



# CREATING A HEALTHIER & SAFER MANITOBA:

## NDP ALTERNATIVE THRONE SPEECH 2019









# INTRODUCTION

In the last election campaign, Manitobans sent a clear message to Brian Pallister. His cuts—in health care, infrastructure or in social services—have hurt families and they want a better approach. Under his leadership, a crisis has unfolded in our province which has put public health, community safety and our quality of life at risk.

The issues affected by his cuts have played out in the news media: a scourge of meth and other drugs, chronic homelessness, outbreaks of STBBIs like syphilis, an increase in violent crimes and homicides, near-constant thefts at liquor marts.

While the root causes of these issues are complex and longstanding (like entrenched poverty, addictions, family violence and childhood trauma) Mr. Pallister's cuts and willing inaction have transformed them into a full crisis.

The recent violence directed at children was a clear wakeup call to our community that something has to change. In the last election Manitobans chose New Democrats to do an important job—hold the government accountable for its cuts and fight for change.

That's why, after consultation with law enforcement and community safety organizations, we are proposing an emergency response for public safety and longer-term investments to address the root causes of crime.

We understand that the solution must go beyond policing. What we need is the political will to address the root causes of these issues, so that people in crisis can get the help they need and police officers are free to keep communities safe. That's why we are calling on the provincial government to immediately commit to \$500,000 in stable, operational funding for the Bear Clan Patrol to expand its operations. We are also calling on the province to immediately increase basket

funding to municipalities so that community agencies and police forces have the resources they need to keep communities safe while continuing to invest in important initiatives like Project Devote.

We have built on our election commitments to invest in education, health care and the economy as a way to address the root causes of crime, addiction and poverty.

Our plan starts by building a path out of poverty and prevents crime by centering Manitoba's education system around the principle that every child deserves the best possible start and an opportunity to succeed. Next, we would address the addictions crisis and poor public health outcomes by putting an end to Pallister's health care cuts and replacing them with innovative new programs. And finally, our plan would help to address the stresses that contribute to intergenerational poverty and family violence by creating good jobs and making smart investments across Manitoba.

Our MLAs recently held a gathering in Winnipeg's north end to hear from community members reeling from the recent violence. At that gathering, we heard tragic stories of families living in fear of violent crime but we also heard a community's genuine love for our province. It was a good reminder: Manitobans are optimistic. They care about each other and they want to make things better.

Because we share that optimism, we are presenting our roadmap to a safer, healthier community.

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COMMUNITY.**



# SUCCESS FOR EVERY YOUNG PERSON

Experts tell us when young people have a healthy home, a supportive school environment and a real shot at a good job they are less likely to be involved in crime or develop addictions. Some kids may start with fewer opportunities but Manitoba's schools can level the playing field - offering a powerful hand up and opening the door to success in the process. New Democrats would take a root causes approach to crime prevention by giving all children and youth a healthy start and real opportunities.

Brian Pallister has made it clear his review of Manitoba schools will end in deep cuts to the classroom, and he's already started to dismantle our education system in the same way he attacked health care. At a time when supports in the classroom have never been more important to the long-term success of Manitoba students, he is slashing services, increasing class sizes and freezing wages for teachers. We have heard from teachers, parents and students all across this province - from larger centres like Winnipeg, Brandon, Dauphin and Selkirk to communities like Gimli, St. Lazare and Minnedosa. Northerners are speaking up in Flin Flon, Thompson, The Pas and Churchill. Manitobans know they need to defend and stand up for their education system.

Targeted programs like nutrition and recreation will help to address violence in schools and help marginalized students reach success. We would ensure students get the one-on-one attention they deserve by capping K-3 class sizes. We would also hire more Educational Assistants and fund key programming in schools, like mental health care and nutrition programs. We would also fund a pilot program that would put community liaisons from grassroots organizations like Bear Clan Patrol and Action Therapy into schools with at-risk students in communities like Selkirk, Winnipeg and Brandon.

