

Speaking notes: Deputy Ministers Dinner  
October 27, 2022

Good evening everyone,

We're all here for a purpose – to dine and chat in a less formal way, about the work we do together, which builds Manitoba, makes our province, people and economy stronger.

So let me suggest then, the one priority demanding our collective commitment. It is that **Job #1** for all governments..... is **Growing the Economy**.

Our economy's health, underpins the world-class public services upon which we depend.

**And our economy, is built on trade.**

Trade accounts for 65% of the national GDP and 53% of Manitoba's economy. A Canada West Foundation short snapshot, of what trade means to Manitoba???

- Trade supports 35,741 direct Manitoba jobs and those are only in the transporting and warehousing sectors. Tens of thousands more, know their livelihoods are indirectly and tightly connected to trade.

From that we can conclude:

- That at 53% of our GDP, trade generates the bulk of government revenues that support health care, education, and the other vital public services; and
- That trade generates the investments and jobs enabling our children to stay here, make their careers, buy their first homes.
  - Just look .... at the \$1.5 billion of trade related private sector investments already made at CentrePort Canada, and the well more than a billion dollars still to come.

But trade depends upon the efficient movement of goods and services on highways, rail, inland and marine ports, and air. Anything delivered to the doorstep, ends its last mile on a road. But, **if you can't move it, you can't sell it.** The Canada West Foundation released a report in May .... 'From Shovel Ready to Shovel Worthy.' That report:

- Highlights the challenges Canada faces in competing not just to maintain.... but capture an increased share of global trade markets;
- It notes that Canada is seriously lagging in the level of investment in maintaining and building new trade infrastructure. Canada – a prolific trading nation producing more goods that we can consume domestically - **still** .....does not have a sustained trade infrastructure investment strategy.
  - On this point, I draw your attention to some revealing - and alarming - statistics in the flyer, the MHCA has placed at your table.
- And, it lays out the steps toward rebuilding Canada's reputation as a reliable trade partner, and therefore our ability to compete globally, in this turbulent, relationship changing, world.

By contrast, our competitors - United States, European Union, Korea, Australia, to name a few - those vying for the same trade markets as Canada - have for years employed such strategies to identify, prioritize and invest, in nation-building trade infrastructure renewal.

Canada's reputation as a reliable trade partner has suffered internationally. In 2009, Canada was in the top 10 nations in the World Economic Forum index of trade infrastructure reliability. That plummeted to 32<sup>nd</sup>, by 2019, just ahead of Azerbaijan.

Domestically, those engaged in trade will tell you that the absence of seamless trade gateways and corridors, is their number one obstacle to sustainable growth.

So Canada must catch up to compete, to move ahead.

In August, the Canada West Foundation on behalf of 5 leading national organizations wrote our Premier, asking her to champion a significant increase in the investment in Canada's national trade gateways and corridors.

Premier Stefanson has made economic recovery and growth a key priority. She has made clear her support for a reliable, and resilient trade transportation system, in an era of climate change, and to increase trade.

Last month, she became Chair of the Council of the Federation. In the accompanying news release, the Premier noted that infrastructure investment is among the top files she will champion with her colleague premiers.

We should not just applaud, but support our Premier in taking the lead, moving her colleagues to make this.... a nation-building priority.

Moving towards the July 2023 premiers' meeting, our Premier .... has a legacy opportunity

- to lead this critical nation-building economic file
- to make the case for revitalizing national trade infrastructure investment; and
- to help trade-engaged sectors across Canada to flourish, through a growing global trade presence.

*The timing is right .... and the action is necessary.*

Our Premier has a unique opportunity to help lead Canada to sustainable prosperity, by championing a national trade gateway and corridor investment strategy.

I invite you to join the growing numbers across Canada who are encouraging our Premier and her colleagues, to making trade infrastructure investment, a nation-building priority; to loudly support the proposition, that growing the economy....**IS** job #1.

Thank you!