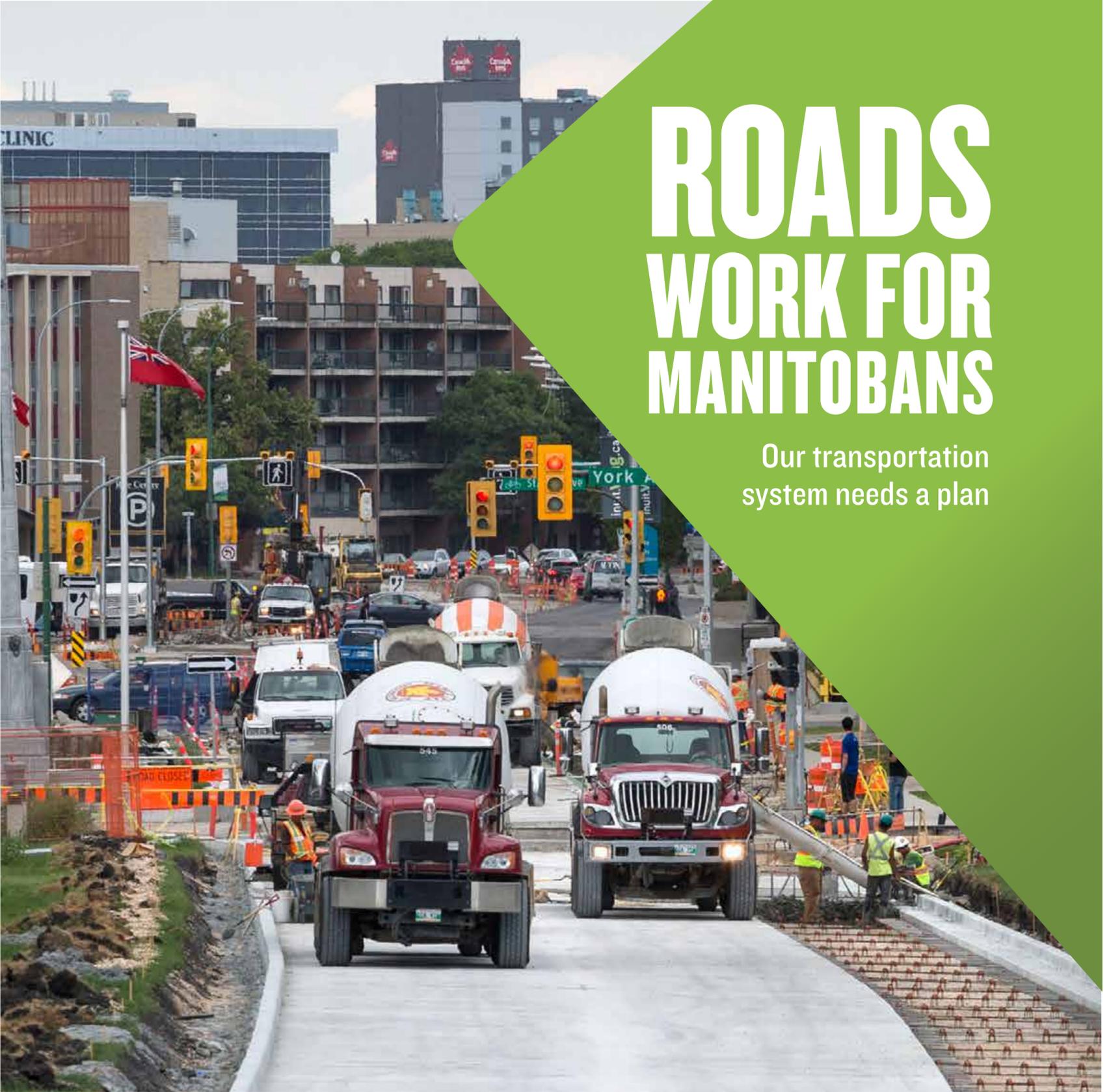




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NEW GOVERNMENT, START FOR RENEWED INVESTMENT IN CORE INFRASTRUCTURE

BY CHRIS LORENC



Chris Lorenc is president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

Manitobans have voted and our government has a renewed mandate.

This must be seen, in part, as support for the work that has been done to right the province's finances, to reduce deficits and return to some balance in our fiscal position.

The MHCA has always supported that goal.

But there is work to be done in growing our economy. The news mid-August from the Conference Board of Canada indicates Manitoba could be in for a rough year, with economic growth projections cut drastically to about 0.5% this year.

That's substantially down from the forecast published in last spring's provincial budget books, which set growth at 1.7%, a respectable rate in Canada. The Conference Board's report is warning 2020 is not looking much better.

Some of this arises from recent trade disputes (China), but the Board also noted provincial deficit-cutting measures have played into the mix, as well.

Nowhere in the provincial budget has this deficit-cutting been more severe than in our roads programs.

Since 2016, the highways budget has fallen precipitously – \$628 million was invested in 2015-16; this year, for the second in a row, the province budgeted \$350 million for highways.

The impact?

The wear and tear on our highways are compounded as repairs are delayed. Manitoba has more than 19,000 kilometres of provincial roads – highways, arteries and collectors and gravel roads.

Decaying roads are unsafe. They slow our commutes and that's bad for the environment and the economy.

Our transportation infrastructure forms the arteries for trade, and trade is the heart that pumps our provincial

economy. If the arteries don't work, the economy will show signs the system is under stress (see above).