The Pallister government has also made the alarming decision to transfer post-secondary education out of the Education Ministry and into the Department of Economic Development, sparking concerns from education advocates that the quality of liberal arts and humanities studies is in jeopardy - all while supports for French language education at the Université de St Boniface has been cut. Un gouvernement néo-démocrate renverserait ces coupures. College and university students are already struggling to keep up after the Pallister government hiked tuition and cancelled bursaries.

An NDP government would ensure that every young person who wants to work should be able to work and that no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty.

We would help thousands of post-secondary students pay for school while learning job skills with co-op job placements and paid internships. We would end Pallister's hikes that put tuition out of reach for some students by freezing rates to inflation and keep students' loans interest-free. We would also restore the ACCESS bursary program, cut by the Pallister government, to help rural, northern and Indigenous students. We would work with universities to provide health care coverage for international students - many of whom will stay in Manitoba and contribute to our economy after graduation. By making our post-secondary system more flexible for students, we would open up new pathways to success for Manitobans.

In order to remove barriers to inclusion for students with exceptional needs, an NDP government would develop a disability policy lens and provincial strategy. This strategy would promote inclusion by addressing issues related to transportation, access to technology and housing and the implementation of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

# FIXING PALLISTER'S HEALTH CARE CRISIS

A broken health care system means all Manitobans can't get the care they need. It spills over into other systems and deepens existing social problems.

Brian Pallister has broken our health care system. He's closed emergency rooms, fired hundreds of nurses, privatized lifesaving services for northern communities, eliminated more than 130 hospital beds across Winnipeg and plunged the health care system into chaos.

Without stopping to assess the damage his government has caused, Mr. Pallister is barreling ahead with the next phase of his plan. We know he plans to make more cuts and closures—especially in rural and northern communities—and we know it will worsen the social challenges our province is grappling with.





A New Democratic government would, first and foremost, end the chaos in health care by listening to the people on the front lines. We would reset the provincial government's relationship with nurses and health care professionals by hiring more front line workers, training more students and restoring the respect broken by Mr. Pallister. As Opposition, we will do our part to help fix that relationship by introducing legislation to end the practice of using mandatory overtime to staff hospitals and emergency rooms.

