



Infrastructure investment – protecting Manitobans, reviving the economy

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As our governments focused this spring on protecting Manitobans from the worst of the coronavirus pandemic, few would have considered our industries “front-line” workers. But we were out there – your members in mechanical contracting and ours, ensuring critical core infrastructure continued to work.

As others cared for Manitobans who fell ill, we were protecting Manitobans from disruption of the basic services we rely upon daily, or potentially catastrophic results should critical infrastructure fail.

Manitoba fared relatively well in the pandemic. But our economy has been battered, with municipalities and the province on track to book significant revenue losses and deficits, due to the necessary business shutdown.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association joined with MCAM and a number of other industry associations in calling upon all levels of government to support enhanced investment in infrastructure, as a means of economic revival. Infrastructure investment has been shown in repeated economic analyses to have amongst the highest returns to the GDP; conservative estimates are between \$1.30 and \$1.60 for every \$1 invested.

MHCA also made recommendations, specific to the core infrastructure industries it represents, to the province and to Ottawa regarding investment plans. Those recommendations included:

FEDERAL

1. To assist short, medium, and long-term municipal needs, double the municipal share of the federal gas-tax revenues.
2. Expedite the approvals process and give flexibility in funding from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. Some categories (transit or “green” infrastructure) have seen minimal or no take up because they are not priorities of municipalities. Allowing reallocation to priority areas, such as our trade transportation system, gets money circulating in local communities, and holds long-term benefit in the legacy assets.
3. Advance the flow of billions of infrastructure funding scheduled to be spent over the next few years.
4. Build on the success of the \$2-billion National Trade Corridors Fund and commit a new allocation, to fund legacy trade-supporting projects. In Manitoba those could include:
 - a. Extension of Chief Peguis Trail connecting to CentrePort Canada Way
 - b. Upgrades to the south perimeter
 - c. Headingley by-pass
 - d. St. Norbert by-pass
 - e. Morris by-pass
 - f. Highway #1, #75, 16, 10 and 6 improvements
5. Expedite the approvals process required to launch the Lake Manitoba/Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project to provide the necessary flood mitigation protection.

PROVINCIAL

1. Enhance, by up to twice, the amount budgeted for 2020 for Highways Capital and other core infrastructure programs
2. Restart the Quarry Rehabilitation Program, suspended since 2018 pending review, putting small and medium-sized contractors to work, helping kickstart economic recovery in rural municipalities
3. Implement three-year approved Highways Capital budgets, updated annually to provide necessary market information to the design, construction, and supply side of the heavy construction industry

4. Minimize carryover of approved capital programs by tracking project construction values (actual expenditures) against bid results and program budget, so departments can add projects during the season to ensure the full use of 2020 budgeted program dollars; also allows government to take advantage of low interest rates and competitive prices in the industry.

All MHCA's advocacy is rooted in the basic principle that governments' No. 1 job is to grow the economy. In calling for enhanced infrastructure investment, MHCA holds true to that principle, which is consistent with the broad public interest.



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For more on MHCA's principles for infrastructure investment, go to www.mhca.mb.ca and click 'Vision & Mission' in the 'About' tab