

Civic Leaders Dinner
April 10, 2024
Chris Lorenc Speaking Notes

Good evening Mr. Mayor, Councillors, senior civic administration and community business leaders.

The MHCA is a proud sponsor of the Civic Leaders' Dinner. Congratulations, Loren and team, for the consistency of its excellence.

I want to comment tonight about seizing a '*unique advocacy opportunity.*'

Advocacy is about many things

- Advocacy is a marathon, never a sprint.
 - It requires persevering patience to see it to conclusion.
- Advocacy is about relationships.
 - An African proverb astutely observes "*If you want to go faster, go alone, if you want to go further, go together.*"
- Advocacy is about understanding the audience, those in position to shape public policy -- the art of "what's doable".

So here we are, public and private sector leaders, with many common ideas about advancing the best interests of our city, province and country.

We have a receptive audience on Main and Broadway, which I think allows us to say 'you know what? We have a unique advocacy opportunity.'

When is the last time that both a newly elected Premier and sitting Winnipeg Mayor championed -- *together* -- focusing on *growing the economy* as a matter of public policy priority?

- "*It is the economic horse that pulls the social cart.*"
 - From Premier Kinew, his ministers, deputies, his government.
- "*NOW is the time to invest in Winnipeg's growth.*"
 - Mayor Gillingham's refrain, most recently at his Chamber State of the City Address, where he challenged the business community *To advocate for the 'needs' to create the sustained economic opportunities* enabling us to address our social challenges: homelessness, poverty, addiction and crime.

We hear affirmation of these common messages advanced by us persistently, patiently for many years.

In this context then, let me suggest Mayor and Councillors, what we *need* to make the ‘*opportunity*’ of sustained economic growth to address social welfare happen:

- 1st -- a Chief Economic Development Officer, at a level equal to the Chief Financial and Chief Operating Officers, reporting through the Chief Administrative Officer, to a Council standing policy committee charged with economic growth oversight, ensuring ongoing structural and political focus on economic growth.
- And 2nd -- concurrently press Manitoba for a *modern era* revenue sharing model allowing Winnipeg – all cities – to invest in and benefit by, sustained economic growth.

Push Manitoba to engage in a long overdue *new fiscal deal* discussion, underpinned by a blank sheet exercise, re-shaping roles, responsibilities and therefore defining a new revenue sharing model.

Importantly, MB’s Budget 2024 *has opened this door*. It announces the Kinew government’s intent to speak to municipalities about a reliable and flexible multi-year funding model. Even if this is but a crack, this is our opening!

We cannot squander the opportunity.

Frankly, only with a visible commitment to economic growth, can Winnipeg credibly approach Manitoba not as an orphan, but as equal partner in advancing our common economic and social policy objectives.

Our advocacy, our marathon, our persistence have resulted in the unique advocacy opportunity to reshape the dynamics of civic and provincial governance informed by the realities of today; and focusing on the opportunities of tomorrow.

To those who say change is impossible, Nelson Mandela said it best: “*It always seems impossible, until it’s done.*”

So, let’s seize this unique advocacy opportunity.

Mr. Mayor, you challenged us to ask you for what we need to create opportunity.

I respectfully suggest we ‘need’ you and Council to take these steps, to enable sustainable economic growth, to support social objectives

And we are here ready to help.

I thank everyone for your time and attention.