



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

### VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS No. 1

#### SECOND SESSION, THIRTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

**1:30 O'CLOCK P.M.**

This being the first day of the meeting of the Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba convoked by Proclamation of His Honour John HARVARD, Lieutenant Governor for the dispatch of business, and the Members of the House being assembled,

His Honour, John HARVARD, was pleased to open the session with the following gracious speech:

Mister Speaker and Members of the Manitoba Legislature:

Welcome to the Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

This is the Second Session of the Legislature since the people of Manitoba voted last May. I am proud to note that, with our newly elected members, we have an Assembly that more closely reflects the face of Manitoba. It includes the largest number of women elected in our province's history and the largest proportion of women of any legislature in Canada.

I am also proud to note that today citizens in wheelchairs were able to enter our Legislative Building through the formal front entrance – another first for provincial legislatures in Canada.

Following last summer's election, your government has acted on its mandate to continue building a strong future for Manitoba: building an innovative economy by growing our population and our skilled workforce; building provincial infrastructure to meet the needs of the coming century; building on our province's clean energy advantage; and building the principle of environmental sustainability into everything we do.

Legislation and new initiatives to be introduced this session will:

- Improve women's health services and provide new diagnostic and treatment options for Manitoba children;
- Renew our province's transportation network and trade corridors, as part of a ten-year, \$4 billion investment;
- Expand skills training and ease the transition of immigrants into the workforce;
- Increase daycare options for Manitoba families; and
- Protect our environment by banning phosphate-laden dishwasher detergents, planting a million more trees a year; and putting a stop to new septic fields in urban areas and provincial parks.

Your government is also working in partnership with Manitoba businesses to deal with changing economic conditions. The rapid appreciation of the Canadian dollar presents a serious and immediate challenge to all of Manitoba's export industries – in particular to our manufacturing, food, forestry, film and tourism sectors.

The province has worked closely with these sectors since the dollar began its rise five years ago. Most recently, Manitoba has joined other provinces in seeking an urgent meeting with the federal government to co-ordinate a national response to the high dollar. Our provincial response includes immediate action to:

- Establish a “direct response team” with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, to expedite the resolution of issues faced by the industry;
- Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, begin the phase-out of the province's corporate capital tax and make the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit 70% refundable;
- Increase the farmland tax rebate to 70%;
- Introduce a new timber-pricing policy;
- Make an immediate two-year investment in the Equity Investment program for local film makers, while enhancing the incentives for foreign film productions to hire local personnel; and
- Launch the “Road to 2010” tourism promotion strategy, with a goal of reaching \$2 billion in annual tourism revenue by 2010.

In addition, Manitoba has been working with the Canadian government and state governments in the U.S. to protect and enhance our access to key trade markets. In response to U.S. border security measures, Manitoba will begin offering an enhanced driver's licence as an affordable and secure form of identification for travelers. The new licence will be available in the fall of 2008.

Manitoba is also taking a major role in the development of a Mid-Continent Trade Corridor, connecting our northern Port of Churchill with trade markets throughout the central United States and Mexico. To advance the concept, an alliance has been built with business leaders and state and city governments spanning the entire length of the Corridor. When fully developed, the trade route will incorporate an “in-land port” in Winnipeg with pre-clearance for international shipping.

### **Innovation and Competitiveness**

To promote sustainable economic growth into the future, Manitoba has adopted a *7-Point Growth Strategy* focused on innovation; skills training; affordability for both citizens and businesses; and strategic plans for key sectors of the economy.

This framework has helped maintain stable, consistent growth over the past eight years. In fact, Manitoba has been the most stable economy in Canada over that period, and in the past year has recorded:

- The third highest growth rate among provinces, with a projection for the second highest growth rate in 2008;
- The third best employment growth, combined with an unemployment rate of just 4.4%;
- The second largest increase in investment; and

- The largest growth in exports.

