

For immediate release

November 21, 2016

Throne Speech falls short on Manitoba economy, public services

Manitoba is not in a financial crisis, but Pallister may create one

Winnipeg – The Canadian Union of Public Employees Manitoba is concerned that today’s Speech from the Throne is a missed opportunity to focus on the public programs that matter most to the province.

“The Pallister government’s message is clearly one of austerity, but there is no budget crisis”, says Kelly Moist, President of CUPE Manitoba. “Measures like cost-cutting and service reduction could stall the economy and worsen poverty, income insecurity, and precarious work.”

CUPE Manitoba is concerned that the focus on cost-cutting measures is part of an ideological approach that will do nothing to improve government, or the lives of most Manitobans.

“We rely on good quality public services, and we are counting on Pallister to maintain and improve these. By all measures, Manitoba’s economy is doing fine,” said Moist. “Pallister refers to a fiscal crisis only to justify cuts, freezes and impractical legislation that will create new problems.”

CUPE Manitoba is also concerned about the emphasis on negatives, while the government fails to present a coherent plan to protect public services and create good jobs. The Throne Speech refers to reducing red tape, but does not differentiate unneeded bureaucracy from important programs and protections. It plans to remove *The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act*, a law that protects the public interest by requiring thorough study and basic public consultation and reporting on projects that plan to hand over public services to for-profit interests. Pallister plans to table legislation to control the cost of public services, but appears to be backtracking on his commitment to respect collective bargaining. The government speaks of the consultations it has undertaken, but appears to listen only to a small, privileged minority.

“The Pallister government has made contradictory statements today,” concluded Moist. “We will not be fooled by a manufactured financial crisis into creating a real one. We will continue to demand that our government do its job – looking after Manitobans’ needs, the most vulnerable, and the public good.”

In Manitoba, CUPE represents approximately 25,000 members working in health care facilities, personal care homes, school divisions, municipal services, social services, child care centres, public utilities, libraries and family emergency services.

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