincial commitment of \$240 million, work has now begun on the first phase of a major expansion project. When completed, this first phase will provide protection to the level of the 1826 spring flood, as well as summer flood protection and recreational amenities.

Renewable Energy

Manitoba's early commitment to meet the Kyoto standards on emission reductions has positioned our province as a leader in clean energy technology.

Continued leadership in clean energy will yield economic as well as environmental benefits for all regions of our province. Major initiatives include the expansion of low-impact hydro-electric generation based on full partnerships with First Nations and northern communities; development of clean energy alternatives, such as wind generation, ethanol and hydrogen fuel; new energy conservation targets, building on the success of Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart Program and Manitoba's leadership in innovations such as geo-thermal heating and home energy-use audits.

Manitoba is in the process of negotiating bilateral agreements with the federal government and provinces to link our initiatives into a nationwide strategy.

One of the major economic opportunities for Manitoba is a proposal to export clean energy to

Ontario. An energy contract of this magnitude will lead to the biggest economic project in Manitoba since Limestone, with benefits flowing to northern communities in the form of jobs, training and a share in future revenues. It will also reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Canada by 40 million tonnes a year.

* (13:40)

Displacing coal generation with renewable energy is, in fact, the single biggest step Canada can take towards meeting our national Kyoto target. Manitoba is committed to working with the federal government to build a new Canadian electricity grid, a clean energy highway that will improve our energy security and foster the development of renewable energy sources.

For rural Manitoba, wind power and expanded ethanol production are the best opportunities for participating in the growing clean energy economy. Manitoba Hydro is set to proceed with the first wind farm in our province, making a significant addition to the portfolio of renewable energy available to our own consumers and our export markets. In the coming weeks, a new biofuels act will be introduced, establishing a framework for the expansion of ethanol production in Manitoba.

A third element of the Manitoba strategy is to expand water and energy conservation efforts across the province. Building on the success of Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart Program, which is saving consumers 241 megawatts of energy a year, your Government will establish a new one-stop agency to perform home audits and assist Manitobans in saving money and conserving resources.

New Opportunities for Youth

The number of young Manitobans enrolled in universities has increased 29 percent since 1999. This is an important measure of our concerted efforts to build a strong economic future. Over the past four years, the youth unemployment rate in Manitoba has consistently ranked lowest or second lowest in Canada. Job creation during that period has averaged over 6000 jobs a year, which is double the rate of the previous decade.

Expanded opportunities are convincing young Manitobans to build their futures here at home. For the year ended June 2003, net migration for youth aged 15 to 24 was positive once again. One thousand and fifty-five more young people came to Manitoba in the past year than left. This is our best result for youth migration since 1984.

It is essential we continue this trend. Increases in post-secondary enrolment reflect well on the partnerships established between educators, employers and government, paired with new investments in our campuses and a commitment to affordability. The next steps will add more flexibility to our education system, to provide the skill sets required by new industries and meet the needs of a broad range of learners.

Your Government is committed to expanding the number of targeted training options, building on the success of programs developed for nursing, new media and the aerospace sector. To support continued growth in the life sciences and biotechnology sector, new programs will be established at Red River College over the next three years.

Your Government is also committed to providing flexible options for learners in rural Manitoba and the North. New legislation will be introduced in the coming year to establish the University College of the North. Consultations with northern residents placed a priority on the training of northern teachers and an Aboriginal justice program.

UCN will be linked to Campus Manitoba and the new dual credit initiative, which is designed to improve rural and northern access to post-secondary education. A wired-in learning network will give high school students and adults the opportunity to complete up to two years of post-secondary credits while remaining in their home communities.

Special efforts will be made to meet the education needs of Aboriginal Manitobans. It is critical to bring about an improvement in learning outcomes and workforce participation for Aboriginal youth. The new Aboriginal Education Action Plan will focus on: initiatives to increase high school completion among First

Nations and Aboriginal youth; a new Access Program, devoted to recruiting and training a critical core of Aboriginal educators, health professionals and community workers; and a new set of workplace links, developed in partnership with Manitoba businesses and employers.