In consultation with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, and with stakeholders from across Manitoba, your government is taking the next steps to update our *Growth Strategy*. Education and training will remain a major focus, with a commitment to undertake the largest increase in apprenticeship training in our history. Over the next four years, 4,000 new apprenticeship spaces will be created, through a partnership initiative that will be guided by the new Apprenticeship Futures Council.

Other education initiatives will include:

- Expansion of the University College of the North, and a second phase of capital investments for post-secondary campuses in Winnipeg and Brandon;
- An enhanced Manitoba Bursary Fund, providing direct support for students who otherwise could not afford post-secondary education; and
- Added labour market services for immigrants, including a new Qualifications Recognition Strategy.

The highly successful Sector Council strategy will be entrenched in legislation, and expanded with the addition of two new councils – one for Manitoba's Construction Sector and one for our Northern Resource Sector.

At the same time the province is introducing new measures to reduce red tape, including:

- Streamlining of business permits and licenses, through the new BizPal service;
- Online filing of PST and other provincial taxes;
- Online incorporation and registration of trade names; and
- The creation of a Manitoba Business Portal, to allow one-stop access for business transactions over the internet.

Your government is also working to deliver services to citizens more effectively, including:

- On-line highway traffic condition reports;
- One-stop replacement for lost or stolen birth certificates;
- Issuing social insurance cards to Manitoba children at birth; and
- A one-stop Career Development Navigator for students and new entrants to the workforce.

Although all spending and tax reduction commitments are subject to the requirements of the Balanced Budget Law, your government will proceed with the tax reductions announced in this year's budget. These include:

- Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, a further reduction in the middle income tax rate, from 13% to 12.75%, combined with a \$200 increase in the basic personal exemption; and
- A 60% income tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba.

The most recent changes add to a record that has seen Manitoba income taxes reduced in every Budget introduced by your government since 1999.

- Also effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, further reductions will be made to the corporate capital tax, which will go from 0.5% to 0.4%, and on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 the corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 14% to 13%.
- On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, the small business tax rate will be cut again, from 3% to 2%. With this further reduction, Manitoba will go from having the second highest small business tax rate in Canada in 1999, to the lowest rate in 2008.

Innovation and ideas have become the most powerful drivers of economic growth. The spectacular growth of Manitoba's biotech sector in the past eight years, leading to an increase of over 200% in pharmaceutical production and the success of homegrown companies like Cangene and IMRIS, demonstrates the value of investments in research and training as part of a co-ordinated sector strategy.

Your government is committed to continue fostering effective linkages between universities, colleges, government and the private sector. Steps taken by Manitoba leaders to learn from best practices elsewhere, most recently in the Nordic countries, will help guide our future direction.

### **Growing Green**

Manitobans can be proud that our province was the first jurisdiction in Canada to begin acting on climate change and that our leadership is now recognized internationally. Manitoba is the North American leader in geo-thermal installations and the building of energy efficient buses, and was recently ranked first in Canada for energy efficiency programming.

Last year Manitoba introduced a new incentive for fuel efficient vehicles, which helped double the sale of hybrid cars. Since 1999, new investments have been made to create bike and walking trails throughout the province. Your government has also restored the 50-50 public transit funding formula that was eliminated during the 1990s – increasing the provincial funding for bus service in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and Flin Flon.

This session your government will introduce legislation setting out Manitoba's Kyoto target and the measures needed to achieve it. The first step is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below 2000 levels by 2010. The second is to tackle the major growth in emissions that took place during the 1990s.

Following on the conversion of Hydro's Selkirk coal plant to natural gas, the new legislation will outline a mechanism to phase down the Brandon coal plant and make electrical generation in Manitoba coal-free. It will also require the capture of methane emissions from large landfills.

Manitoba's exports of clean energy continue to displace emissions from coal plants in other jurisdictions. This year our province will join with the other western provinces to study options for building an east-west power grid.

