



Speech from the Throne



At the Opening of the
Fifth Session of the
40th Legislature

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Delivered by:

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Lieutenant Governor of the
Province of Manitoba

2015 Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Manitoba Legislature, and all Manitobans:

Welcome to this Fifth Session of the 40th Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. We acknowledge our presence on Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Red River Métis.

On behalf of our government, all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all Manitobans, I wish to extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to the survivors and the friends and families of the victims of Friday's horrific and senseless acts of violence in Paris, France.

Out of respect for the victims of these attacks, I would ask that all gathered here today rise to observe a moment of silence.

Thank you. As we begin a new legislative session today, we are ushering in a forward-looking vision for Manitoba.

During the recent federal election, Manitobans and Canadians rejected the politics of pessimism and division, and instead chose optimism.

This should come as no surprise. Inclusiveness, diversity, a focus on families, and a respect for environmental and indigenous rights—these are our shared values, and the values that represent who we are in Manitoba today.

This call for progress—and a willing federal partner at the table—means that our government is being presented with a greater opportunity to serve Manitobans and make more of a difference in their lives.

We are ready to work with the new federal government to realize its plan to bring refugees to Canada, and we will work with our partners in settlement services to ensure refugees get supports when they arrive.

We are looking forward to working with the federal government to lift the cap on immigrants and refugees, which has been imposed on Manitoba for too long. We all understand that building a stronger province involves reuniting families.

We also look forward to discussions with our federal partner on the issue of national pension reform to provide a more secure future for seniors.

We are pleased that the new government in Ottawa has committed to a federal inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and we support the participation of the victims' family members in the inquiry.

Our government is committed to broadening the mandate of the East Side Road Authority, which already creates good local jobs, training and business opportunities for indigenous communities, to now include the building of Shoal Lake's "Freedom Road."

But we cannot stop there.

We asked Manitobans what their priorities were for the future and we are listening.

Almost 150 years ago, Manitoba's founder, Louis Riel, had a vision to build a strong and inclusive province.

In this year's Speech from the Throne, our government is building on this vision with a dynamic and forward-looking plan for Manitoba.

Next April, families will stand at a crossroads and choose between very different futures for Manitoba.

Our plan today is not for naysayers or skeptics who still believe in the failed policies of deep cuts and privatization—especially when it hurts families.

This is a smart and strategic plan, grounded in the values and priorities of Manitoba families, that re-imagines Manitoba as we build towards 2020.

Investing in a Modern Manitoba

The time to build our future is now.

We will build and lock in strategic investments at historically low interest rates and keep our borrowing costs, which today stand at 5.6 cents on the dollar, affordable for the long term.

As we invest, we will steadily grow our economy for the benefit of everyone and create good jobs for our young people.

Today, we are well positioned to take on the challenge of transforming Manitoba because of our strong economic foundation. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada forecasts that our economy will be the strongest in Canada in 2016.

Manitoba is now the leading job creator in the country with the lowest unemployment rate. More Manitobans have good jobs than ever before.

We are very proud of this record and we are not done yet. We have come a long way and now is not the time to turn back. It is time to build on our momentum with smart, strategic investments that move Manitoba forward.

To advance this vision, we are pleased to announce that, in 2016, CentrePort Canada will break ground on a new Rail Park, which will include a major new business.

For far too long, rail lines have divided our capital city. It is time to move the tracks and open up opportunities for urban renewal.

This initiative will create opportunities to build stronger and safer neighbourhoods and communities with less rail traffic.

The creation of the CentrePort Canada Rail Park will help us achieve that.

With rail companies, the City of Winnipeg and partners, we are now taking on this task.

We recognize that our growing cities and towns require more and better infrastructure.

We are committed to providing stable, predictable and long-term funding to municipalities.

Two years ago, we introduced our five-year, \$5.5 billion infrastructure plan for roads, bridges, highways and flood protection. These investments will create close to 60,000 jobs for Manitobans, and hundreds of projects, big and small, that are changing the face of Manitoba.

Today, we are pleased to announce that we will ramp up our infrastructure plan by extending it beyond 2020, for a total investment of more than \$10 billion.

This is a record-breaking commitment for infrastructure, unprecedented in our province. It will create good jobs and grow our economy.

As we ramp up our plan, we will forge a New Partnership with the City of Winnipeg. This will be an enhanced and flexible partnership totaling \$1 billion over five years for critical infrastructure, including roads, public transit, wastewater treatment plants and recreation centres.

The New Partnership will renew roads in every neighbourhood in Winnipeg.

Our government has committed to building the Waverley Underpass and working with the City to eliminate traffic jams and delays on Marion Street.

