



Speech FROM THE Throne

At the Opening of the
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43rd Legislature

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Delivered by:

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Lieutenant-Governor of the
Province of Manitoba

Working Together. Working for You.

We begin by honouring the sacredness and importance of these lands and waters, and of the ancestors that once walked where we are standing today.

We recognize the Anishinewak, Cree, Dene, Dakota, Métis, Inuit and Anishinaabe nations who paved the way to what is now known as Manitoba, home to all who are treaty people.

This acknowledgement is a reminder of our histories and the original homeland of those nations which have become home to all of us today.

Our government also wants to acknowledge the people of Manitoba are great people who have come together to do great things in our history. We have shown the rest of Canada that Manitoba can be a leader. A leader in clean energy, a leader in the arts, and our plan will make us a leader in fixing health care.

We must recognize that the great things in our province have always been protected by our brave service people who have stepped up to fight to defend our freedoms, our liberty and the very democracy we practice in this chamber. We are mindful of the sacrifices they made so that each of us, here in Manitoba, can contribute to our democracy. Voting is an important way that we pay tribute to those sacrifices.

Our government will always honour the bravery of veterans, first responders and those in active service.

WORKING TOGETHER

There is optimism in our province, for it is a new day in Manitoba.

Manitobans elected our government to bring people together to solve the challenges we face as a province: from record wait times for health care, to rising costs for families and a homelessness crisis that is visible across the province – in our downtowns, in rural communities and across the north.

Manitobans elected our government with a mandate to leave no one behind. You have asked us to be a government that will work together with business leaders, workers, community organizations and all orders of government to make life better for Manitobans.

Our mandate is drawn from the stories we've heard over the last two terms of this Legislature. The nurse who is exhausted after health care cuts and worried for her patients. The blue collar worker who feels he's lost his freedom when his paycheque disappears under rising gas prices and higher Hydro bills. The family in rural Manitoba who has to drive hours to get the health care they need. The senior who doesn't feel safe in her home at night. The parents who want their children to find good careers right here at home—and to not have to leave our province to find opportunities. These are our stories.

We are working to implement the mandate we received from you by working together with the public servants who share our commitment to make life better for all Manitobans. We will value their work and listen to their expert advice. Whether as snow plow drivers, conservation officers, mechanics or civil servants in this building, these hardworking professionals are the people who will turn our shared vision into a reality for all of us.

To the public service—we thank you for getting us through difficult times. It is time for a government that works with public servants instead of against them to deliver results for you, the people of Manitoba.

WORKING FOR YOU

Our government is already delivering on our commitments to Manitobans.

In one of our first acts, we reached out directly to Manitobans working in our health care system today. We committed to being a listening government and shared our plan to reset the relationship with health care staff on the front lines.

Our team is launching a health care listening tour which will hear from the staff at the bedside across the province. We will hear directly from Manitobans who care for you at the bedside.

We are fulfilling our commitment to reduce bureaucracy in health care by returning oversight of all surgical and diagnostic procedures back to the government's Health Department, and focusing funding on public health care delivery in Manitoba.

We have taken steps to address the immediate crisis in health care and reduce wait times. We are opening ten additional surgical slates for surgery at the Grace Hospital and expanding spinal surgical capacity at the Health Sciences Centre, Concordia Hospital and the Brandon Regional Health Centre. Taken together, these investments will reduce wait times and help patients move from emergency rooms to wards, where they can get the care they need.

We are also reducing the MRI waitlist and giving Northern families better access to health care with a new mobile MRI unit for northern Manitoba.

We are working with all levels of government to solve the challenges we're facing together.

In health care, we secured a commitment from Premiers across Canada to work together to fix the staffing shortage and ensure they do not poach Manitoba's health care workers.

We have already unlocked \$500 million in new investment with the federal government to deliver low-carbon, reliable, and affordable electricity to people and businesses across the province and expand our electricity grid while creating good family-supporting jobs for Manitobans. Together, we will ensure Manitoba becomes a leader in the low-carbon economy of tomorrow.

Today we are proud to announce that we have a commitment from the Federal government to work with us on our plan to help families make the switch to affordable, geothermal home energy. This collaborative approach will help us deliver on our commitments to reduce emissions, lower costs for families and create more low-carbon jobs.

We will deliver on this commitment while bringing blue-collar Manitobans along with us, training people this year to install geothermal heat pumps for families across Manitoba.

In all of the decisions our government makes, we will include the voices and needs of rural Manitoba. With our new Westman cabinet office in Brandon, we will give families in Westman, the Parkland and surrounding communities a direct line to our government.

We are making life better for working families. We ended the strike we inherited from the previous government with a deal that is fair for workers at Manitoba Public Insurance and also responsible to ratepayers.

