

Manitoba PC Caucus

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Week in Review

GOVERNMENT TAKES MEASURES TO SUPPORT CONTINUED OPERATION OF KRAFT PAPER MILL IN THE PAS

October 14, 2016

Growth, Enterprise and Trade Minister Cliff Cullen (MLA for Spruce Woods) announced passage of a regulation by the new government of Manitoba to support and facilitate the acquisition and continued operation of the kraft paper mill in The Pas by American Industrial Acquisition Corporation (AIAC). The mill is currently owned by Tolko Industries (Tolko), which had announced in August its intention to close the mill by Dec. 2.

“Our government is committed to sustainable, long-term economic diversification and development in northern Manitoba, which includes both the preservation of existing jobs and the creation of new opportunities,” said Cullen. “A different approach is required, one that balances the importance of supporting businesses that invest and create jobs, while responsibly managing taxpayer money for the benefit of all Manitobans. Our government is therefore very pleased to have played a part in facilitating this agreement, a development, which if approved by current employees and pension plan members, will preserve existing jobs that would otherwise be lost in The Pas and surrounding communities.”

The government has passed a statutory regulation to provide temporary relief through a potential three-year exemption from amortized pension solvency requirements under the Pension Benefits Act Regulations concerning the existing Tolko employee pension plans in Manitoba. This exemption is subject to the agreement of a significant majority of Tolko’s current employees and pension plan members following proper notice under the existing regulations, the minister noted.

The AIAC acquisition will allow for the preservation of existing jobs, both directly at the mill in The Pas and in affected support sectors including wood cutters. It will also preserve a significant corporate tax base within the community and is a positive development for the broader social and economic development of northern Manitoba.

“This private-sector driven solution involved some creativity but does not involve government subsidies or the use of taxpayer funds. It is consistent with our government’s commitment to ensuring that direct support for industry is accompanied by long-term and sustained economic impacts and opportunities for the communities in which those industries operate,” added Cullen.

PROVINCE INTRODUCES STRONGER SEXUAL ASSAULT LEGISLATION FOR MANITOBA CAMPUSES

Proposed changes introduced today to the Advanced Education Administration Act and the Private Vocational Institutions Act would require all universities, colleges, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, degree-granting institutions and private vocational institutions to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus, Education and Training Minister Ian Wishart (MLA for Portage la Prairie) announced this week.

The proposed bill would also set new requirements for institutions to raise awareness and communicate the availability of services and supports on the campus community and publicly report on activities under the policy.

“As we have seen in recent years, the issue of sexual violence in post-secondary education is a challenge faced by institutions across Canada,” said Wishart. “This bill would ensure that all Manitoba post-secondary institutions have appropriate policies and procedures in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus so all students can pursue their education in a safe environment.”

CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Small Business Week, which runs October 16-22, was kicked off on Friday to showcase a vital segment of the Manitoba economy.

Small businesses, which employ between one and 99 employees, employ 72 per cent of Manitoba’s workforce and are the fastest growing business sector in the province. For more information on Small Business Week, go to www.entrepreneurshipmanitoba.ca/sbw.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

During Question Period on Thursday, October 13th, Government House Leader Andrew Mickelfield (MLA for Rossmere) took a question on the progress of our government’s legislative agenda over the first 2 weeks of the fall session:

“I’d like to first say how exciting it is to serve as Government House Leader for the largest majority in this province in more than 100 years.

You know, our members are bringing fresh energy and new ideas to this House. We are bringing forward legislation to improve financial oversight, to restore basic democratic rights, to make elections fairer, to increase transparency, to eliminate waste and duplication, to increase protection for at-risk children, to combat sexual violence.

And I want to say there’s a whole lot more where that came from, Madam Speaker. What a great day it is to be in this House.”

MANITOBANS ASKED FOR INPUT ON HOUSING STRATEGY

The Manitoba government has launched an online survey to help guide the development of a new province-wide housing strategy, Families Minister Scott Fielding (MLA for Kirkfield Park) announced this week.

“Reviewing Manitoba’s housing strategy will help ensure we are delivering the most effective programs and investments,” said Fielding. “This survey will help us understand our challenges and opportunities and guide our work on a spectrum of housing needs. We want to hear from Manitobans, including our tenants and community partners, on how we can make improvements in four priority areas.”

Manitobans can participate in an online survey at www.gov.mb.ca/housing/housing-consultation.html until Friday, Nov. 18

GUEST COLUMN:

BILL 7 ENSURES DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS FOR WORKING MANITOBANS



Andrew Smith, MLA for Southdale

To ensure democracy in the workplace and to protect the rights of employees, Manitoba's new government is making important changes to provincial labour legislation.

The amendments to Manitoba's Labour Relations Act will make workplace union certification by secret-ballot votes mandatory. This change will restore open and respectful environments to Manitoba workplaces after the previous government removed that fairness and democracy years ago by eliminating mandatory secret-ballot voting.

With the reinstatement of mandatory secret-ballot votes, workers across Manitoba will be able to participate in decisions on union certification without fear of intimidation by colleagues, unions or employers.

Currently, without secret-ballot voting, workers are susceptible to unfair pressures. Fear of reprisals by co-workers and dismissal by employers is commonplace, and employees are often influenced in the way they vote.

Returning fair and democratic secret-ballot votes to Manitoba will also give employers more certainty that union certification decisions are legitimate, regardless of their outcomes.

Surveys have shown that such secret-ballot voting is supported by most people in our province. As well, the provincial Labour Management Review Committee, which includes representatives of business and labour organizations, has been consulted on this change.

These legislative amendments will bring Manitoba in line with most Canadian provinces that require secret-ballot votes for union certification. This change is also in step with our new government's belief in collaboration and partnerships with workers, entrepreneurs and all Manitobans.

We are proceeding with this legislative change in favour of fairness, transparency and democracy for hard-working people across Manitoba, as we continue to fix the province's finances, repair its services and rebuild its economy.

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Finance Minister Cameron Friesen with Morden Fire Chief Andy Thiessen at the Mary Beth Dolin Fire Service Awards



Education and Training Minister Ian Wishart took part in a Thanksgiving celebration with Syrian refugees in Altona



Premier Brian Pallister and St. Norbert MLA Jon Reyes are happy for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on securing a CFL playoff spot!



Fort Richmond MLA Sarah Guillemard hosted families visiting the Legislature as part of efforts to raise awareness on National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Day



Sustainable Development Minister Cathy Cox discussing recycling