The mandate of the Minister of Education has recently been expanded to include the promotion of citizenship activities among youth. With advice from educators and the newly formed Youth Advisory Council, the minister will advance new models for teaching the context of Canadian citizenship and for connecting classroom learning with community participation.

* (13:45)

The model of citizenship draws together some of the innovations already taking place in Manitoba classrooms, with increased emphasis on leadership training, on youth engagement and on linking curricular studies with extracurricular activities such as arts and athletics.

This year the school calendar was amended to start classes after the Labour Day long weekend. Public response to this change was positive across the province. Parents, educators and the Manitoba tourism industry have all recommended that we continue the policy. In consultation with schools, your Government will ensure that the post-Labour Day start is maintained across Manitoba.

Healthy Living

Four years ago, the health system in Manitoba was in crisis. Since that time, the education of doctors, nurses and diagnostic health professionals has been expanded. Major capital improvements have been made to hospitals in every part of the province. MRIs, CT scans and other diagnostic tests have been increased significantly by adding new equipment and extending hours of operation.

These investments have brought a measure of stability to Manitoba health care. But more needs to be done to meet the health needs of our citizens as efficiently as possible and ensure a standard of care that is sustainable into the future.

At the heart of these improvements is a new Manitoba Wait List Reduction Plan. The plan has five components: improved information services, including an expanded Health Links and posting of wait lists on the Manitoba Health Web site to allow patients to make choices that will reduce their wait times; expansion of day surgery and outpatient diagnostics to free up hospital beds; investments in new diagnostic equipment for all regions of the province; expanded use of rural diagnostic equipment and operating theatres; and stabilizing and renewing the nursing workforce to get nurses to where they are needed.

Education of health professionals remains an important part of the health plan. Further expansions will be needed to address emerging demographic challenges in the professions and changing standards of clinical practice. The medical class at the University of Manitoba, which was expanded from 70 to 85 spaces two years ago, will be expanded to 100 spaces. Total nursing enrolment will grow to 3000 over the next four years, with added programs for rural and northern communities. Special funding will be set aside to educate and hire more diagnostic equipment technologists.

Investment in health capital is ongoing. The redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg is designed to accommodate the introduction of new technology. The redevelopment of the Brandon Regional Health Centre will allow more day surgeries and take the pressure off acute care beds. This is the model for future upgrades in health capital, supporting a shift to community treatment options and improved patient access.

Other innovations in health service include the changes to cardiac surgery recommended in the Koshal report and introduction of the leading edge gamma knife procedure at Health Sciences Centre. Winnipeg has been chosen as the site for gamma knife surgery in western Canada, reflecting a new regional approach to sharing health technology.

A more holistic approach to health is being advanced through the appointment of a Minister responsible for Healthy Living and prevention. Promoting physical activity and nutritious

eating, through public education and new programs in schools, is part of a long-term strategy to reduce the need for medical care.

Special attention will be given to healthy living strategies for seniors and elders. Your Government is committed to improving seniors access to public services, including health information, health prevention and recreation options. On the advice of stakeholder groups, the Manitoba Seniors Directorate will be restructured to focus on access and service delivery across departments.

* (13:50)

To provide affordable recreation options for all citizens your Government will continue to invest in wilderness trails and parks. Since 1999, volunteers across Manitoba have built over 600 kilometres of trail, supported by over \$2 million in provincial funding. The network of wilderness protected areas has been steadily expanded during that period. In the coming months, your Government will sign a memorandum of understanding with the federal government to create a new Lowlands National Park on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg.

The Minister responsible for Healthy Living has received recommendations from the All-Party Task Force on Environmental Tobacco Smoke, which calls for a province-wide ban on indoor smoking in public places and in provincial workplaces. The minister will bring forward legislation that reflects these recommendations.