Building on successful energy efficiency projects in inner-city Winnipeg, Brandon and the Island Lake First Nations, this year Manitoba Hydro will introduce a new province-wide program to help lower-income Manitobans make cost-effective, energy efficient home improvements.

Thousands of trees are planted every year in Manitoba by individuals, industry, community organizations and the province. Trees improve soil fertility, increase soil moisture, reduce flood risks and provide wildlife habitat. They also play a crucial role as climate stabilizers by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In one year, an average tree inhales 12 kilograms of carbon dioxide and exhales enough oxygen for a family of four.

The Manitoba government will be partnering with the Manitoba Forestry Association, community groups and others to plant an additional 5 million trees over the next 5 years. Our pledge to plant over five million trees will be entered as part of the UN's Plant for the Planet Billion Tree Campaign.

### **Lake Winnipeg Water Clean-Up**

Every Manitoba citizen realizes that we have been taking our spectacular water resources for granted. Since 1999, measures have been introduced each year to protect water quality. A major new strategy was introduced a year ago to deal with nutrient loading in Manitoba's waterways. Based on the work of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, the strategy is focused on reducing nitrogen and phosphorous levels.

In the months ahead the next steps in the Lake Winnipeg Clean-Up Strategy will be announced, including new restrictions on the phosphorus content of household dishwasher detergents and lawn fertilizers, and new measures to limit cottage and residential septic fields.

Municipal sewage treatment facilities will be a major focus of the strategy. Manitoba has already committed provincial funding for more than half the cost of upgrading the City of Winnipeg's West End wastewater treatment facility. As part of the tri-level negotiations to address the City's capital requirements, your government will commit today to a further \$206 million investment for the upgrade of all three wastewater treatment plants in Winnipeg. Your government will also commit to invest \$150 million for rural and northern municipal water and wastewater projects, working in partnership with the federal and local governments. If all levels of government are able to support this initiative, investments in Manitoba water protection will total over \$1 billion. This will lead to a dramatic reduction of phosphorous and nitrogen levels in our lakes and waterways.

A third component of the Lake Winnipeg strategy deals with agricultural sources of phosphorus. The Clean Environment Commission has been assessing Manitoba's efforts to deal with nutrients generated by livestock operations. Based on input from scientists, agricultural experts and a set of community forums held throughout the province, the CEC Report will ensure Manitoba has a strong and environmentally sustainable plan for the livestock sector.

In the coming months a new water conservation strategy will be introduced. Although Manitobans are accustomed to thinking there is an abundance of water available for our needs, reducing everyday use of water is actually the simplest way to improve the effectiveness of our waste water treatment facilities. It is also a way that businesses and homeowners can save money. Our new strategy includes consumer-based incentives to help Manitobans reduce their water bills while ensuring we protect this precious resource for future generations.

### **Healthy Families**

Child care is vitally important to Manitoba families. In the 2007 Budget, your government increased the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million – to backfill withdrawn federal funds and ensure that commitments made to Manitoba families were kept. The province’s program has added over 6,000 funded child care spaces since 1999 – an increase of 38%. New investments have also improved training and salaries for existing staff and helped train 700 new child care workers – including 250 who will graduate this year.

Over the next two years your government will ensure more children can get into licensed child care by funding another 2,500 spaces, establishing a new training and recruitment fund and increasing workers’ salaries. This is part of the next phase in Manitoba’s child care vision, which recognizes the essential role that early years development plays in school success and workforce participation.

Attention to early years and the factors influencing school readiness have proved to be an effective way of raising classroom performance. Graduation rates in Manitoba school divisions have increased from 73% in 1999 to 84% today. New measures will be introduced this year to further improve our school retention rates. At the same time, your government will seek a new partnership with First Nations and the federal government to improve graduation and retention rates.

Safety for children will remain a paramount concern. Part of the new plan for child care is the development of a *Safe Child Care Charter*, providing parents with further confidence that their children are being looked after in a safe environment. The same principle extends to school-aged children. This session legislation will be introduced that will build on the anti-bullying initiatives already implemented by the province and Manitoba school divisions.

