

Good Morning. I want to say what a pleasure it is to be here this morning representing the 15,000 members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

We've been an active participant in these Chamber events for a number of years now. It's a partnership that we value, because we recognize that education is at the core of our success as a province and a nation and that it cannot be the responsibility of any one person or group. There is an important role for all of us in helping our 170,000 students lead healthy, productive and rewarding lives.

We understand the challenges we face today. We're preparing our students to use technologies that have yet to be invented in order to do jobs that don't yet exist. We're nurturing their understanding of community in order to be citizens of a country that embraces the diversity of the world. And we know that our job is only the start. If our students and communities are to be all they can be, then public education is only the beginning of a lifelong experience in growing and learning.

MTS appreciates that both government and the business community view education as an investment in the future – in the human capital that will be at the root of our success or failure. But education must be about a lot more than simply preparing for work, and we should not diminish the broad goals of education in the pursuit of the more narrow task of job training. It's a mistake we sometimes make to the detriment of our children.

We're pleased to be here this morning to share the good news of how great public schools are helping build a terrific province. We believe the future is bright. And we believe that by working together we can build on that success. We're proud to host breakfast this morning and we want to thank you so much for taking the time to join us.

And now it's my pleasure to introduce the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, the Honourable Peter Bjornson.

Minister Bjornson is – first and foremost – a teacher and colleague. His award winning efforts at the Gimli High School are well known, and anyone who has had the chance to visit his office knows he continues to take a personal interest in what is happening in schools around the province.

We've worked hard in recent years to build an open and straightforward relationship with the Minister and his Department and I want to thank them for their efforts in working with teachers.

The Teachers' Society is pleased that this government has kept a commitment made early in its mandate to benchmark public school funding to the rate of economic growth. It's a promise government has fulfilled and exceeded – and it's one we especially appreciate in these difficult economic times.

It has been a real pleasure for me to work with Minister Bjornson and his department over the last few years. We have some lively debates

on many issues, but I know his door is always open, he's always willing to listen, and we know he truly cares about the children who are the future of this province – and you can't ask for more than that.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Honourable Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education.