

Civic Leaders Dinner January 31, 2019

Good evening, it is great to see everyone here tonight – this is a popular event and I believe the turnout tonight indicates the value of such dinners.

It is important that leaders in a city's business community have opportunities to sit, relax and talk to those in political offices and senior administration. We need to know each other better. Specifically, we should know what each of us is thinking because we all have the same goal – growing our economy.

Winnipeg must position itself as a magnet for new business, it needs the services, the infrastructure and the tax regime that permits business to compete locally, regionally and globally. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

We all have heard references, amid the outrageous, tragic events unfolding in Europe, to Winston Churchill's memorable words of courage and wisdom.

I too would like to borrow from Churchill tonight, in the context of our own challenges here. These words come from his very brief, but memorable, address to his alma mater Harrow, in 1941.

He told the graduates: "never give in – never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense..." "Never, never, never give up."

Winnipeg, and Manitoba's, great challenge of the day is economic growth. There are numerous priorities vying for the attention of our governments, our political leaders and taxpayers. But we must all heed Churchill's exhortation to stay the course, in the face of other persuasions and pressures, on this challenge.

Never, never, never forget..... that *growing our economy is government's #1 priority*.

Never forget that without a growing economy, there are no revenues to fund healthcare, education, social services, reconciliation efforts, poverty reduction programs, parks and recreation, hockey rinks and cultural centers.

That the risk of investing in the economy, thereby creating wealth and jobs, is most often borne by the private sector sometimes with government as partner in a regulated manner.

That it is the less-than-sexy asset investments -- like pipes, pavement, highways, trade gateways & corridors, related bridges and structures, rail, air, inland ports, marine facilities -- our core infrastructure, that is an enabler of not only economic growth, but allows for the funding of the amenities of personal and public life -- entertainment, culture and recreation.

Our schools, community centers, hospitals, hockey rinks, recreational centers, cultural facilities are built, funded and function, expanding and enhancing our quality of living, only because of a growing economy.

Never forget that trade, and the movement of people and products, rely on seamless multi-modal transportation systems taking each traveler and product to intended destination.

That trade generates 54% of Manitoba's GDP and therefore, by extension, contributes 54% of our healthcare, family services, education, and social services budgets.

We now have in CentrePort Canada a once in a lifetime opportunity of transforming our local, regional, and provincial economy to a global trade profile until now unimagined, because of its *cheaper faster better connections* to the world, already having local impacts because of the of billions of dollars invested and to be invested by the private sector into that mega trade footprint.

It is a buoyant economy that enables civic, provincial, and federal budgets to craft, support, pay for the introduction, maintenance, and enhancement of our social safety net, for contemplated programs like pharmacare, daycare, dentalcare, affordable housing.

Never, never forget that to support growing the economy it must be guided by a principled, evidence-based visionary, aspirational economic growth strategy, in our case at minimum regional in scope, then enabled by land use, active transportation, recreational policies supported by budgets, each applied with discipline to purpose.

These are some of the simple principles of governance that shape not only who we are, but enable us to become who we wish to be.

So please never, ever forget that *growing the economy is government's job #1*.

Thank you