In the fall of 2006, your government began an overhaul of the child welfare system, investing over \$48 million to implement the recommendations of three reviews undertaken by independent officers of the Legislature. At least 70% of the recommendations have been addressed. The actions include:

- Funding for over 150 new staff positions to provide workload relief for front-line workers;
- A 23% increase in foster care rates;
- Recruitment of over 500 new foster placements; and
- A shift in focus from apprehension to prevention, providing front-line social workers with the supports needed to avert crises in families.

Your government has made a strong commitment to break the chains of addiction and improve mental health services by investing more than \$40 million over the past two years in addictions programming and capital. A new addictions treatment centre is under construction in Thompson and planning is underway to develop a mental health emergency room in Winnipeg – the first of its kind in Canada.

This year, a new Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder strategy was launched. In the coming year a leading edge program called Spectrum Connections will be introduced. It will assist young adults living with FASD, with a special focus on those who are leaving the foster care system.

A new provincial program to help children living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder commenced this month. This program is designed to help children receive the treatment and supports they need to lead productive lives.

To promote healthier living habits for all citizens, your government is providing practical information, programming and incentives. Manitoba schools and communities are playing a lead role. Since 2005, when the programs were introduced, almost half of our schools have registered as *Schools In Motion* and 76 communities have registered as *Communities in Motion*. This year *Workplaces in Motion* will be introduced, to encourage Manitobans to incorporate physical activity into their workdays. Also this year, students entering Manitoba high schools are required to undertake physical activities every year in order to graduate. In addition, legislation will be introduced to ban the sale of food containing trans fats in school vending machines and cafeterias.

Adding to the TransCanada trail network and other recreational trails which have been constructed in Manitoba since 1999, a special bicycle and walking trail has been planned as part of the Manitoba Floodway Expansion Project. It will be named the Duff Roblin Trail, in tribute to the Premier who initiated the Floodway. The 40-kilometre trail will begin at the Floodway inlet south of Winnipeg and at its northern end will connect with the trail network in Bird's Hill Park.

Culture in Manitoba is flourishing with the recent success of the second annual Manito Ahbee Festival, which extended to a ten day event this year. The Manitoba Theatre Centre is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and is well on the way to completing a \$10 million endowment. The provincial government contributed \$1.3 million to the MTC campaign and is providing similar support to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's endowment fund.

In the past year Manitoba recording artists released an incredible 205 albums. Recording artists and industry professionals surpassed previous recognition levels, receiving a total of 131 award nominations and bringing home a total of 39 national awards. And this year eight Manitobans were elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Artists, confirming Manitoba's reputation as an incubator for artistic talent.

## Health Services

Improving health care for Manitobans remains a top priority for your government. Since 1999, significant steps have been taken to address the impacts of the prior decade's cutbacks – by expanding the education and hiring of health professionals; by investing in health capital; and by introducing new innovations in health delivery.

These changes have had a positive impact. Today there are 235 more doctors, 1,589 more nurses, and over 200 more technologists working in Manitoba than there were eight years ago. These increases were achieved by reversing the human resource policies of the 1990s, which had caused a massive departure of nurses from Manitoba and yearly reductions in the number of practicing physicians.

The change in hiring policies has been accompanied by a concerted effort to expand the education of health professionals. The expansion will continue this year, with:

- Nursing education spaces added at Manitoba's universities and colleges;
- Spaces added to the University of Manitoba School of Medicine;
- A new primary care paramedic program introduced at Red River College, to support improvements in rural emergency services;
- Increased staffing levels in personal care homes – building to a target of 400 additional staff; including additional nurses and nurses aides, more dieticians, respiratory therapists and occupational therapists. These additions are part of a long-term strategy to improve the quality of care for seniors.

