

# The Brandon Sun

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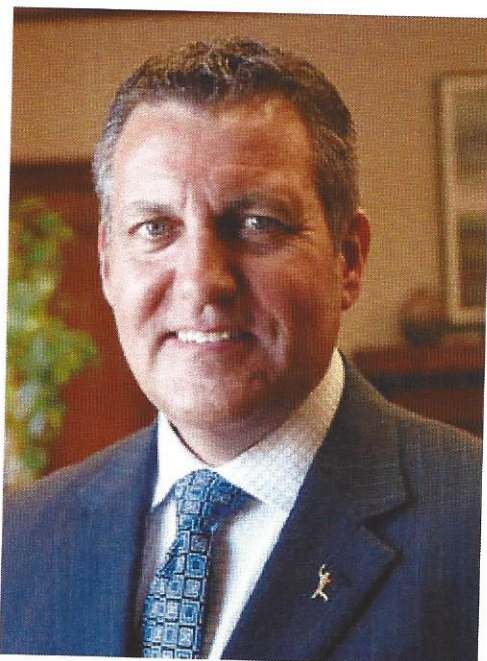


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## Jobs, economic growth priority: Cullen

By: Charles Tweed

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Cliff Cullen

The economy will be front and centre if the Progressive Conservative's first throne speech is any indication of how the newly elected government will lead.

Delivered by Lt.-Gov. Janice Filmon, the throne speech led with a plan to strengthen the province's economy.

"Jobs and economic growth are at the centre of our plan for a better Manitoba," Filmon said following an introduction that touched on the generosity of Manitobans, the fires that have devastated Alberta and acknowledged that the province is on Treaty 1 territory and in the heartland of the Métis people.

The speech didn't include many details, but served as a framework for the direction of the government.

Spruce Woods PC MLA and Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade Cliff Cullen said more details will be divulged in the budget which is expected to come down near the end of May.

Cullen said his department will roll several aspects of the economy, jobs and investment into a "one-stop shop" that was spread across several departments under the previous NDP government.

"It's about doing what we can to entice jobs to Manitoba and grow the economy to keep our kids at home," he said. "Any time we can create jobs, we also create wealth for the province so we have money available to pay for the social programs that Manitobans have come to expect."

The government has already taken the first step toward joining the New West Trade Agreement with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, according to Cullen.

The government will also support the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement among 12 countries.

That deal will affect several Canadian industries with one of the big winners being the beef industry, which will gain improved access to growing markets in Asia.

"Agriculture is a key component of our diversified economy," Cullen said.

Results in service administration, the deficit and becoming a more open and transparent government are the keys to success, according to Cullen.

"We want to be the most improved province in Canada in our first mandate," he said. "We want to reduce the tax level on everyone, but our challenge is we find ourselves in a considerable hole financially. In fact, it's worse than we thought it was."

Association of Manitoba Municipalities executive director Joe Masi was happy that the government is going to partner with municipalities.

"Members of our cabinet will meet with their counterparts at the City of Winnipeg and municipalities from across Manitoba to provide them with a fair say on strategic infrastructure investments," Filmon said as part of the speech.

AMM launched a Fair Share, Fair Say campaign prior to the provincial election and Masi believes this is the first step toward that.

"We were pleased to see municipalities will have a fair say in strategic infrastructure," Masi said.

He was also happy to see that the government will make infrastructure investments of no less than \$1 billion per year, while making flood protection a top priority.

The speech referenced the elimination of "unnecessary red tape." Masi said there are a number of delays in planning and zoning that stifle growth.

He pointed to the pesticide ban as a regulation that should be scrapped altogether.

Municipal leaders argued the ban, which eliminated the use of cosmetic pesticides on lawns regardless of their federal approval, cost taxpayers more money and organic products were less effective causing use to skyrocket.

"The ban has cost municipalities a great deal more money," Masi said. "We've expressed our opposition to the regulation. It doesn't appear that the ban is that effective and you have to use a lot more so we've asked that that regulation is overturned."

The speech ended with a pledge.

"The resulting responsibilities are great," Filmon said. "But they will be borne earnestly — with respect, purpose and humility — in the interests of all Manitobans."

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