The sustainability of health care services is an ongoing concern in Manitoba and across the country. Following the recommendation of the Romanow Commission, your Government is committed to establishing a National Health Council to monitor progress on improving health services.

The Romanow Commission also called on the federal government to move to funding 25 percent of health costs. The federal funding commitment for this year falls short of that recommendation and leaves in doubt what the long-term health partnership will be. Recognizing our own responsibilities to improve health care through innovation, Manitoba will work

with the new administration in Ottawa to seek full implementation of Romanow's vision for a sustainable health system. An encouraging sign is Mr. Martin's recent pledge to "keep the promise of universal and high-quality health care."

Community Safety

Personal safety and security is important to all Manitobans. Your Government has increased direct funding for policing to unprecedented levels and put in place new services and legal protections for seniors, children and victims of crime.

Manitoba is recognized for having Canada's strongest provincial anti-gang laws. Recent legislation led to the shutting down of a fortified gang bunker and over 41 prostitution and sniff houses. Police have been given new tools to fight organized crime, including charges for wearing gang colours and the ability to shut down businesses that are fronts for criminal gangs. In the coming year, new resources will be added to law enforcement, including new Crown attorney positions and supports for the Integrated Organized Crime Task Force. New legislation will be introduced allowing civil forfeiture of proceeds from crime.

A reform of the Provincial Court will be launched on December 1 to tackle justice system backlogs and the remand culture. The reforms will involve the restructuring of court procedures, emphasizing early case preparation to cut down on later delays. It was designed with the participation of the judiciary, the police and all justice system stakeholders.

Legal Aid will also be reformed to ensure that the Manitoba justice system operates in an efficient and credible way.

New community prevention measures will include an expansion of the successful Lighthouse program, which opens up gyms, libraries and computer rooms for after-hours programs. This prevention approach also includes mentoring initiatives to provide at-risk youth with positive role models and connections to the community.

Following the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission,

your Government has worked with Aboriginal communities to establish new Aboriginal policing and probation services. An Aboriginal Restorative Justice Program, Onashowewin Inc., will be launched to provide community alternatives to fines or jail sentences for minor offences.

Affordable Manitoba

Un gouvernement à la mesure de nos moyens et un coût de la vie peu élevé demeurent d'importants avantages du Manitoba.

Translation

Affordable government and a low cost of living remain an important part of the Manitoba advantage.

English

Manitobans continue to enjoy hydro and auto insurance rates that are among the lowest in North America. Keeping these rates steady has helped contain increases in the cost of living and protect the real value of wage increases. The Consumer Price Index in Manitoba rose just 1.1 percent from October 2002 to October 2003, a third lower than the Canadian increase.

During the past four years, property values have risen across Manitoba while property taxes have been held flat. This reverses the trend of the previous decade, when property values were flat and education taxes rose steadily. Increases in the Education Property Tax Credit and a 27% cut to the Education Support Levy have played a major role in holding down taxes. Continued progress in support of affordability remains a priority for the Manitoba government.

* (13:55)

Reductions in personal income tax to come into effect January 1, 2004, will bring total income tax reductions to \$220 million over four budgets. During the same period, Manitoba's small business tax rate has been reduced from 8 percent to 5 percent and the corporate income tax rate had been reduced from 17 percent to 16 percent, the first reduction since the Second World War. The threshold for the small business tax will be raised 10 percent on January 1, from \$320,000 to \$360,000, and the corporate rate will be reduced again to 15.5 percent.

Since 1999, Manitoba's minimum wage has been increased in a fair and regular way, consistent with the 1999 election commitment. Reflecting the rate advice of the Minimum Wage Commission, a further increase of 25 cents will take effect on April 1, 2004.