A second pillar in the strategy to improve health services is investment in health capital. At the end of the 1990s, health facilities across the province were in a state of serious decline. Thanks to the redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre, the rebuilding of the Brandon Regional Health Centre and the replacement of the Swan Valley Hospital, surgeons and nurses now practice in state-of-the-art operating rooms. New hospitals have been built in Gimli and Morden-Winkler, and a new emergency room was recently opened in The Pas.

The capital program will continue this year with the planning and construction of a new hospital in Selkirk, new operating facilities at Ste. Anne Hospital and a redeveloped emergency ward at Steinbach's Bethesda Hospital. Dialysis treatment spaces will be added in Winnipeg, Russell and Gimli, and in the First Nations communities of Berens River, Norway House and Peguis.

In addition, your government has committed to a major investment in the delivery of health services for women and their babies. Consultations on a plan to replace the Women's Hospital at Health Sciences Centre with a state-of-the-art facility will be underway shortly. The investment will also include a South End Birthing Centre and a redeveloped maternity ward at St. Boniface General Hospital.

Innovation is the third pillar in the health care strategy. Investment in the *Gamma Knife* at Health Sciences Centre has helped make Manitoba a national centre for neurosurgery.



New investments in non-invasive surgery will reduce recovery time for patients and improve outcomes. This includes an updated version of the *Gamma Knife* and a machine called the *Artiste*, which allows for removal of cancerous tumors without invasive surgery. Both will be operational in the coming year.

Children's health care will be improved with the installation of a new MRI and a cardiac catheterization lab at Children's Hospital, and the development of a new asthma and allergy clinic for children.

Investments in innovation play a key role in the recruitment of health specialists. Two new pediatric cardiologists have been recruited to Manitoba. The launch of a new pediatric ophthalmology program this year has led to the recruitment of a specialist in pediatric ophthalmology. This builds on the 103 additional specialists who have come to Manitoba since 1999.

The result of investing in health professionals, health capital and innovation is a measurable improvement in the delivery of service. Key wait times have been reduced for Manitoba citizens.

- The wait time for radiation therapy is now one week. In the 1990s, it was as high as six weeks.
- The wait for an MRI is now six weeks, compared to 32 weeks in the 1990s; and for a CT scan it is now eight weeks, compared to 16 weeks.
- The wait time for cataract surgery is down to 11 weeks, from a high of 22 weeks in the 1990s; and the median wait for all orthopedic surgery is 25 weeks, down from 37 weeks.
- The median wait time for non-emergency cardiac surgery in Manitoba is now – at 13 days – the lowest in the country.

Investment in diagnostic programs outside of Winnipeg has not only helped bring wait times down, it has also added convenience for rural patients. The newly-opened MRI at the Boundary Trails Health Centre is the second MRI installed outside of Winnipeg. A decade ago, most patients had to travel to Winnipeg to get a CT scan. This important diagnostic test is now available in Brandon, Steinbach, Morden-Winkler, Thompson, The Pas, Selkirk and Portage la Prairie.

The focus on reducing wait times for critical tests and operations has been expanded to include a range of important health services, including sleep disorder treatment, bone density tests, ultrasounds and pain management. Earlier this year, Manitoba signed an agreement with the federal government to establish a wait time guarantee on radiation therapy for cancer patients – the first province outside Quebec to implement a wait times guarantee.

### **Safer Communities**

Manitobans want to feel secure in their own communities. Our citizens expect appropriate consequences for acts of violence and organized crime. They look to all levels of government to ensure an effective response to new tactics used by criminals, and to provide programming that will help young people make more positive choices in their lives.

Effective crime prevention strategies can make a difference. Thanks to the hard work of the Auto Theft Task Force, car thefts in Manitoba are down dramatically – by 26 percent this year over last year. Although the rate of car thefts remains unacceptably high, the trend is encouraging and speaks to the need for concerted efforts to combat crime.