Now that we're returning to fiscal balance, Manitoba must rebuild. We have to attend to those elements of public policy that spur our economy.

Strategic infrastructure investment is proven to have amongst the highest returns to GDP – between \$1.30 and \$1.60 for every \$1 invested.

Here's what the MHCA suggests for our new government's next steps:

1. *Review all provincial infrastructure expenditures, government-wide.*

We need to know precisely what we are funding, and why. Prioritizing investment for those projects that are focused on improving trade will have the fastest and highest return to the economy.

2. *Measure what you value.*

We need to know the detailed condition of our highways – including arterial and collector roads – in order to plot priorities, and to ensure we maintain our roads. What will be the cost to do that? We can't know or have a meaningful debate on that, until the province agrees to release all reports Manitoba Infrastructure holds on highway condition assessment and need and the infrastructure investment deficit. The department even tracks where collisions occur and why. Let's see those reports, not hide them like state secrets.

3. *Strategy. We need one.*

Governments that value their transportation network have an "asset-management" plan. Such a plan helps ensure highways don't deteriorate to the point they must be rebuilt because that's far more costly (see graph below).

Finally – get started.

The MHCA understands that Manitoba's highways and bridges need something in the range of \$9 billion worth of work to get up to good condition – evidence of decades of neglect that will take decades to address. Start by prioritizing the projects with greatest return to the GDP, identify dedicated streams of revenue, return the highways capital budget to a meaningful level and stick to the investment schedule laid out in line with the asset-management plan.

In the last report on the age of public infrastructure, published in 2008, Statistics Canada said Manitoba's roads were the oldest, on average, in Canada.

We've had some good years for infrastructure investment since then but successive years of budget cutting are having an effect, on our roads and our economy.

It's time to rebuild – start with the basics.

It's time to reinvest in our infrastructure and our economy.

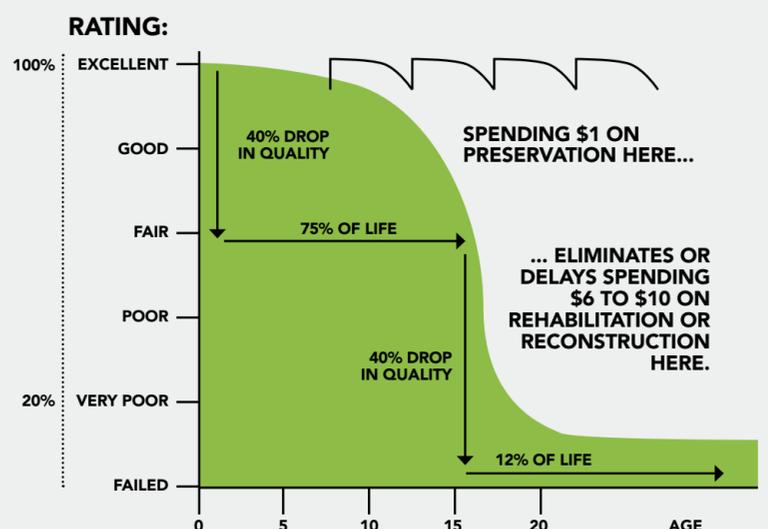
The high cost of decay

Manitoba's roads were rated the oldest in Canada, the last time Statistics Canada surveyed highway condition and investment in 2008. There were isolated years in which our highways saw good investment levels, but since 2016, that budget has been cut dramatically.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association advocates for an infrastructure investment strategy that includes sustainable, incremental funding – laid out in annual and five-year budget programs – to maintain our transportation system and other core infrastructure assets (water and sewer, bridges and water-control structures) to keep citizens and communities safe, and to grow our economy.

Maintaining infrastructure is more cost-effective than reconstructing. Below shows the higher cost of reconstruction.

EXAMPLE OF ASSET DETERIORATION CURVE (ROADS)



Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Research Council, Washington, D.C., TR News, Sept. - Oct. 2003

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WHY DO WE NEED A SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT STRATEGY?

The circle

Manitoba's economy generates government revenues, which fund our social infrastructure programs and critical services. The economy's growth is enabled by core infrastructure - streets, sewer, water, highways, bridges, drainage and water-control structures. Core infrastructure provides the foundation for all our economic activities, social programs and critical services.

Not unlike social infrastructure programs – healthcare and education – core infrastructure requires a comprehensive, strategic investment approach. If ignored, this will threaten our economy's ability to generate wealth, and therefore the fiscal capacity to fund our social programs and critical services - our quality of life.

The circle is complete – the elements are inextricably linked.

The plan

A long-term, strategic approach to public investment in infrastructure recognizes the value of core infrastructure to our economy, daily needs and quality of life. It involves reviewing what government now spends on core infrastructure, what new assets are required for economic growth, defining need and ability of each government level to pay, and identifying the infrastructure projects, such as trade transportation assets, holding the highest return on investment.

Such a strategy is underpinned by an asset-management plan that allows monitoring the condition of infrastructure assets, the cost of maintenance or replacement, and providing for the assets we must build to maintain service to a growing population and to raise our international trade profile. It is put into action via annual and multi-year budgets to ensure capital investment is rolled out in a sustainable, efficient manner to prevent decay of assets and infrastructure-investment deficits from becoming unmanageable.