The New Partnership will move on priority projects such as replacing the Louise Bridge, extending the Chief Peguis Trail westward, and upgrading Kenaston Boulevard.

Together, we will invest in recreation and wellness centres that are important to families and make our communities stronger.

The New Partnership will modernize public transit that many families rely on while keeping it affordable. Winnipeggers are best served when we work together on innovative ways to improve services.

Together, we will complete the southwest leg of Rapid Transit connecting the University of Manitoba to downtown, and commit to partner in future phases of Rapid Transit.

And we are not stopping there.

Our government is providing new money to add electric buses to the fleet. This creates good jobs right here in Manitoba and will make Manitoba a leader in green innovation.

Not only will we reinvent our capital city, we will undertake a major plan to build our great province.

We are a government that builds strong communities across Manitoba.

For rural and northern families, we will launch a new Growing Communities Fund to build and renew roads, bridges, water and sewer infrastructure, and recreation centres.

Our Wheat City is a growing and diverse community. We will move forward on priority projects in Brandon, such as a new south-end school, the redevelopment of the North Hill Assiniboine Community College campus, and the expansion of the Daly Overpass.

Our government will partner with local communities to expand cell service and broadband across Manitoba to better connect families and entrepreneurs.

Highways connect our rural and northern communities, and are crucial corridors for business and trade.

Our government will continue to make significant upgrades to highways in every part of the province, including new roads connecting First Nations communities along the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

We will also upgrade single-access roads into communities such as Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

When we invest in highways and bridges, we are investing in stronger communities and good jobs for all Manitobans.

Exciting New Jobs Here in Manitoba

We have come a long way since the days when building cranes all but disappeared in Manitoba. Together, we have changed Winnipeg's skyline.

Downtown Winnipeg is now home to major attractions such as the MTS Centre, an expanded Convention Centre and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights because our government, businesses and communities worked together towards a common goal: to make Winnipeg an attractive and affordable place to raise our families.

Winnipeg is approaching a population of 1 million and we are committed to a series of forward-looking investments in the heart of our capital city to attract more investment and enhance our quality of life.

This year, Winnipeg was named the most business-friendly city by *Canadian Business* magazine.

Thanks to our incentives and affordability, Winnipeg's business community is growing like never before. We will work with our partners to develop a Strategic Innovation Plan to grow clusters like Innovation Alley.

Manitoba has much to offer: spectacular scenery, natural wonders, outstanding culture, and world-class exhibits like the Journey to Churchill at Assiniboine Park. We will support the Conservancy in its next redevelopment of Assiniboine Park.

We have an exciting plan to attract more visitors and spur new businesses to continue growing our province.

As called for by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce to support Travel Manitoba, we will ramp up our investments in tourism to grow the industry.

We will increase our annual tourism expenditures to achieve the level of investment, as called for, while creating a sustainable funding model to boost tourism and market Manitoba to the world.

This strategy will create exciting new jobs and welcome visitors to our great province.

In partnership with Nunavut, Manitoba will showcase Inuit art to the world, and our government will support the building of the Winnipeg Art Gallery's new Inuit Art Centre, which will house the world's largest collection of Inuit art.

In the North, we will continue to promote Churchill as a tourism destination and a gateway to the North with world-class research facilities in arctic science.

We are already known across Canada as a creative hub for the arts. Our vision is to build on that strength, modernize and increase our investments in arts and culture, and expand Manitoba's talent pool of creative innovators.

Business owners, and anyone who has ever planned a social, praise our modernization of Manitoba's liquor laws for cutting red tape and spurring new business opportunities.

Our local craft beer industry is hopping and we want Manitoba to become a craft beer destination. Manitobans can expect to see as many as ten new craft breweries in the coming years.

Our government believes in a strong, socially responsible and publicly-owned Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, which is consolidating its operations into a new headquarters and bringing 400 jobs to downtown Winnipeg.

The federal government has signalled that it will be legalizing marijuana. The Liquor and Gaming Authority and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries will be well positioned to regulate the sale and distribution of marijuana in a safe and socially responsible manner.

Investing in a Healthy Environment

Manitoba is leading the country as the first province to support David Suzuki's Blue Dot Declaration. We will protect our lakes and parks for generations to come and introduce legislation that guarantees every Manitoban the right to enjoy a healthy environment.

We will contribute to the restoration of Lake Winnipeg by making sure Winnipeg's wastewater treatment plants comply with the highest quality standards.

We are committing a full one-third of the current cost to upgrade Winnipeg's wastewater treatment plants. Our share will increase by nearly \$100 million.

We will work with all partners to reduce nutrient loading and continue to fight the spread of zebra mussels.

Here in Manitoba, we know the effects severe weather and flooding can have on our communities.