We sent a clear message to Indigenous governments across Manitoba – we are ready to work with you. With the Premier's appointment as the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation as well as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, our government will reset the relationship with Métis, Inuit and First Nations leadership in our province.

In the spirit of working together, we removed the prohibition that prevented Manitoba Hydro from dealing directly with Indigenous governments and we are advancing economic reconciliation by working with the leadership of the Treaty One First Nations as they transform the former Kapyong barracks into the residential and commercial development of Naawi-Oodena.

We have begun to honour our commitment to search the landfill for the remains of Mercedes Myran, Morgan Harris and Mashkode Bizhiki'ikwe. Our first step was welcoming their families into the Legislature where we promised that no government in Manitoba will ever use the families of murder victims as political props again.

And as winter quickly approaches we worked with community organizations to help shelters across Manitoba operate 24/7.

In just one month we have accomplished these important things by working together with you, the people we serve.

THE WORK AHEAD

The road ahead will surely have challenges.

Many commitments the previous government made did not fit within a sustainable approach to the province's finances.

These decisions have left Manitoba in a financial challenge.

This does not deter us from fulfilling our mandate to balance the budget at the end of this term in office, but it will require that we act responsibly and stabilize the province's finances.

With a new government and a new mandate, we will be good stewards of our province's books.

Our government will be fiscally responsible while investing in health care, education and communities across the province.

The path forward will take time and hard work. But we are optimistic, because we know the way we do difficult things in Manitoba is by working on them together.

A NEW VISION FOR HEALTH CARE

It is time for a new vision in health care.

Choosing to work in health care is an act of love.

At the heart of our health care plan is a commitment to take better care of the Manitobans who take care of us—those Manitobans who are working on the front lines of our health care system.

The wealth of knowledge and experience of our frontline workers will inform our decisions in health care. Our government will foster a culture of open and transparent communication. We will prioritize the expertise of the frontlines and reduce the burnout caused by excess bureaucracy. We will set out clear goals to improve our system, work with the frontlines on those commitments and hold management accountable to improve things for you, the patient.

Our commitment to the front lines of health care is to improve retention and recruitment by creating a culture in health care in Manitoba that respects nurses, doctors, allied health care professionals, aides and support staff by respecting their decision-making powers, their expertise, and empowering them to do what's best for you—the patient.

Instead of more agency nurses, we will give nurses more agency.

Instead of closing emergency rooms, we will bring emergency rooms closer.

And instead of sending more patients out of province to receive surgeries, we will bring more surgeries here to our province where you, the patients, live.

We will make Manitoba a rewarding place to practice medicine, care for patients and pursue cutting-edge research that will help Manitobans stay healthy. We will improve health care at every level by expanding primary care teams, opening more clinics for minor injury and illness and improving long-term care.

Our government will never forget the way seniors were neglected in the pandemic. We will not let this happen again. We will take better care of the seniors who raised us with more home-care support so that you can live independently for as long as you feel comfortable. We will increase the hours of direct care for each senior living in personal care homes. And we will create a Seniors Advocate — a strong, independent voice for seniors and their families.

Today Winnipeg has some of the worst ER wait times on record, too many patients are leaving ERs without being seen and rural and Northern families are forced to drive hours from home to access emergency care.

Our government will work to reduce wait times at emergency departments by adding more beds to acute care hospitals. This will reduce the backlog of patients waiting for beds and help every patient access the type of care you need more quickly.

Right now it's too difficult for many Manitobans to train for a career in health care. Our government will change that. We will create more opportunities for training in rural and northern centres and we will work with regulatory colleges to streamline the credential process so more Manitobans can join the frontlines.

As we staff up our health care system, we will restore our Emergency Care network, starting with opening new ERs at the Victoria Hospital and Eriksdale.

Reproductive health care is a right. Our government will protect and affirm Manitobans' right to access abortion services, protect abortion providers and make prescription birth control free.

LOWER COSTS

We will give freedom back to Manitobans who are struggling to make ends meet right now by making life more affordable.

With inflation at the highest level in a generation, our government believes we should use our power to save you money.

At the start of the new year, our government has a plan to give you a break at the pump – we have a plan to pause the provincial gas tax, saving you 14 cents per litre every time you fill up.

This will provide relief to families, small businesses and municipalities.

Our commitment to freeze hydro rates, after the previous government's rate increases, will also help families and small businesses with monthly costs. We will deliver this in a way that respects the independence of the Public Utilities Board and the most recent rate application, all while ensuring the long-term fiscal strength of Manitoba. And the best way for us to do that is to stop the privatization of Hydro subsidiaries and ensure that Manitoba Hydro stays public forever.