Fair Manitoba

Improvement in affordability is one of the most effective means of combatting poverty. Reductions in personal income taxes, combined with new tax credits for families, have targeted relief to low-income earners and removed thousands of Manitobans from the tax rolls.

Investments in training opportunities and family supports have also delivered a direct benefit to low-income families. The clawback of the National Child Benefit will be completely phased out this year, restoring \$13.7 million to low-income families. The Manitoba Prenatal Benefit, the first of its kind in Canada, has assisted over 4200 expectant mothers who have low incomes. This is in addition to home visiting programs which have helped more than 1500 at-risk families to provide good parenting.

Since 1999, annual funding for child care in Manitoba has increased by over 41 percent. The increased funding has provided for new over 1700 new spaces, increased wages and training for child care workers and the introduction of early childhood education programs. The provision of quality child care and the establishment of a province-wide network of parent-child centres are major elements of a strategy that focusses on early years development.

The results of these efforts are positive and significant. Since 1999, the number of employable social assistance recipients has been reduced by half.

A 2003 Statistics Canada report indicates a reduction in the percentage of low-income families in Manitoba following the restoration of the Child Benefit.

Workplace injuries in Manitoba have been reduced by 14 percent since 2000. Your Government will continue to target resources to

improve workplace safety and reduce the number of workers killed or injured on the job.

Partnerships for Growth

Le Plan stratégique de croissance économique en sept points, présenté à l'Assemblée législative il y a un an, soulignait le lien qui existe, d'une part, entre la recherche et les industries fondées sur le savoir et, d'autre part, la nécessité d'établir des partenariats stratégiques dans chaque région et dans chaque secteur de l'économie manitobaine.

Translation

The seven-point Action Strategy for Economic Growth, which was presented to the Legislature a year ago, emphasized the link between research and knowledge-based industries and the need to build strategic partnerships in every region and every sector of the Manitoba economy.

English

In line with that strategy, your Government has committed to a new post-graduate scholarship fund and targeted training for leading-edge sectors. The Premier's Economic Advisory Council, which had served as a valuable forum for developing the long-term growth strategy, has been asked to take a new role in implementation efforts, focussing on skills development, image promotion and local investment strategies.

As recommended by the Advisory Council, a new stand-alone Manitoba Tourism Agency will be formed. It will support public-private partnerships for developing and marketing the tourism sector.

Following another recommendation of the Advisory Council, a Manitoba Immigration Council will be appointed to assist in reaching our annual immigration goal of 10 000. The council's efforts will enhance a successful business and community partnership, which has helped raise the level of international immigration to Manitoba by 50 percent over the past five years.

* (14:00)

The vitality of Manitoba's cultural industries is a crucial element in the vitality of our economy and our ability to attract young, creative people to our communities. Your Government has recognized that role through its support for creative and applied arts and arts education at all levels. To promote one of the distinctive components of Manitoba culture, a new Advisory Council on First Nations and Indigenous Arts and Cultural Activities has been established.

Manitoba has always been a province which looks outward, not inward. We are a trading province doing business with the entire world. We are proud of the successes of our entrepreneurs, the dedication of our workforce, and our diverse and modern industries. Increasingly, Manitoba is seen as a leader not only in traditional resource development, manufacturing and skills, but also in knowledge-based industries where our skill and talent are becoming recognized internationally.

To add to these considerable advantages, your Government is taking steps to improve the co-ordination of its trade development efforts into our primary market in the United States and into other key markets around the world. The further development of the Mid-Continent Trade and Transportation Corridor will remain a high priority, along with building even stronger relationships with individual states.

Our goal is to foster employment and economic growth opportunities across all regions of Manitoba. Manitobans learned long ago that the future of our province depends on healthy economies in all regions. Policies that ignore our interdependence or that seek to benefit one region at the expense of another have no place in Manitoba.