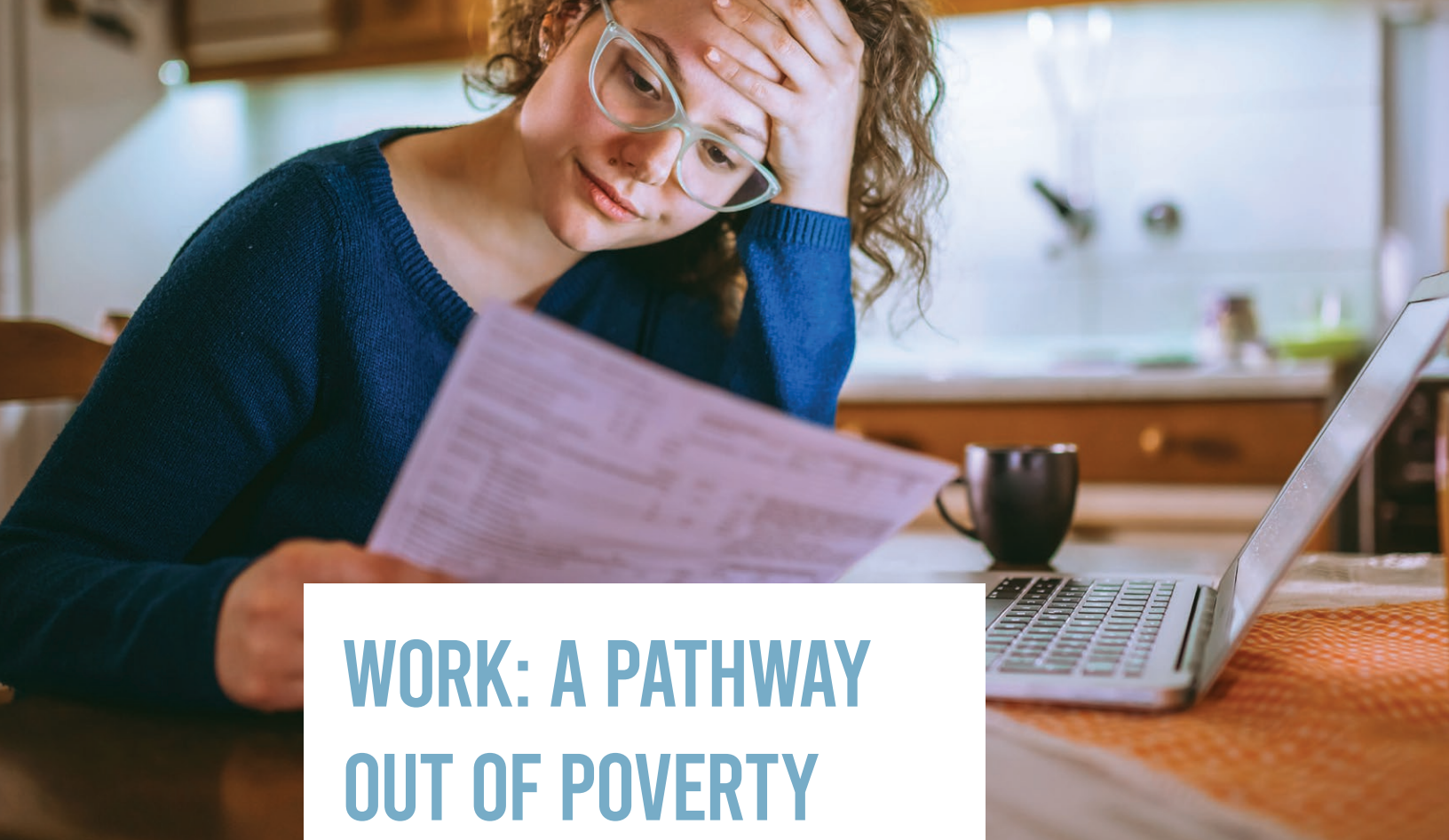
We would prioritize women's health by supporting access to reproductive health care while offering free menstrual products in schools. We would increase community-based health care and offer more family-friendly hours in clinics. We would also return birthing to northern communities like Flin Flon, keep Lifeflight public and hire more midwives in northern communities.

The health care system is bolstered by a "housing first" model of social services. An NDP government would address the social determinants of health by investing in affordable housing and transitioning EIA into a basic income by eliminating the "welfare wall" as a disincentive to work.

In order to address issues like addictions and poverty, we have to refocus how mental health care is delivered so that it is affordable, accessible and meet people where they are in life. An NDP government would create new community-based mental health services, double the number of counsellors working in ACCESS Centres and paying for more options for mental health care so that families can choose the treatment they want without worrying about the cost. In the last campaign we committed to appointing a Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions, and we've demonstrated our commitment to this as the Official Opposition by naming a Critic of Mental Health and Addictions.

Acknowledgement of the spectrum of identity is an important component of mental health care, as evidenced by the recent Manitoba Human Rights Commission order to allow no-sex designations on all government I.D. Our Official Opposition will re-introduce legislation on this issue to pressure the Pallister government to comply with the order.

Finally, we will support the New Democratic Party of Canada's work to pressure the minority federal government to create a national Pharmacare plan and lower the cost of drugs for Manitoba families.



## WORK: A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY

Manitobans are feeling anxious—from everyday things like paying the monthly bills or finding a good job, to broader concerns for the safety of their community or the fate of our environment. An increase in violent crime is just one symptom of a society and economy that is struggling.

Life is getting harder under Brian Pallister. He's made it harder for workers to make the choice to join a union and introduced heavy-handed wage-freeze legislation that violates the charter right to collective bargaining for over 120,000 public-sector workers.