That is why we are partnering with communities to rebuild around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, and we are protecting our communities by investing in critical flood protection now.

We also recognize the important role surface water management must play in flood control and protecting water quality.

Our boreal forest is one of the most important ecosystems on the planet. Indigenous communities have been stewards of the boreal forest for thousands of years.

We will work with indigenous communities on sustainable development, including new support for indigenous land-use planning.

We will engage with northern communities through Opportunities North to support our shared vision of a strong and sustainable northern economy.

Together with East Side communities, we continue to advance Pimachiowin Aki as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is the largest intact boreal forest in North America which supplies Lake Winnipeg with clean water every day.

Our government will take new actions to protect wetlands and wildlife with our partners such as Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Lake Winnipeg Foundation.

We will continue to invest in the parks that make Manitoba unique, and expand our network of protected areas.

We will support, with new funding, our municipalities and our partners such as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba who, through innovation, green our communities and create good jobs.

We will help the City of Winnipeg implement its own curb-side composting program.

We will continue to reject calls to privatize Manitoba Hydro, calls to cancel all export sales contracts, and calls to cancel development projects, which would put thousands of Manitobans out of work.

Manitobans enjoy the most affordable utility bundle in Canada thanks to our strong, publicly-owned Crowns like Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Public Insurance.

Going forward, we will bring in new programs so that Manitobans can save on their energy bills while we capitalize on our clean, green hydroelectricity here at home.

We must act on climate change. We need to adapt and we will position Manitoba to take on this challenge with innovation and good green jobs.

Investing in our Children and Youth

Investing in the early years gives our children the strongest possible start.

We will ramp up our investments in prevention programming to focus more resources at the front end.

A strong focus on prevention and supporting programs like Families First will avoid putting young Manitobans' futures at risk.

Our vision for Manitoba is to build a province where we work together to tackle tough issues.

The colonial legacy of the residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the child welfare system still remains.

Indigenous communities must be full partners in our efforts to support and keep families together.

We will introduce customary care legislation to ensure children can grow and thrive safely in their community, strengthening their connection to language, culture and family.

We recognize our role in the reconciliation process. It is an honour that Manitoba is home to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

We are acting on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We will be introducing legislation that ensures all Manitoba students learn about the histories, languages, cultures and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples to build on our shared values of inclusion, diversity and respect.

We want to make sure every family can find high-quality, affordable child care.

We are announcing an ambitious goal: we will create a universally accessible child care system with 12,000 additional spaces for families, and expand Manitoba's workforce of early childhood educators with our partners, such as Red River College and Université de Saint-Boniface.

We will be expanding child care centres into new housing developments as well as schools, colleges and universities.

Every family who needs child care should have access to an affordable space.

We will expand programs that provide healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks in schools.

We will invest more in community schools, early childhood hubs, and after-school programs in the inner-city and in northern Manitoba.

Teachers are the backbone of our education system. Our government recognizes the incredible work they do every day to make our children successful.

Our schools prepare young people for the opportunities of tomorrow and we will make strategic investments in our schools so that every child can succeed.

We will make classes smaller and provide more one-on-one attention so that no child is left behind.

We will support children who are struggling in our schools, help them with reading and math, and provide opportunities to students who want to excel beyond the core curriculum.

Our Bright Futures Fund supports programs such as Career Trek, Wayfinders and Pathways to Education.

We will continue to ensure that students face no “wrong doors” by creating new programs to help indigenous, newcomer and francophone students excel in higher learning.

Every parent wants their children to have the same opportunities they did, and more.

We will ramp up our First-Year Now initiative to ensure high school students earn university and college credits to get a head start on their careers.

We must build a new Manitoba that creates better education and job opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.

We will forge new partnerships and engage young indigenous leaders by forming an Indigenous Youth Leadership Premier’s Advisory Council, modeled on the Premier’s Economic Advisory Council.

Newcomers, who come in the hopes of a brighter future for their families, will be supported with language and literacy training, and specialized supports to ensure that they have the tools they need to succeed and feel welcomed in our communities.

We will expand community-based programs that help skilled newcomers get good jobs in their chosen careers across Manitoba.

Students have told us that post-secondary education should not be a debt sentence. We are listening to our students.

While other jurisdictions are cutting funding and raising fees, we are committed to keeping post-secondary education affordable for all Manitobans and provide more up-front supports to students.

We will develop more mixed-use housing for students in partnership with post-secondary institutions such as Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg.

With a \$150-million commitment to the University of Manitoba, our government will leverage half a billion dollars to ensure students get the supports, education and research opportunities they need to succeed in our modern and ever-changing labour market.

By working with teachers, business leaders and economic development agencies such as YES! Winnipeg, students will connect with good jobs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math related professions.