Your government has taken action on crime by hiring more police officers and prosecutors, working with the federal government to strengthen the legal consequences for criminals, and adding positive alternatives for youth who might be lured into crime. This strategy will continue.

- Since 1999, 155 police positions have been added throughout Manitoba and the number of Crown prosecutors has been increased from 88 to 111. This year more police officers will be hired – the first step in a new commitment to add 100 police and 20 prosecutors.
- In September of this year, a Manitoba community delegation traveled to Ottawa to seek changes to the federal Criminal Code and Youth Criminal Justice Act. These proposed changes include stricter measures for dangerous offenders; stricter bail conditions and mandatory prison sentences for those who commit gun crimes; and action on impaired driving. Manitoba supports the legislative amendments that were announced in the federal Throne Speech and will continue working with all parties in Ottawa to strengthen our national laws.
- This year will see the expansion of two prevention programs which have proved highly successful in offering positive alternatives for youth: *Lighthouses*, which provides places for young people to play sports, study, or go on-line in the evenings; and *Turnabout*, which provides monitoring and alternative outings for children under 12 who come into conflict with the law.

To co-ordinate the fight against gangs and organized crime, Manitoba has created an Integrated Organized Crime Task Force. It brings together the RCMP, the Winnipeg Police Service and the Brandon Police Service in a single, intelligence-led strategy. Over the past four years, the province's Gang Prosecutions Unit has achieved 737 convictions or guilty pleas involving gang members – with over 400 serving jail time.

In the coming months your government will add a Crown Attorney in the Brandon region who will be dedicated to prosecuting gang crime. New legislation to be introduced this session will include protections for witnesses who testify against gangs and a criminal property forfeiture law enforced by a dedicated justice unit.

Your government will also continue to equip police and prosecutors with innovative law enforcement tools. The *Fortified Buildings Act*, introduced in 2002, has been used to remove fortifications from 17 buildings. The innovative *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* has shut down 258 drug, prostitution and sniff operations since it came into force in Manitoba – and is now the model for similar laws adopted in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. Two investigative teams will be added to shut down even more crime havens.

The sexual exploitation of children is a crime that has been specifically targeted by your government since 1999. Manitoba's *Cybertip.ca*, introduced in 2002, has now been expanded nationwide. It has shut down 1,100 child pornography websites and led to 20 arrests. Manitoba was one of the first jurisdictions to set up child-friendly courtrooms, which are designed to make it less traumatic for children to testify. Manitoba was successful earlier this month in getting Canada's provincial and territorial justice ministers to sign onto a national amber alert protocol that will aid in the safe return of abducted children.

This year a Crown Attorney will be dedicated to work exclusively on child exploitation cases, in coordination with police, provincial investigators and child welfare agencies.

### **Inclusion and Citizenship**

The child poverty rate in Manitoba has dropped by 25% since 1999 and there has been a 47% reduction in the child poverty rate of families headed by single women. These improvements are encouraging, but no level of poverty should be accepted in a prosperous society. More needs to be done, and more is being done.

Last year your government announced the *Rewarding Work* program, a four-year strategy designed to support low-income working families, and to help more Manitobans move from welfare to work. We are fighting poverty with jobs and helping employers fill the many job vacancies in the Province. Recently programs were announced to increase training and connect potential employees to jobs. Municipalities, non-profit and other employers can now receive a minimum wage subsidy to hire and train people receiving welfare.

In the coming months a further increase in the minimum wage will be announced, based on previous consultations by Manitoba's Minimum Wage Board. Additional steps will be announced in the coming year to help lower poverty and increase participation in the workforce, including a new child benefit that will provide further support to working families.

Building on the momentum and experience gained from the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities project and Age Friendly Rural and Remote Community Initiative, Manitoba is moving ahead to ensure Manitoba's communities are prepared to meet the needs of its growing seniors population. This year, the popular Safety Aid program will be expanded. Your government will work with Seniors Resource Councils to help provide programs that increase seniors' independence and improve their lives.