We know that many Manitobans, including many young people, are facing a more challenging economy than previous generations. Rising student debt, a lack of affordable housing options, and the growth of contract work and the gig economy all contribute to the anxiety felt by many young workers about their futures.

Our caucus is committed to push for changes to make life better for young workers here in Manitoba. We will introduce legislation to protect and regulate companies who are hiring more workers as independent contractors and leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. We will also recognize the role of unions in building a fairer and more prosperous province and protect workers' right to organize by advocating for card check certification.

We will continue our call for a \$15 minimum wage, because no one working full-time should be forced to live in poverty.

The NDP understands that good jobs do more than allow Manitobans to pay their mortgage, support their families, and pursue education. They also foster safe communities and healthy families.



Under Brian Pallister, northern and rural communities have lost jobs and seen whole industries threatened. Northern Manitoba has lost hundreds of mining jobs, putting families into poverty and contributing to a rise in crime. Rather than help these communities, by working to restore a rail line or releasing emergency funds in the Mining Community Reserve Fund, the Pallister government left Northerners to fend for themselves. An NDP government would ensure northern towns get access to the emergency funds they deserve and grant multi-year mining permits to keep the industry alive.

In rural Manitoba, farmers, ranchers and their communities are facing serious challenges. Not only has climate-change induced flooding and droughts put agricultural exports at risk, but the Pallister government has made regressive changes to Crown land lease regulations which could force some Manitobans to consider giving up the family farm. A New Democratic government would first reject Pallister's bidding process, which benefits the richest corporations and hurts family-owned farms, then work with producers across the province to find solution to poor harvest conditions. This would include keeping using our Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation and its AgriInsurance programs to help producers in their time of need.

We would maintain our campaign commitments to make life more affordable for working families by making parking at hospitals cheaper and lowering the price of a family's first home. We will introduce legislation to protect consumers against rising cell phone bills and spotty wireless coverage in rural areas. We will also speak and listen to Manitobans about legislation that could modernize how time is observed in our province to make life easier for families.

Building more respectful, safer communities includes respecting our environment. Climate change is the challenge of our time and it's already affecting all Manitobans, in the form of floods, devastating winter storms, wildfires and droughts. These natural events pressure our health care system, increase food insecurity and displace families. New Democrats take this crisis seriously. We believe in real action to reduce carbon emissions, preserve our environment and protect future generations quality of life.

We also believe that climate change is an important opportunity to create good jobs in the clean energy sector and make Manitoba a leader in renewable energy. We would build on the plan we put forward in the election campaign to make Manitoba Hydro a renewable energy hub and we would be a real partner in upgrading the North End Wastewater Treatment facility by funding the provincial share of this important environmental infrastructure project.

We're proud to have strong Indigenous leaders on our team. We're committed to real relationships with Indigenous communities, creating good jobs for Indigenous young people and using a portion of provincial gaming revenue for an Indigenous Jobs Fund.

As Opposition, the NDP will continue to call for the recognition of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will build on past legislation that reforms the child welfare system and recognizes the rights of Indigenous families to raise their own children. We will mirror our campaign commitment to establish an MMIWG Committee of Cabinet by creating a caucus committee led by Indigenous women that creates legislation to implement the recommendations of the National Inquiry.

# SAFER, HEALTHIER FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

At our recent community gathering, a long time poverty activist told the group: "In times like these, we can't be turning away from each other. We have to help each other. When you see someone in trouble, open your door."

New Democrats believe government should use that same principle to build a province that helps all people, not just those at the top. The solutions to a social, crime and public health crisis require a plan of immediate action and long-term investments to address root causes.

While Brian Pallister cuts health care, dismisses violent crime and ignores an addictions crisis New Democrats are listening to families and fighting for real change. In the last election, Manitobans elected more New Democrats into the Legislature to be a stronger voice against Mr. Pallister's cuts.

We will not be silent. We will call for change and we will hold the government to account so that life is safer, healthier and more successful for all of us.



Authorized by the NDP Caucus