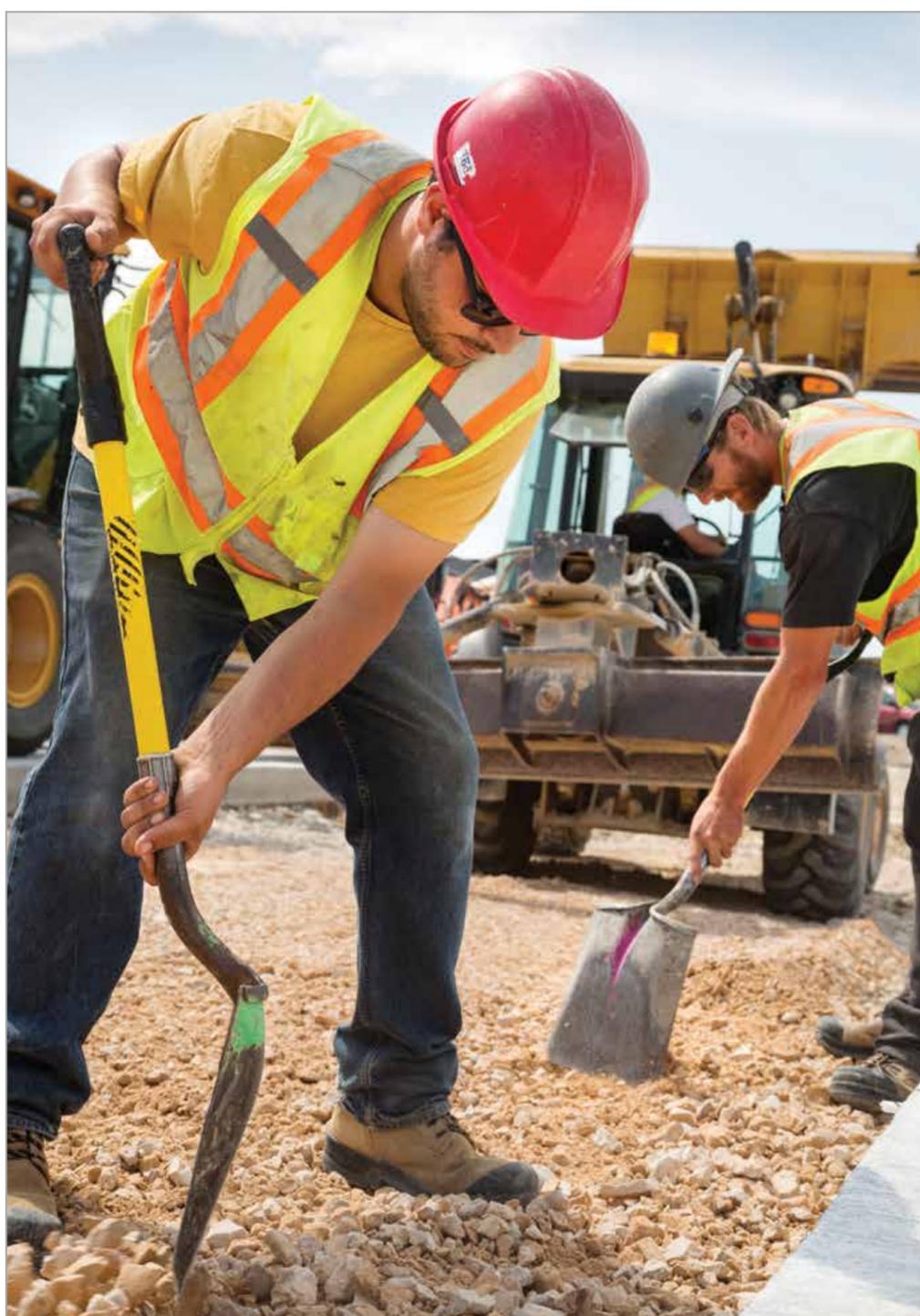
The payback

The benefits of a sound, sustainable strategy for infrastructure investment are

- **Manageable program levels** – a transparent multi-year budgeting process allows the public to see how their needs will be met in a timely manner; it also allows industry to plan ahead, which ensures a competitive bidding environment, optimal prices and best value to the taxpayer
- **Prioritization of infrastructure projects** – singling out projects with the highest return to the GDP spurs increased revenues to government, supports job creation, sustains social and other government programs and underpins the economy and our quality of life.
- **Sustainable borrowing** – identification of priority projects, funding streams and balancing cost-sharing between governments - proportionate to each's revenue resources - through funding agreements allows each level to manage debt and debt-servicing costs.

Need to know more?

Go to mhca.mb.ca and click on the Fix Our Roads tab for a fuller discussion of a long-term strategic infrastructure investment plan for both the provincial and the municipal government levels.