Because our vision for Manitoba is based on our shared values of inclusion, our plan helps people get their foot in the door in traditionally under-represented sectors.

We will invest in new supports for trades and training across the province and double the number of women apprentices in the skilled trades.

We will enhance our First Jobs Strategy to help more young people start rewarding careers.

In the North, we will partner with the University College of the North to build a new trades training centre to help students take advantage of the good jobs created by Manitoba Hydro, our investments in northern infrastructure, and mining.

By investing now, we are helping young people get good jobs in a growing province.

Investing in Healthy Families

When we ask Manitobans what kind of province they want to see in 2020, they tell us that robust health care services for families form a major part of that vision.

Our government will support an exciting new partnership with the Reh-Fit Centre to build the Pan Am Clinic of the future.

We are ushering in a new era of women's health care with a state-of-the-art Women's Hospital.

We will support the expansion of the Women's Health Clinic and its important programming in reproductive health.

We will make sure more families have access to midwives and post-partum supports, and we will expand the successful Fertility Treatment Tax Credit to provide more support to would-be parents.

We will create a new breast milk donation centre and complete the rollout of digital mammography throughout the province.

We will enhance our Emergency Medical Services system and move towards equalizing and reducing ambulance and other fees.

Cancer affects us all. We are investing in effective cancer care strategies, and will support a new state-of-the-art CancerCare facility to give Manitobans better access to expanded treatment.

We have shortened the journey from diagnosis to treatment for cancer patients, and we will build on this success by improving the journey for Manitobans with chronic diseases.

Seniors have worked hard to give us all a better life and they deserve our support to stay in their homes with dignity.

Manitoba pioneered home care in Canada. Together, we will pioneer home care innovation to serve our loved ones in the years to come without introducing user fees as other jurisdictions have done.

We will enhance funding to seniors centres and work with our partners to develop more seniors housing to foster independent living in our communities.

We will continue to build new personal care homes with an added focus on high-needs patients suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia, and we will make sure seniors get the individualized attention they need in a culturally responsive environment.

We will improve palliative care services for Manitobans by creating new hospice beds in partnership with Jocelyn House, support a new research chair in palliative care with the University of Manitoba and partner on the International Centre for Dignity and Palliative Care.

We will introduce legislation to help families find balance while caring for their loved ones, including making sure they get the time they need to provide care.

Our government will invest in the social determinants of health.

To be healthy, we need access to healthy foods. We will continue to invest in community-based strategies to expand local production of healthy foods across the North, and work with producers and the agricultural sector to bring local foods to new markets.

Together with community partners, such as Make Poverty History Manitoba, we will take steps to increase the minimum wage and bring the incomes of Manitoba families above the poverty line so that all Manitobans can live with dignity and fully participate in society.

We will develop more social and affordable housing with our partners, and work to end homelessness.

We will expand access to community-based youth mental health services by developing a variety of supports for young people with complex needs and those who are struggling with addictions to opiates. We will put in place new standards of service in northern Manitoba.

We will modernize our supports to persons who face employment disadvantages due to severe and prolonged disabilities.

We will provide training and job opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment by strengthening our Social Enterprise Strategy with our partners, including BUILD, Aki Energy and Manitoba Green Retrofit.

Our vision for Manitoba is one where everyone can feel safe in their homes and their communities. We will bolster supports for victims of crime, while tackling the root causes of crime with a Restorative Justice Strategy.

We will take important steps to provide paid leave to Manitobans who are victims of domestic violence, and we will make legislative changes to strengthen protection orders.

We will partner with our post-secondary institutions to make our campuses a safer place for all students with policies to prevent, and respond to, sexual violence and sexual harassment.

With healthier, safer and stronger communities, Manitoba will be able to reach its full potential.

Conclusion

Today, we are presenting a forward-looking and optimistic vision of a prosperous future. It is an inclusive vision that believes in the potential of every Manitoban, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and newcomers. It ensures that every child, senior and family has an opportunity to contribute and belong.

It is a smart, strategic vision that promotes steady growth, creates good jobs and builds critical infrastructure. It enhances our well-being and quality of life, develops our cultural assets to attract new tourism dollars, and reinforces our commitment to water quality, lakes and parks.

It is an ambitious vision, but one that is within reach, should we choose to grab hold of it.

We were encouraged to see so many engaged Manitobans voting in the last federal election.

We recognize the record number of Manitobans participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies this year. In honour of our veterans who have sacrificed so much to protect our democracy, we will now take the necessary steps to make November 11th a full statutory day of Remembrance.

We also honour the contributions made by Peace Officers and First Responders to the safety of our communities and, when they fall in the line of duty, we will ensure that their story is heard through our Geographic Names Program.

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.