In the coming days we will also announce a significant new policy to help the agricultural industry by lowering costs for producers and ranchers.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

Our new department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness was founded with a simple goal but an immense task —to end chronic homelessness in our province over the next 8 years. We designed this department to break down barriers and cut through the excuses to deliver the housing and wrap around services needed to get people out of bus shelters and tents with dignity and compassion.

Through this new department we will work with municipalities, businesses, community organizations and every level of government to connect our loved ones on the streets with barrier-free housing, addictions and mental health supports, health care and a pathway to employment.

The number of Manitobans dying from drug overdoses continues to rise. That's why it is so important that we provide wrap around services that are grounded in real harm reduction.

Toxic drugs are tearing our families and communities apart. Part of the solution to the addictions crisis is holding those getting rich off of human suffering accountable. We will continue to pursue opioid manufacturers and we will bring in an Unexplained Wealth Act to help build cases against those who profit from the chaos in our communities.

We will work with law enforcement, community safety patrols and community organizations to make our streets and communities safer for everyone. And we will help law enforcement focus on violent crime by hiring more mental health professionals to respond to non-violent calls.

Working with municipalities and the business community, we will revitalize the downtowns of our urban centres. While previous governments may have put out press releases, we are putting out resources to get signature developments moving that will improve downtown Winnipeg —our province's downtown — alongside investments in Brandon, Dauphin, Selkirk, the Pembina Valley and the north.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Investing in Manitoba kids is an investment in our future.

Over the next four years, our government will support students at every step of their education journey, from early childhood education to post-secondary institutions and trades training programs.

Kids cannot learn on an empty stomach, but for too many children hunger and family poverty are a reality. Our commitment to a nutrition program in every school will have a profound impact on the next generation, improving educational outcomes and graduation rates, and lifting families out of poverty. We will start this work within the current school year.

Parents and educators know class sizes are too large. Our government will work with educators to lower class sizes for the youngest learners so they get more one-on-one time with their teachers and Educational Assistants.

In every part of the province our government will ensure that queer and trans students in Manitoba are safe, respected and know they belong, and we will work with communities and school divisions to ensure every family is welcome and included at their school. Our vision for Manitoba is one where parents, educators, and students work together, not against one another, and one in which the 2SLGBTQ+ community is safe and valued.

We will work with the childcare sector to retain and recruit early childhood educators and create new, high-quality childcare spaces at workplaces and community hubs like the Park Community Centre in Brandon.

We will support Indigenous learning by appointing an Assistant Deputy Minister for Indigenous Excellence to ensure that Indigenous student achievement is a pillar of Manitoba's education system.

We will recruit more French language teachers and reinstate the Assistant Deputy Minister for le Bureau de l'Éducation Française.

We know that education funding must keep up with enrolment and student needs. Our first budget will take steps toward the funding necessary to support our children and grandchildren.

The Israel-Hamas conflict has strained some of the ties that bind us together as Manitobans. But our government is clear: we are one people, and hate has no place in our province. Living up to that statement requires continued work, and that action starts in our education system.

Our government has heard from Jewish students who tell us they're afraid to go to school. Our government has spoken with Muslim families who have faced Islamophobic discrimination and violence.

Our government will be there for you and for all Manitobans. We will combat division and anti-semitism by including Holocaust education in the K-12 curriculum.

We will push for unity and against Islamophobia by ensuring educators in our province have anti-Islamophobia toolkits that come from Manitoba's Islamic community.

Let us be clear, our government views these only as first steps. And we are committed to walking forward with you to combat these forms of hatred, as well as homophobia, transphobia, and all other negative ideologies which seek to divide us as Manitobans.

A STRONG ECONOMY WITH GOOD MANITOBA JOBS

The economic horse pulls the social cart. In order for us to deliver on our mandate to fix health care and lower costs for families, we have to grow the economy and ensure the conditions are right for the private sector to succeed. Our government has committed to predictability by implementing the province's 2023 fiscal framework.

Our government has strong relationships with business leaders and will work hard to reinforce them. Industry drives a growing economy, brings more investment to Manitoba and are the partners we want to work with to make it easier for Manitobans to join the workforce, join a union and join the middle class.

To support this we are establishing a Premier's Business and Jobs team which will have membership from every region, from many sectors and with representation from both employers and employees. This team will be tasked with articulating a clear provincial economic strategy to strengthen our diversified economy and lean into new low-carbon opportunities.

We will rebalance labour relations in Manitoba to ensure fairness for workers across our province.

We will use the power of post-secondary education and training to ensure the next generation of Manitobans are open, thoughtful and highly skilled workers who are ready to build the infrastructure of the future. We will stop the trend of losing workers to other provinces and we'll help new Canadians get the support they need to put down roots here.

We will listen to and work with Manitobans living with disabilities, building an inclusive province that allows everyone to participate equitably.