Waverley Underpass - Maple Leaf Construction

MHCA/Colin Corneau photo



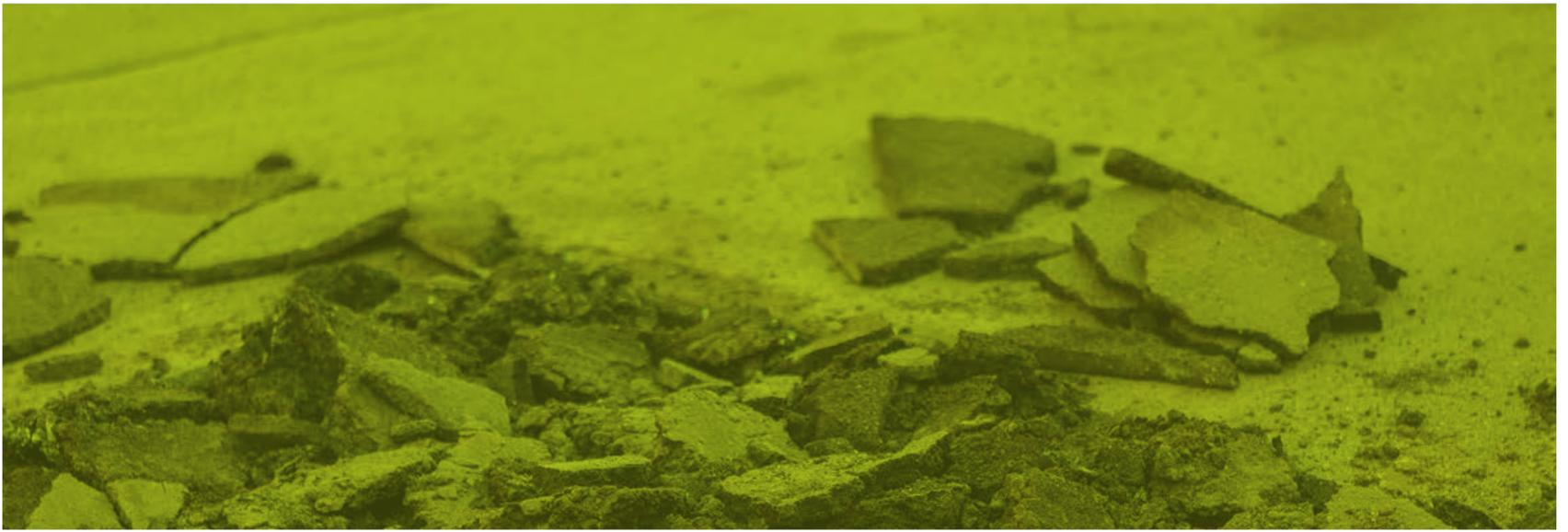
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WINNIPEG'S BUMPY STREETS

WHAT'S THE PLAN TO FIX OUR INFRASTRUCTURE?

The chart below sets out the forecasted bridge-work budgets, 2020-24, compared to revenue increases from the 2% tax hikes, according to Winnipeg's 2019 Operating and Capital Budget.

BUDGET YEAR (MILLIONS)	BRIDGES	LOCAL & REGIONAL STREETS BUDGET	L&R STREET RENEWAL RESERVE	RESERVE INCREASE
2020	5.65	111.6	75.0	11.6
2021	3.4	154.1	87.0	12.0
2022	10.0	164.5	99.4	12.3
2023	11.7	147.2	112.4	13.1
2024	19.9	137.8	125.8	14.4
TOTAL	50.65	715.2	499.6	63.4

The financial implications of allowing 'bridges' to draw on the street renewal reserves are evident.

- From 2020 to 2024, bridge work expenditures are expected to total \$50.65 million, vs. \$63.4 million in new revenues from the 2% tax hikes.
- Allowing bridges to be funded from the tax-hike revenues means in any year there could be much reduced, or NO, funding for street repairs from the reserve. The 2% annual tax hike could go almost entirely to bridges.

City council should explain to Winnipeggers what is its plan to maintain city streets, in light of missed targets and the decision to fund bridges from the 2% tax revenues.



Ellice Avenue - Bituminex Paving

MHCA/Colin Corneau photo

Every year, every Winnipeg property owner pays at least 2% more in municipal taxes. That's a result of a deal to fix streets city council struck with Winnipeggers in 2013 and '14.

The revenues from that 2% tax flow to city coffers, into a fund dedicated exclusively for street repairs. But this year city council changed the terms of that agreement.

The deal was that the budget for local and regional streets would rise annually by at least the amount raised each year through the tax.

That didn't always happen - some years there was no change in the budget level.

But this year, city council fundamentally altered the deal. It voted to allow bridge work to be funded from the revenues raised by the 2% annual tax hike.

Bridge work is expensive. The change means in any given year, the street repair budget might get none of the new revenues raised by the 2% tax. The city's own financial records show the total expenditures on the bridge program from 2014 to 2019 amounted to \$51.5 million. That total is slightly higher than the total of new revenues raised in the same period for the local and regional street renewal reserves.

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association asked the city administration for its analysis of how approving funding bridges from the special reserve would affect the annual street renewal budgets. An equally important question is how the change would affect the city's capacity to reduce the infrastructure investment gap - the difference between what we need to expend to bring our streets up to good condition and what is being invested currently.

According to the original plan, the local and regional street budget was supposed to hit \$119.2 million this year. It is actually \$105.6 million.

No reply has been received from the city, yet. It's a good question for Winnipeggers to ask their councilors - city council has not explained how, or if, it plans to stay on or near target to reduce the deficit in street repairs.

With bridges now drawing from the street renewal reserve, how can Winnipeg manage to keep its streets in repair?



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Yvette Milner is president of Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba



Chris Lorenc is president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

A SOLID, EASY START

TO PROTECTING WORKER, EMPLOYER RIGHTS

BY YVETTE MILNER AND CHRIS LORENC

It is common now for newly (re)elected governments to make pledges to get busy. Often, we hear about the "first 100 days" promise – what will get done within first 100 days of governments taking office.

First, congratulations to the Pallister government on your re-election.

And as you're settling in, we offer an easy pledge for the '100 day' list: protection of working Manitobans' right to choose to join a union, or not. This is called an open shop, and most Manitobans (73%) working in the construction industry choose to work in an open-shop or non-union setting.

It's an easy check on the to-do list. So easy, in fact, there is a bill already written, waiting to be passed.

