

Dep Min Dinner – MB Chambers of Commerce
November 21, 2023
Dennis Cruise

Good evening and thanks very much for this opportunity to speak to you all.

On behalf of the Board of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, I'd like to thank every one of the deputy ministers for attending tonight.

I am Dennis Cruise, President of Bituminex Paving and Chair of the MHCA. I know you were all looking forward to hearing from Chris Lorenc tonight.

Chris is out of province and is sorry he couldn't make it tonight.

Like many of you here, the MHCA has started meeting with the new cabinet ministers and the deputies – new and returning,

We've been really happy with how quickly we've been welcomed for those introductory meetings.

That openness sends a really encouraging sign.

It hasn't always been that way. So again, thank you to the deputy ministers – you are really important to building the foundation for collaboration.

A fresh start.

We all know Manitoba is a great place to live, work and play.

But we all know we can do more. We need to do more.

Do more to build a better province, for everyone.

For that to happen, our economy has to grow.

As a roadbuilder, I know the importance of getting people to their destinations every day, on time. Making sure what we produce gets to our customers every day, on time.

We produce far more in this province than we can consume, which is why we trade.

Trade generates 53% of our GDP – it generates the revenue that supports the social programs we so badly need today.

Programs to shelter people, build good housing, support hospitals so people don't wait way too long in emergency rooms, get help to those battling addictions.

Getting our goods to out-of-province markets grows our economy, it means we can create good jobs at good wages.

But you can't sell what you can't deliver.

Maybe some of you here grumbled about construction zones tying up the commute this summer.

Here's the thing: The work on Winnipeg's regional roads is an investment – an economic investment.

The volume of work that happened this year is a direct result of Winnipeg's deliberate, publicly posted asset management and investment plan that

- identifies regional streets as trade corridors
- assesses a condition rating for all streets
- and prioritizes construction where its most needed to support the economy.

And you're able to judge the city against that plan because it's public.

Remarkably, ***we can't say the same for our highways, provincial roads and bridges.***

We know they need a lot of work – in fact, \$9 billion worth of work.

Why have we never seen the province's report on the condition and investment need of our transportation system?

So, to our new government, to our fresh start, I say 'Trust us. Trust Manitobans to be part of that discussion. Now.'

The work of every organization, business or initiative represented here tonight – public or private – depends on

- making our trade transportation corridors a priority
- building a system that supports our communities, our population growth
- and making investments that deliver the highest returns to the GDP.

That's revenue to government coffers.

That ensures all Manitobans share in the prosperity that economic growth delivers.

Let's see a provincial economic plan

- that says we can trust Manitobans with the facts
- that commits to publicly releasing a report showing how we will build a transportation system capable of delivering the goods
- that invites everyone to the discussion about how we plot a fresh start.

That's a future we can all invest in.

Thank you