Your government has been active on issues of accountability and transparency. This session changes will be made to Manitoba's election laws to increase democratic participation and improve accountability, accessibility and transparency for citizens. An independent Commissioner will be established, with the power to issue orders upholding Manitoba's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. In addition, changes recommended by the Provincial Auditor General will be made to further improve the scope and transparency of provincial budget reporting and complete the transition to a Summary Budget.

*The Employment Services Act* will be amended to protect workers who are not covered by existing labour law protections.

### **Northern Manitoba**

Your government has worked closely with northern communities to improve delivery of health and education services, enhance infrastructure, develop resource-sharing agreements and expedite the settlement of Treaty Land Entitlement claims.

These partnerships will continue in the coming year with the enhancement of the University College of the North's main campus facilities in The Pas and Thompson, and the addition of satellite campuses in remote communities. This new phase of northern post-secondary education coincides with the appointment of former National Chief, Ovide Mercredi, as the first Chancellor of UCN.

Building on the Millennium Scholarship Fund's pilot projects, and the Standing Tall initiative developed with the Manitoba Metis Federation, Manitoba will seek a tripartite partnership to strengthen primary and secondary education in the North.

Manitoba has worked with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to develop terms of reference for the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, and will shortly announce the Board for the new Fund. Work is also underway with the Manitoba Metis Federation to develop a Metis Economic Development Strategy.

Training of health professionals for northern service will be expanded through UCN and the University of Manitoba, and new dialysis units will be added to serve remote communities. In addition, the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, which has 27 participating communities involved in community garden programs and the Manitoba Food Charter, will be complemented by the development of a commercial greenhouse at Grand Rapids.

On the East Side of Lake Winnipeg, programs are underway to retrofit houses, improve air access, and adapt the winter road network in response to the challenges of climate change. A new Youth Advisory Roundtable will be launched to allow youth in remote First Nations to discuss their challenges and work towards solutions.

A key priority is the building of an all-weather road to provide year round access to remote communities on the East Side. The plan is compatible with the initiative to designate a UNESCO World Heritage Site and protect the East Side boreal forest.

This year, work will begin on the first leg of the all-weather road, from Hollow Water to Bloodvein, with the building of two bridges. Route selection is now underway for the second leg, to Berens River. The Manitoba government will initiate the design work and environmental approval process while seeking a federal funding partnership for the entire road. Construction work, and the development of related employment, training, and tourism opportunities, will take place with the full participation of First Nations communities.

## Rural Manitoba

This year Manitoba producers are enjoying a harvest combining high quality crops and strong prices. Producers are also experiencing steady increases in the value of their farmland alongside decreases in property taxes. Your government will continue to reduce education taxes on farmland, with the enhancement of a farmland tax rebate that is currently saving farmers \$29 million a year.

While the near record prices for crops are a benefit to crop producers, they have resulted in increased feed prices for livestock producers. Safety net programs are in place to assist these producers and any others who are affected by challenges in the agricultural economy. This year, Manitoba will spend \$95 million through the Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization program to assist Manitoba farmers. Your government has also shown its support for farmers in other ways, including continued support for the single desk Canadian Wheat Board.

To ensure supports are in place for any future downturns in the agriculture sector, the Province is negotiating a new federal-provincial safety net package and advocating for changes recommended by Manitoba producers. In particular, Manitoba will urge the federal government to continue to play the lead role in disaster funding for agriculture.

A year ago, the Province improved the *Rural Entrepreneur Assistance* program, resulting in a doubling of the dollar value of loan guarantees provided to rural small businesses. In the coming months, the province will be consulting with stakeholders and lending institutions on extending the successful *Bridging Generations* program to rural small businesses and fishers. We will also be launching consultations with the co-op sector in Manitoba to lay the groundwork for a strengthened relationship and enhanced support for co-ops in all areas of Manitoba.