The proposed Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act expressly set out the right of employers bidding on public construction tenders and their employees to choose whether they wanted to have union representation and pay union dues. In other words, there could be no compulsion to pay union dues in order to work on public projects.

Your government supporting free will, free choice. Your government welcoming open and fair, unimpeded bidding on government contracts.

Aside from respecting workers' rights, the protection of choice for employers and employees protects the most competitive environment, as well. This brings best value for taxpayers.

Who would complain?

The bill was proposed in 2018 but did not see a final vote this spring because, as permitted under the legislative assembly rules, the opposition set it aside as one of the bills it could delay to the fall sitting of the legislature. That delay meant it could not see a vote prior to the call of this year's provincial election.

Party politics aside, the bill itself is sound. And it is sitting there on the shelf, waiting to be pulled down and tabled again in the legislature.

This is not about eroding fair contracts. It simply reverses the overly restrictive conditions a previous administration applied to any firm hoping to bid on large public construction projects – such as the Floodway expansion and Hydro developments under project-labour agreements.

Project-labour agreements can include beneficial terms and conditions employers must

meet – agreeing to increased labour participation from local or Indigenous communities, for example. But insisting that anyone bidding or working on a public project be affiliated with a union or pay union dues is the antithesis of free will and it raises the cost to the taxpayer.

Manitoba has strong labour-relations laws, employment codes and workplace safety and health legislation ensuring work environments are fair, respectful, healthy and safe.

But to demand that union dues be paid for the right to access work is just wrong. It not only disrespects the choice of employees regarding unions, it assumes employers are working to deny benefits and pay commensurate with the market and job skills.

Manitoba is not the only jurisdiction to have wrestled with forced unionization. Arising from Canadian experiences, it has been found that forcing workers to belong to unions increases the cost of projects by 12 to as much as 40 per cent.

Open, competitive bidding is a cornerstone of the competitive environment that has been proven time and again to bring best value on a contract. It respects what the private sector does best – as the source of ingenuity and value for dollar.

If it were otherwise, all governments at all levels would have dispensed with their reliance on the private sector to get the job done and choose, instead, to launch massive hiring sprees each construction season to put trades, labourers, engineers and project managers on the public payroll.

No party has or would suggest such a policy or practice, for good reason.

If sounder minds prevail on this point, then why force unionization through the back door of distorted labour-management agreements?

The union influence in Manitoba is strong. It is understandable why the NDP, which reserves special power for unions in its party constitution, would want to make a public show of red-circling the proposed Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act for a rough ride through the legislature.

But voters have spoken and the time is ripe for our provincial government to defend and enshrine workers' rights to free choice in their employment environment.

Taxpayers deserve to see it done. This priority deserves to be on the 'first 100' days to-do list.



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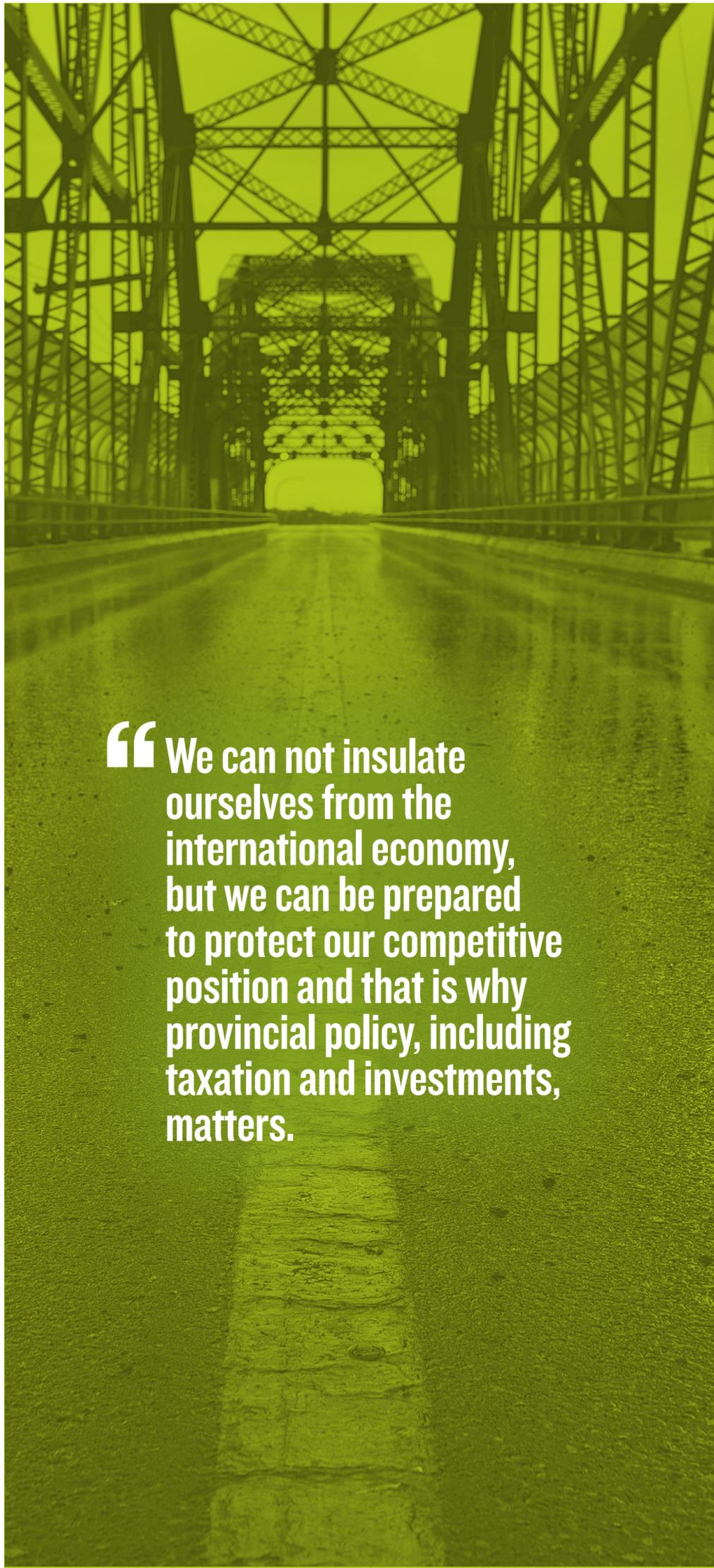
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This is not about eroding fair contracts. It simply reverses the overly restrictive conditions a previous administration applied to any firm hoping to bid on large public construction projects – such as the Floodway expansion and Hydro developments under project-labour agreements.