Revitalizing Rural Manitoba

The growth strategy for rural Manitoba builds on the strengths of our communities and the promise of innovation. Investments in bio-science, nutraceuticals and food development are creating new opportunities for Manitoba farmers and rural entrepreneurs. Links between our research institutions and the agricultural economy will be strengthened through the new bio-

technology training strategy and targeted supports for students pursuing graduate studies in agriculture.

Our most immediate challenge is to maintain stability in the rural economy. The single case of BSE found in Alberta last spring created a crisis of major proportions for farm communities. In response to the crisis, the Manitoba government has made available a package that includes low-interest loans for cattle producers, cash flow supports, feed transport subsidies and initiatives to enhance processing capacity.

The partial opening of the U.S. border has alleviated but not ended the crisis for Manitoba cattle producers. Your Government will continue to work closely with the industry as it adapts to the new realities of the post-BSE market.

After consulting with Manitoba farmers, the Province recently signed onto the national Agricultural Policy Framework Implementation Agreement and committed \$43 million in provincial funding. The agreement adds new financial supports for Manitoba producers. It will complement provincial initiatives in research, animal health diagnostics and food safety.

Future growth in rural Manitoba depends on sustainable practices and diversification of the rural economy. The refocussing of provincial resources on water quality and water management will make a major contribution to rural sustainability.

Economic diversification opportunities already underway include the expansion of food processing and ethanol production, wind farm development and new manufacturing. The rewiring of rural Manitoba, a partnership effort that includes the extension of rural broadband service, the Manitoba Smart Network and the CyberSchools initiative, has the goal of providing rural communities with the same business and learning opportunities available in our urban centres.

Northern Partnerships

In the North, your Government has built new partnerships to promote growth and employment opportunities in the resource sector.

The Manitoba mining industry has been hit by a series of challenges in past years, but it continues to provide some of the brightest prospects for future growth. Your Government has used the Mining Reserve Fund to support northern communities affected by mining closures. At the same time, it has worked to establish new First Nations mining partnerships and a Diamond Strategy to promote new opportunities.

A new model for hydro development has been initiated in advance of the Wuskwatim project, involving full collaboration on dam design and environmental approvals and agreements for job creation and revenue sharing. With the prospect of a major energy sale to Ontario, hydro development remains the most promising opportunity for northern growth.

Renewed investment in northern transportation infrastructure is already paying dividends. Our northern Port of Churchill, which was threatened with closure last spring due to drought conditions on the Prairies, ended up shipping over 615 000 tonnes of wheat, canola and linola, a 120% increase over last year. Maintaining transportation links in the North, to service potential economic opportunities and provide affordable supply routes for isolated communities, remains a priority for the Manitoba government.

To build more effective partnerships with First Nations, Métis and other Aboriginal citizens, your Government has formed a new Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet. The new committee will improve co-ordination of Aboriginal issues across government departments. Among the priorities for the committee are an accelerated resolution of Treaty Land Entitlement agreements, the expansion of the Aboriginal Employment Agreement, the clarification of community-based Métis hunting rights in light of recent Supreme Court decisions and continued co-operation to develop a Manitoba Métis Strategy.

In the coming weeks your Government will proclaim legislation establishing the new Child and Family Services Authorities, allowing Aboriginal and Métis peoples to deliver child welfare services in their own communities.

Sustainable Cities

Tous les résidents du Manitoba tirent avantage de villes saines et en pleine croissance, dotées de centres-villes dynamiques.

Translation

Strong and growing cities, with vibrant downtowns, are a benefit to all citizens of our province.

English

Four years ago, the Manitoba government began a new partnership for growth in Winnipeg, investing in projects to revitalize the downtown and upgrade housing in central neighbourhoods. The fruits of this partnership can already be seen. The downtown Red River Campus opened this fall. Construction of the True North Centre and redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre are well underway, and a public tender process is also underway to bring the headquarters of Manitoba Hydro from the suburbs of Winnipeg to a signature downtown building.