Through a partnership with the federal government, the Province will also launch *Value Chain Manitoba*, an innovative business model that promotes formal partnerships between producers, processors and suppliers for the development and marketing of niche Manitoba commodities – such as Berkshire pork, berries and organic products. Value chains are designed to develop products that respond to growing consumer demands for specialty items, such as those that are locally produced, organic, and have health and wellness benefits.

This year will see the full implementation of the ethanol mandate announced in 2003, supported by a \$150 million expansion to the Husky ethanol plant in Minnedosa. The next step in the Manitoba biofuels strategy will be a mandate for biodiesel, supporting the development of small-scale plants across Manitoba – including those already being built in Arborg, Rapid City and Beausejour.

## Urban Centres

Your government has partnered to improve the economic, social and physical conditions in the downtown neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson through the successful *Neighbourhoods Alive!* program. This year will see the full expansion of *Neighbourhoods Alive!* to five new urban centres: Flin Flon, The Pas, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk.

Work will continue with the City of Winnipeg and the federal government to advance the successful models of cooperation in the Forks North Portage Partnership and CentreVenture, and support will be provided for Brandon's newly announced "Renaissance Brandon" project.

In the coming months, your government will also announce a number of initiatives under the province's new housing strategy. The announcements will include the construction of new affordable housing in urban centres across the province, as well as the revitalization of over 13,000 public housing units.

Your government will begin implementing a plan to double funding for recreation facilities across the province, including support for proposed facilities in Winnipeg, Brandon, The Pas, Portage la Prairie, and the Selkirk Library.

Provincial funding will be provided to add four firefighting positions each in Brandon, Thompson, and Portage la Prairie to increase public safety and fire response. The City of Winnipeg will receive \$3.8 million to support twenty new positions, along with other enhancements to the City's Fire Paramedic Service.

Road and bridge improvements are a priority for our urban centres. The replacement of the 18<sup>th</sup> street bridge in Brandon is underway. In the coming year a new twin bridge will be constructed and the old one will then be demolished. The second new bridge will be constructed in 2009. The Eastern Access project is also underway in Brandon, with surveying and land acquisition completed in 2007. Construction is expected to begin in fall 2008.

While providing long-term funding for City of Winnipeg wastewater upgrades, the province will continue to partner with the city on priority transportation projects. The Manitoba government has made a five-year commitment to invest \$125 million in Winnipeg roads. In addition, \$85 million will be invested in improvements to the Perimeter Highway, including the twinning of the northeast Perimeter.

This year, work on the Red River Floodway achieved a level that protects Winnipeg against a one in three hundred year flood. The protection will be increased to one in five hundred years by the spring of 2008 and is on track to achieve the goal of one in seven hundred year protection in 2009.

The provincial government is working with the Asper family, the community and the federal government to obtain capital and operating funding for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Your government has pledged \$40 million in the coming year, to help establish the first national museum outside of Ottawa.

\* \* \*

In closing I would like to point out that today her Majesty the Queen and her husband Prince Phillip are celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

I would also note that on February 18<sup>th</sup>, Manitobans will mark the first observance of our new provincial holiday, *Louis Riel Day*, which honours the Founder of Manitoba and celebrates our province's aboriginal heritage.

**Tuesday, November 20, 2007**

---

Also in 2008, Manitoba will play host to the Canadian Country Music Awards ceremony and the Brier Curling Championship.

I know all Manitobans will join me in wishing success for the Manitoba Bisons this weekend in their pursuit of the Vanier Cup, and for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in their pursuit of the Grey Cup.

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 in the best interests of all our citizens.

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

---

**PRAYER**

---

On Motion of Hon. Mr. DOER, Bill (No. 1) – An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office/Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, was read a First Time.

---

On motion of Hon. Mr. DOER:

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

---

Hon. Mr. DOER moved:

THAT this House do now adjourn.

And the Question being put. It was agreed to.

---

The House then adjourned at 2:31 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 21, 2007.

Hon. George HICKES,  
Speaker.