“ We can not insulate ourselves from the international economy, but we can be prepared to protect our competitive position and that is why provincial policy, including taxation and investments, matters.

MANITOBA NEEDS ‘MORE’ TO BOLSTER ITS COMPETITIVENESS



Don Leitch is president and CEO of the Business Council of Manitoba.

BY DON LEITCH

Now that the election is over, it is time our government turns its promises into a plan.

And there is more to be done.

After an election most governments embark on quick implementation of their most important election promises and commitments, if for no other reason than to demonstrate to voters that they made the right choice.

There was a reason why Manitobans heard all parties make commitments respecting the economy, government finances and Manitoba's overall competitiveness: They all recognized the importance of economic growth.

It is critical the Progressive Conservative government move to implement its key commitments on the economy, taxes and our competitiveness, for the following reasons.

If we do not act Manitoba runs the risk of falling behind other jurisdictions working to improve their competitive profiles. Quick action on regulatory reform, taxes, partnerships and infrastructure investments is more important now than it has been for years. Daily we have reports of economic turmoil, uncertainty and disruption. Both of our major trade agreements, the new NAFTA with the U.S and Mexico and the agreement with the European Union, remain to be fully ratified. Manitoba jobs and incomes are exposed in periods of trade downturns and uncertainty.

We can not insulate ourselves from the international economy, but we can be prepared to protect our competitive position and that is why provincial policy, including taxation and investments, matters.

Troubling signs on the horizon compel us to quickly enhance our capacity to compete in what may soon be a more challenging trade environment.

Earlier this summer 10 of Manitoba's leading business organizations collaborated to issue a document on Growing Manitoba's Economy - More to be Done. It contained seven principles, or pillars, for putting Manitoba on the road to greater prosperity, wealth creation and meaningful jobs for Manitobans. This document built on a similar one produced prior to the 2016 election.

Leading into the next four years, the business organizations saw reason to encourage government and the private sector to work together on a common economic agenda, and for the provincial government's prime focus to be ensuring Manitoba's economy is competitive and on critical investments in infrastructure and community assets.

Our fiscal progress over the last three years could be jeopardized if the international economy softens. The budget may then not be balanced ahead of schedule. So attention now to investments that grow the economy are doubly important – that's the “more to be done” part of the business organizations' document.

What is ‘more’? ‘More’ is government forging a collaborative working relationship with the private sector, the ones who create wealth in the province. ‘More’ is government investing in infrastructure and community assets while the private sector invests in the means of production, including factories, farms, expanding warehouses, and in new information technology. It means government investing more at a level that ensures Manitoba's infrastructure deficit does not deepen. We have seen how difficult it is to get out of a fiscal deficit; clearly, it is equally difficult to get out of our infrastructure deficit.

Here's a good example of how infrastructure investment supports economic growth:

Manitoba's value-added production, which capitalizes on our abundant agricultural resources, is growing but to expand that growth, we will require more infrastructure to service the sector. We saw the additional infrastructure that was required near Portage La Prairie to service two major investments. Other communities will similarly be able to benefit from private-sector investment, but only if we have the commensurate public infrastructure in place.

That is why the business organizations have called for a common infrastructure strategy and a multi-year plan with funding commitments.

That plan will help guide us to a more prosperous future.

To view Growing Manitoba's Economy – More to Be Done, go to businesscouncil.mb.ca and click on Insights

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UNDER CONSTRUCTION: THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION



Chris Lorenc is president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association

BY CHRIS LORENC

If you've never been smudged, you're missing out. I was smudged this spring, in a private meeting that preceded Mayor Brian Bowman's 3rd annual signing ceremony for new partners to the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord.

As the smoke wafted over, I was acutely conscious of the profound purpose of the morning and the covenant being made, publicly.

The MHCA Board of Directors approved signing on to the accord early this year, to continue and enlarge our industry efforts to engage Indigenous communities and employ Indigenous workers.

For MHCA and our industry leaders, it was an easy decision. Heavy construction reaches all parts of Manitoba, remotely or in urban places and spaces. We hire locally. We leave legacy benefits. Those are lasting economic spinoffs.

Entering a neighbourhood or community is like entering someone's home – we are conscious of the intrusion and disruption. Settling in is easier when community members are part of the crew.

But as with most Canadians, we recognize we have a lot to learn, more opportunities to seize and – to the central point of Mayor Bowman's initiative – to do more to reconcile the damaging legacy of Canada's history of colonialist and racist policies and practices, the impacts of which we can see all around us on our city and province's streets.

