



MANITOBA HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION (MHCA)
Unit #3-1680 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0Z2

**Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
Ministers' Dinner, June 4, 2024
Chris Lorenc, B.A., LL.B., President & CEO MHCA
Speaking Notes**

'Make history....be the first.'

Good evening, Deputy Premier, ministers, senior provincial administration and business leaders.

The MHCA is a proud founding presenting sponsor of this dinner, so congratulations Chuck and team, for its ongoing excellence.

We're here tonight with our still relatively speaking new provincial government. The Premier and Cabinet may be feeling a bit "broken in." But it's only been 7 months – a lifetime in politics to be sure, but a short time, for the real work of government.

That work includes improving core public services.

To achieve this, our government - all governments - have to take care of Job #1, which is to **grow the economy**. As our Premier candidly repeats "it is the economic horse that pulls the social cart."

So, it's about conditions that **attract** new investment, **support the growth** of existing businesses, and in the process, **create jobs, generate revenues** to government which fund core services.

Fundamental to everything our economy does **is** our transportation system - our highways, trade gateways and corridors, bridges and structures, marine and inland port facilities, rail and air networks.

How fundamental?

Manitoba's economy is largely dependent on trade. Almost 54% of our ~\$65B GDP and roughly 240,000 direct & indirect jobs rely on trade.

To support trade, our transportation system must seamlessly, efficiently, and cost effectively move goods and services to and from markets - domestic, continental and global.

While some goods move by air, rail or ship the vast majority, indeed that last mile will always be on the road.

So, we need to protect our transportation system's capacity. That means investing in a manner that is **sustainable, predictable, incremental and above all, information-based and strategic**.

You would think, given the importance of the transportation system, that its current condition, maintenance requirements, investment needs and opportunities would be a matter of public record.

You would think that right?

It will shock you then to hear that **no provincial government** has ever made public that information. **No provincial government**. The current government has inherited this state of affairs.

That's a problem ... because this is the very information that Manitobans need, to understand the importance of investing in, not spending on, transportation.

I assume it would also shock you to hear the transportation system investment deficit - what we need to invest to bring the network to good condition and build the needed infrastructure - is **about \$9 billion**. I say **about**, because that is the years ago rumored amount - \$6 billion for roads and \$3 billion for bridges.

Compare that against the annual highways capital program, which only recently increased to \$500 million (*not all of it allocated to actual construction*).

But we are eternal optimists and believe a novel approach is in the air with Premier Kinew and MTI Minister Lisa Naylor.

Within the government's short first seven months in office, we are in a position to publicly acknowledge and applaud Premier Kinew's and MTI Minister Naylor's stated support for:

- Investing in national trade gateways & corridors with federal and private sector engagement.
- Ensuring CentrePort Canada's ongoing ability to attract new trade-related investments to Manitoba.
- Supporting a visionary northern Canada trade gateway role, for the Port of Churchill; and
- Appointing the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Infrastructure, to help shape forward-looking transportation investment criteria.

So...really a great start.

Let me conclude then with an appeal to the whole of Premier Kinew's government.

Make history. Be the first provincial government to make public the system-condition report, build Manitoba's transportation system around an investment strategy that creates a robust global trading profile to help achieve levels of economic growth and social well-being, we have yet to experience.

Let **this** be one of your key legacy decisions.

I thank the Deputy Premier, and ministers for attending this dinner the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce for this opportunity and everyone here tonight for your attention.



Chris Lorenc, B.A., LL.B.,
President & CEO, MHCA