

**Ministers' Dinner – MB Chamber of Commerce**  
**May 25, 2022**  
**MHCA President Chris Lorenc address**

Good evening,

I thank Chuck Davidson and the Manitoba Chamber for this great opportunity to see so many people here tonight, joined by the Premier, her cabinet and senior administration colleagues.

Scanning the audience, it's apparent we're anxious to recharge our economy, moving beyond just regaining lost ground, but forging ahead with sustainable growth.

The economic forecasts of 3.6% GDP growth in 2022, slow next year to 2.6%.

Budget 2022 describes the risks –Covid, supply chain issues, labour shortages, inflation and “geopolitical instability.”

But these challenges are present in all jurisdictions. We cannot settle for Manitoba trailing Canada in economic growth nor be satisfied with **simply** rebounding.

We need to build the conditions for sustainable, envied growth.

And that, largely depends on our global trade profile.

This is about our **ability** to move what we manufacture, harvest and produce, to market seamlessly and reliably. ***If you can't move it, you can't sell it.***

Trade supports 53% of Manitoba's and 66% of Canada's GDP. Canada's economy produces more than we can consume, and so our economic health depends upon our ability to export to markets that need our products.

Trade spins off jobs - ~240,000 jobs in Manitoba - and the incomes and general tax revenues supporting healthcare, education, and social services.

**Trade must be at the core** of our economic growth policy.

That requires focusing on our national trade gateways & corridors, border crossings, bridges, inland and marine ports, railways, and airport infrastructure.

For too long, Canada has been complacent. We *accepted* as '*fact*' that *trade was, is and will be.*

Worse, we neither invested strategically nor sustainably, in trade gateway & corridors. Instead, we defaulted to '***shovel ready***' expenditures, rather than investments.

Abundant evidence shows that Canada, as seen by our global customers and competitors, has fallen far behind. Why? In part because Canada does not have a sustained national investment program to support trade infrastructure.

On May 10, Canada West Foundation released a report called '***From Shovel Ready to Shovel Worthy***' addressing this pressing national concern.

I placed at your table a "*cheat sheet*" on its areas of focus.

It's about the economic value, attached to our trade productivity and profile.

It's about how our '*shovel ready*' approach to investment in trade infrastructure is failing us.

It's about the best practices of competitor nations that have created successful strategies

- that line up nationally significant trade infrastructure projects, 15 to 20 years in advance
- that use private sector engagement to enhance those investments

Those countries are delivering their goods to some of the world's fastest growing middle-class populations.

Meanwhile, domestic, and international users of trade infrastructure – people like many of you – have spoken loudly about falling confidence in Canada's trade infrastructure, about our inability to efficiently get the goods to and from market.

This, in a country whose economy is more dependent on trade than most other similar nations.

This is a serious threat to our economic health and therefore standard of living.

We have to address this now.

*Ladies and gentlemen, trade IS our economic health care program* and must be, at the centre of our provincial and national economic growth strategies.

Perrin Beatty, President of the Canadian Chamber best put it. He said this:

***"There is the infrastructure we want, like parks and hockey rinks, the infrastructure we need, like schools and hospitals, and then there is the infrastructure that pays for these things, and that is trade infrastructure."***

Manitoba is well-positioned to be Canada's leading trade advocate.

*And so I close with this call to action.* Let's all of us - elected and private sector - champion trade, as Manitoba and Canada's path towards sustainable economic growth.