



February 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

On April 19th Manitobans will vote in the provincial election to determine who will lead our province for the next four years. Elections are important for all citizens and as CUPE members, 25 000 strong, we rely on good government to help us deliver needed public services throughout Manitoba. **Who governs our province matters a great deal.**

The NDP has governed our province since October 1999, and many CUPE members have not worked under any other government and don't know the struggles that many CUPE members faced in the 1990's when our right to free collective bargaining was taken away by legislation and all citizens lost when our former crown corporation, the Manitoba Telephone System was privatized.

The NDP record over the past 16 years has not been perfect. Like others we in Manitoba have felt the effects of the 2008 global recession and we have had some tough rounds of bargaining and other important issues to deal with.

It is inevitable that no matter who is in office, we as public employees will face challenges, and our job is to speak up and to lobby and advocate hard on behalf of the members we serve. Unlike many of our sisters and brothers across Canada, we have had a decent relationship with the NDP government. We have not faced legislation attacking our right to free collective bargaining.

We have not faced provincial privatization nor has Manitoba gone down the path of so-called Public-Private-Partnerships. At each of our CUPE Manitoba conventions since spring 2000 we have had the Premier in attendance to meet and speak to us. There are CUPE regions in Canada where they have never had a Premier speak to them and they have no positive things to report on in terms of their relations with their provincial government.

The purpose of this communication is to share information with you and to ask that you share the attached bulletin with your members. **We all benefit when members exercise their right to vote and when they make an informed decision.**

Thank you for your leadership and your activism, it makes a difference. On April 19th we have a choice to make, and delegates to our 2015 Division Convention decided that we want to continue to build our province with quality public services by re-electing the NDP.

I would be pleased to attend your local's membership meeting or to meet with you directly to discuss this matter. Remember, together we can make a difference on April 19th.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Moist".

Kelly Moist
President, CUPE Manitoba

jk/cope342

Provincial Report Card – 1999 to 2016: Stronger Together

As CUPE members, we must remind ourselves of all the gains we have achieved since we elected the NDP to govern in Manitoba.

"Now is the time for me to do what I can to make sure Manitoba continues to be a progressive place"

– Wab Kinew, nationally renowned activist, author, and the NDP Candidate for Fort Rouge

This report card highlights *only some* of the accomplishments our NDP government has achieved, from keeping our economy strong to implementing important laws that protect workers!

Let's work together and do what we can to make sure Manitoba continues to be a progressive place to live, work, and play!

1. Manitoba's Economy

Manitoba's economy is among the strongest performing in Canada. The Conference Board of Canada as well as numerous large banks have pointed to Manitoba as an economic leader.

This is because Manitoba's NDP government has invested in jobs and public services, rather than cutting like other provinces have done. From 2009 – 2015 Manitoba's unemployment rate has remained steady at around 5.3% despite job losses across the country. Throughout the past 16 years our unemployment rate has been well under the national average.

The Manitoba economy is expected to grow at a rate of 2.5% to 3% - well ahead of the expected growth of the Canadian economy as a whole.

Like all governments in Canada, Manitoba has incurred deficits since 2009 due to the global economic crisis. Recognizing that inaction in the face of financial crisis could lead to significant job losses, our NDP government stepped up and began a series of major infrastructure investments in order to stimulate the economy, put people to work, build for our future, and ultimately move the province out of recession. Manitoba took on debt to make these investments, but it is manageable debt in these times of historically low interest rates.

In fact many economists are saying that now is the time for governments to take on debt if it means protecting jobs and services. The new federal government has adopted the Manitoba approach in announcing its intention to purposely run deficits in order to fund major infrastructure investment.

The Manitoba government has opted to run manageable deficits and invest in Manitoba as opposed to an austerity agenda of cuts that would have seen services reduced and public employees laid off.

2. Minimum Wage

In September 1999, the Manitoba minimum wage stood at \$6 per hour. Since the NDP came to power, they have raised the minimum wage 16 times and it currently sits at \$11 per hour. Only Alberta (\$11.20) and Ontario (\$11.25) have higher hourly wage rates

In addition to regular increases to the minimum wage the Manitoba government has invested heavily in education and healthy living programs directed at low income citizens.