The heavy construction industry is on the streets every day, for long hours. Our workers are sighting lines, shoveling base, laying and tying in sewer and water pipes, pouring and rolling asphalt or concrete, finely finishing the curbs and flagging motorists to keep everyone safe.

We have an intimate feel for the streets; we get to know the neighbourhoods and residents. Our workforce draws from all neighbourhoods.

No one in this city can say race relations are rosy. Far from perfect. But, like most Winnipeggers, we are figuring it out, and the goal is to ensure all Manitobans share and grow in the prosperity that comes with economic and social progress.

I was comfortable, at the signing ceremony June 18, in publicly attesting to our industry's commitment toward working harder to that goal.

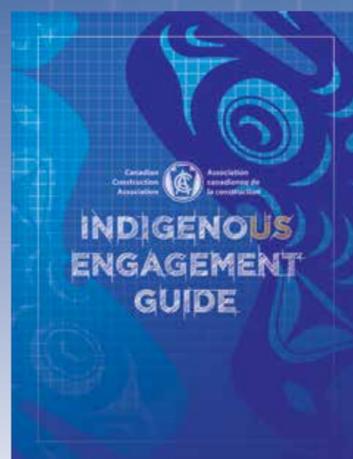
When the smouldering sage came to me in the circle of signatories, public officials and elders on the 2nd floor of City Hall, prior to the courtyard ceremony, I felt the gravity of the undertaking.

The heavy construction industry is proud of the progress made to include Indigenous people in our work. In signing the accord, it also attests to the heavy hauling it has before it.

And we say: As with the founding role First Nations, Inuit and Metis people played in creating what we know today as Canada, we cannot build strong communities without them.

Next time you're passing through a road construction site, look at those with their sleeves rolled up. You'll see all Canadians there, repairing streets, constructing highways, laying water and sewer lines to serve our communities, building the water-control structures to defend towns and cities against floods and – for the few who travel as far – carving ice roads on frozen waters so a year's worth of critical supplies to northern and isolated communities can be delivered.

That's us. All of us.



MHCA/ WORKSAFELY- INDIGENOUS HEAVY CONSTRUCTION HISTORY AND PARTNERSHIPS

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

MHCA initiated and the MHCA President chaired the task force that developed the Canadian Construction Association's Indigenous Engagement Guide, which was distributed nationally for the heavy civil and ICI construction industries in 2016. The guide, a first in Canada, is the manual for construction companies looking to work with and in Indigenous communities. Its intent is to build a respectful partnership and to ensure legacy value, through economic and workforce training, for the communities when the construction project itself is complete.

HEAVY CONSTRUCTION FUNDAMENTALS – GRADE 12 EMPLOYMENT TRAINING COURSE

MHCA is working with the Manitoba Construction Sector Council and Southeast Collegiate to launch in the fall of 2020 a training course on the fundamentals of heavy construction. The goal is to make high school graduates ready for employment in entry-level positions.

The course will cover basic aspects of construction work, including safety and skills. It will set up the student for higher levels of training, for career advancement

INTRO TO HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATION – SIMULATOR TRAINING

Our introduction to heavy construction equipment operation course has partnered with a number of Indigenous groups, associations and northern communities in the past few years. The course puts students in the virtual driver's seat of a variety of pieces of heavy equipment, such as excavators. Students completing the course are ready for the second level of training, which would permit them to be hired to operate.

IN-SEAT HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR TRAINING

Since 2015, MHCA has been working with First Nation and Metis organizations to bring heavy equipment operating training to a number of communities, to train operators on dozers, rock trucks, excavators and loaders

WINTER ROADS/COR CERTIFICATION

Since 2007, MHCA's WORKSAFELY advisors have delivered training on safety and health to 23 Indigenous communities engaged in winter-road construction.

MHCA delivers the Certificate of Recognition program to Indigenous communities, heavy construction companies and individuals working on Manitoba Infrastructure's winter roads system

SAFETY TRAINING

In partnership with Manitoba Construction Sector Council, MHCA delivers safety training to a number of Indigenous communities.


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ROADS WORK FOR MANITOBANS

And we build the roads

The men and women of the heavy construction industry work in your region, your town and on our neighbourhood streets, your highways, bridges, sewer and water projects and water-control structures. Our workers come from your communities – across Manitoba.