In Brandon a similar partnership has been built to support a period of strong growth in Brandon's population and new economic prospects for the entire Westman region. Partnerships with Brandon neighbourhoods have resulted in the building or renewal of 500 housing units. New investments in the Keystone Centre, Brandon University and the Brandon Regional Health Centre have contributed to an ongoing construction boom.

Manitoba is now proposing to work with the City of Brandon and local developers to build residential housing on the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site. Future proceeds from the development could be earmarked for heritage preservation projects, which would include the existing Mental Health Centre buildings.

In central Winnipeg, over 1600 housing units have been built or restored through neighbourhood initiatives funded by all three levels of government. These neighbourhoods have recently seen dramatic increases in housing values, in

some cases as much as 60 percent, reversing the negative trend of the previous decade.

Ensuring sustainable growth in Winnipeg requires a regional approach, focussing development within the city's borders while preserving the character of the surrounding green belt. Since 1999, the Province has said no to development proposals that would have opened another 4000 lots beyond the perimeter. Provincial lands within the city limits have been made available for a new model of suburban development. Profits from the new Waverley West development will be earmarked to support housing needs in the city centre.

* (14:10)

The future infrastructure needs of the city must also be managed on a regional basis. Manitoba is partnering with the federal government and the City to fund the first stage of floodway expansion. The Province is also prepared to be part of the solution to Winnipeg's waste treatment and transportation challenges, providing funding support and legislative authority for long-term financing.

Growth for all regions of Manitoba is our goal. Your Government will work to increase population through immigration partnerships, to retain our young people with education opportunities, to provide affordable housing through neighbourhood initiatives, to build excitement with dynamic downtowns and to ensure sustainability through long-term planning.

Representative Democracy

The spirit of partnership plays an important role in this Legislature as well. Many citizens see only the partisan debate that takes place in this Chamber. They do not take into account the amount of legislation that passes with the support of all members and the shared commitment to advance the interests of our citizens.

All-party committees of the Legislature are a good way to demonstrate this unity of purpose and arrive at non-partisan solutions. A recent example is the All-Party Task Force on Environmental Tobacco Smoke, which held public consultations across the province and brought

back a unanimous set of recommendations to the Legislature. The same approach will be taken to other issues of importance to Manitobans.

At the national level, there has been a major change in the political landscape over the past year, with eight provincial elections and the transition of Canada's next Prime Minister. These developments afford an important opportunity to build greater co-operation among governments as we work together to pursue essential national priorities, such as securing our national health care system and strengthening our national hydro-electric grid.

Encore une fois, je voudrais remercier les invités qui se sont joints à nous aujourd'hui à l'occasion de l'ouverture de cette nouvelle session, et exprimer ma reconnaissance au Président et à tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative pour le dur travail qui les attend.

Translation

Once again, I would like to thank our guests for joining us for the start of the new session and thank our Speaker and all members of the Legislature for the hard work that lies ahead.

English

As you proceed to carry out the responsibilities the people of Manitoba have entrusted to you, I trust that Divine Providence will guide your deliberations and your decisions in the best interests of all our citizens.

The Sergeant-at-Arms made obeisance with the mace and preceded the Lieutenant-Governor, accompanied by the Premier, the officer escort and the aides, to the north doors of the Chamber.

God Save the Queen and O Canada! were sung.

The Speaker proceeded to the chair and the Premier returned to his seat.

The Sergeant-at-Arms made obeisance with the mace before the Speaker's chair and returned to the table.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are

assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O Merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 1—An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 1, An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office; Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Doer: I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Doer: I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: Before putting the question to the House, may I inform all present that a receiving line composed of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Liba, the Premier and Ms. Devine, and the Speaker and Ms. Dupont will form shortly in Room 200 at the north end of the building and that refreshments will be served in Room 254 at the south end of the building in five minutes time.

Motion agreed to, and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m., Friday, November 21, 2003.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

November 20, 2003

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