3. Investments that Matter

Over the past 16 years the NDP government has invested heavily in sectors where CUPE members work.

- **Health Care:** Manitoba has been a champion in calling for the federal government to restore the Conservatives' plans to cut billions from health care across Canada. The NDP has funded upgrades and renovations in almost every hospital facility in the province, and there are over 500 more doctors and 3,000 more nurses working today than in 1999.

While some are calling for user fees for health care, Manitoba has committed to protecting universal public health care for all.

- **Education:** Since 1999 the Manitoba NDP has built 21 new schools, 14 replacement schools and invested over \$1 billion in public education capital upgrades. The NDP has also protected workers' jobs, while other provinces have eliminated thousands of school support staff and teachers. The government recently announced a \$32.5 million boost to education.

The NDP has also consistently increased capital and operating grants to universities and colleges, legislated caps on tuition increases, and has

eliminated interest on student loans, making post-secondary education more affordable to Manitoba families.

- **Municipal:** Grants to the City of Winnipeg and Manitoba's municipalities have consistently increased in order to assist with water, transportation and other important municipal public works. The province has been a leader in funding for the arts, and through its "Neighbourhoods Alive" program has invested in helping lower-income communities grow.
- **Energy:** While other provinces invest in oil, coal, and nuclear energy, Manitoba Hydro has become a global leader in renewable energy development along with the new Hydro head office in downtown Winnipeg.
- **Entertainment & Culture:** The Manitoba government assisted in building the MTS Centre arena and Investor's Group Field along with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the expanded Winnipeg Convention Centre.
- **Infrastructure:** Manitoba's NDP government has avoided building infrastructure by the so-called Public-Private-Partnership approach. P3's have been proven to cost more and at times see public infrastructure owned and operated privately.

With support from CUPE, Manitoba is the only government in Canada to have enacted P3 legislation to ensure transparency and accountability in any future public-private-partnership.

4. Labour Legislation

Since 2000 the Manitoba government has passed numerous pieces of legislation to improve the rights of workers, some of these have included:

- Extending parental leave from 17 to 37 weeks;
- Enhancing unpaid compassionate care leave and job protection for workers who are pregnant or are on parental leave;
- Enacted a new stat holiday in February (Louis Riel Day);
- Increased the fine for employers who violate workers' health and safety;
- Strengthened the right to refuse unsafe work;
- Increase fines for employers found to suppress WCB claims;
- Established SAFE Work to help prevent workplace injuries;

- Enacted presumptive Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder legislation;
- Paid days off for victims of domestic violence.

The Manitoba government has worked in partnership with trade unions over the past 16 years. While we have had challenges in working with government, they have had an "open-door" policy and we've found solutions to many challenges.

5. Child Care

Since 1999 the Manitoba government has placed a priority on early childhood development and public child care, tripling funding since 1999. There are now 33,100 child care spaces in Manitoba, and the NDP has committed to building another 12,000. Manitoba has the lowest child care costs outside of Quebec and our government's voice has been consistent in encouraging movement towards a national, affordable public child care system.

6. Pensions

Over the past 16 years the Manitoba government has been a strong defender of fair pensions for all workers. Significant investments have been made in public plans that the province sponsors.

In the early 2000's the provincial government passed legislation to enable the creation of the jointly trustee City of Winnipeg pension plan. We have many pension challenges including that of our school board members, and this remains a front-burner issue for our union.

At the national level the Manitoba government has been a strong and consistent voice for CPP expansion and for eligibility for Old Age Security to be returned to 65 years of age.

7. Human Rights

Over the past 16 years key human rights advances have been made by the NDP government including:

- Amending the Pensions Benefits Act to provide for the recognition of same-sex partners;
- Committed funding for the Shoal Lake 40 "Freedom Road";

- Significant improvements for people with disabilities, including eliminating employer's power to pay below the minimum wage to workers living with disabilities;
- Enacted anti-bullying legislation to protect kids in schools;
- Proposed an Environmental Bill of Rights to fight against climate change;
- Was a leader in the call for a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls; and
- Helped to build the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

jk/cope342