Manitoba's agricultural producers work hard to feed families in Manitoba and around the world. We will respect these producers and partner with the agricultural industry to invest in agricultural science, innovation, resilience and sustainability.

Along the way, we will pursue economic reconciliation. Across our province, Indigenous businesses, entrepreneurs and governments are building up Manitoba. Our government will value the hard work they are doing in our province, and we will partner with them to create more opportunities for all Manitobans.

This means collaborating with the Manitoba Métis Federation and First Nations leadership to develop a meaningful economic reconciliation strategy.

Working with Indigenous partners, local residents and the business community, our government will develop a real critical minerals strategy that provides good jobs for rural and northern Manitobans while building a low carbon future.

Our province is a hub for artists, like Morgan Grace and Keith Ginther, the Métis musicians who helped us mark the first throne speech of the 43rd legislature today. We will help grow the creative sector and invest in local artists and festivals for more Manitobans to enjoy. Our province is full of entrepreneurs, small businesses and innovators – and our government will invest in the important contributions they make to help Manitoba thrive.

Through meaningful infrastructure investments, we can ensure that Manitoba is a real partner in interprovincial and global trade. With northern Manitobans, our government will invest in trade corridors and ensure the Port of Churchill helps us fulfill our economic potential by making Manitoba a maritime province.

We will make it easier for businesses and Manitobans to travel across our province with improved airports in the north. Together, we can build a strong economic future in our province, where businesses want to invest, and where families can build a good life with good wages.

MEETING THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We will meet this challenge head on and keep our government focused on the environmental impacts of government policies.

Manitoba has the low-carbon electricity, the skilled workforce, the emission-free vehicle manufacturers and entrepreneurial spirit to build a lot of wealth in the current economic environment. Our government's goal is to build our province into a showcase for the world—one that shows other provinces and countries that you can have an advanced, growing economy with good jobs that is doing its part to solve global warming.

Our new department of Environment and Climate Change will lead the way. We will bring in measures so families can afford electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, make their homes more efficient with geothermal heat pumps, and we will stand up a hydrogen industry that will power future growth opportunities.

Manitobans are looking for ways to reduce emissions and lower their energy costs. And businesses are looking to decarbonize. The clean energy future isn't a dream in Manitoba – it's here today, in the workers who are putting food on the table by building up our Hydro infrastructure, and the business leaders and entrepreneurs who are putting capital on the line to build a carbon-free tomorrow.

Of course the land, air and water cannot merely be reduced to economic goods. We want future generations to feel as good about living here as we do today. That's why our government will work with Indigenous nations to protect our land, water and biodiversity.

WORKING TOGETHER

Manitobans gave our government a mandate to work together to deliver on these bold commitments.

To our counterparts in other orders of government, we are ready to reset the relationship and work with you.

To municipalities across Manitoba, we will work with you to strengthen your local economies, provide the services and build the infrastructure you need to keep up with population growth.

After years of hindered growth, we will provide predictability and help your planning with multi-year funding for municipalities.

You are our partners, in health care recruitment and economic growth.

You are the experts on the ground and our government will respect your governments in the work you do.

We have already shown we can work with the federal government to tackle the climate crisis, make life affordable and fix health care.

To Indigenous governments in Manitoba, we will acknowledge you for who you are, and what you have always been – which is governments. We will work with the Manitoba Métis Federation and First Nations governments to advance our shared priorities. We will work with Inuit leadership in Manitoba as well as leaders from the Kivalliq region and across Nunavut to ensure Manitoba is a hub for the north.

We will transform child welfare to ensure every child in Manitoba is connected with their family, their community and their culture.

In this spirit of reconciliation, our government will put forward legislation to acknowledge Louis Riel as the first Premier of our great province.

Our government will recognize the stories and resilience of Residential School Survivors by establishing September 30th, Orange Shirt Day, as a provincial statutory holiday. On this day and every day, we will encourage more Manitobans to learn about our shared history.

This past September 30th will be the last time Orange Shirt Day was not a recognized statutory holiday. In the future, every single Manitoban will be able to participate—including those who work in manufacturing, construction, and other provincially regulated workplaces. That way every child will be able to honour Orange Shirt Day, no matter where their parents work. This is another step closer to a Manitoba that truly lives up to the phrase “Every Child Matters.”

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Our government is made up of people from all walks of life who have come together to work for you.

We are humbled by the sacred mandate you have given us.

We will honour your trust and faith in our government to deliver on the priorities of Manitobans.

Where every family can afford to build a good life in Manitoba.

Where you have quality health care close to home.

Together, we are rejecting division, and coming together to create a strong future for Manitoba.

Together, we are working to make that vision of hope and collaboration a reality.

Together with Manitobans from all walks of life, from every part of the province, from every background...

Together, our government is working for you.

Miigwech, merci, thank you.