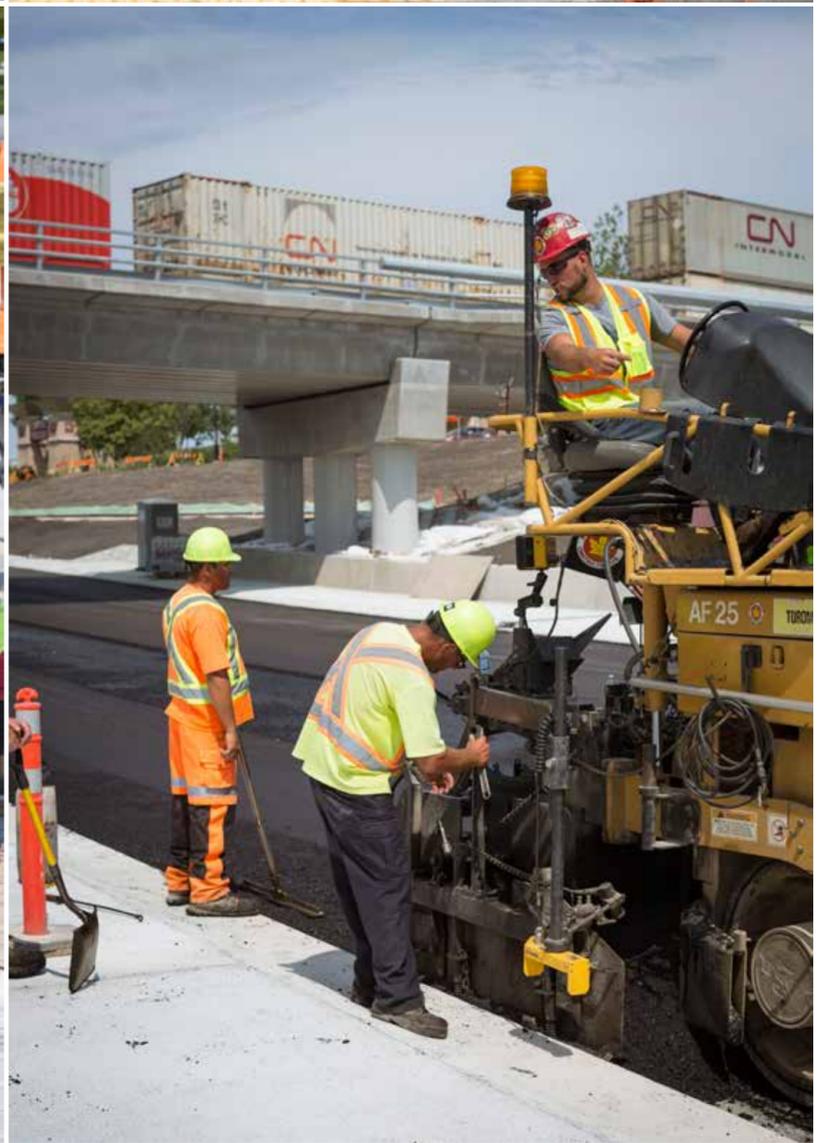
However you move, our industry delivers the infrastructure of critical services that get you to your destination efficiently, and protect your community from extreme weather. Core infrastructure keeps business working and trade on the road, and that grows our economy.

This summer, the MHCA went out with photographer Colin Corneau to profile its members. Below (and on the front cover), is the reconstruction of Memorial Boulevard by Maple Leaf Construction.

The opposite page shows work on the Waverley Underpass (Maple Leaf, again), on Elllice Avenue, by Bituminex Paving, and on Empress, perennially dubbed Winnipeg's "worst road" in CAA Manitoba's annual survey, by Borland Construction.

MHCA/Colin Corneau photos







30 YEARS OF SAFETY EXCELLENCE
WORKSAFELY **MHCA**

TECHNOLOGY TAKES SAFETY TRAINING AND DOCUMENTATION TO A **HIGHER LEVEL**

MHCA/Colin Corneau photo

Technology is helping to drive early decision-making throughout heavy construction operations, which can reduce or eliminate costly errors that can lead to injuries or fatalities. Our industry has used technology to simplify safety program administration and improve effectiveness of training.

Within Manitoba's heavy construction industry, long-term trends show work-related injuries and fatalities are declining, overall. Part of this improvement is due to the rising importance of workplace safety and the increased use of technology to support it.

The MHCA's WORKSAFELY™ team turned to technology in 2012 to transform how it delivered safety programming to the heavy construction industry. WORKSAFELY partnered with SiteDocs, to move from paper-based administration of safety programs — housed in filing cabinets — to a digital platform. This helps construction companies shift their safety program systems to a mobile, more efficient and simpler platform.

Arnason Industries was one of MHCA's first companies to take advantage of the digital application e-COR, to improve the firm's safety performance.

Arnason's Robert Paige says he has seen huge success since integrating e-COR into the safety management process.

"More than just preventing mistakes and creating efficiencies, e-COR plays a key role in engaging our employees," Paige says. "Having e-COR on our phones or tablets allows workers to take safety management out of the office on onto the jobsite."

Whether workers are recording incident details, conducting audits or logging safety observations, the ability to replace paperwork with a digital platform boosts efficiency and participation, he explains.

"From automation to task management to reporting, technology provides the basis for our company's safety culture, creating an area of accountability to gear us to work towards our safety goals."

In addition to e-COR, WORKSAFELY and SiteDocs have created a digital platform for auditing safety programs called Easy COR. When it comes to doing your COR audit, the newly introduced Easy COR application can further simplify the audit documentation and administrative process.

Another line of progress for in construction is in virtual-reality training, putting students in the virtual driver's seat of heavy equipment.

For WORKSAFELY's safety and work-force training, technology has played a key-role, says Don Hurst, WORKSAFELY director of training and education.

"Workers now have the opportunity to get exposure to environments, such as driving a front-end loader or learning about confined space, in a controlled environment," says Hurst.

In 2013, the MHCA partnered with Brandt Tractors and Toromont Cat to change how they delivered heavy-equipment operator training by acquiring simulators that recreate the operation of four key pieces of heavy equipment: front-end loader, dozer, excavator and grader.

"We are very excited about the opportunities that this simulator-based training opens up for those looking to get into the industry as equipment operators," says Phil McDaniel, MHCA WORKFORCE program coordinator. "The simulators can be transported and that opens up the introduction to heavy equipment training to various areas of the province."

One of WORKSAFELY's key partners in bringing virtual reality into the classroom is Bit Space Development. Bit Space worked with WORKSAFELY to take its existing Roadbuilders Safety Training System (RSTS) to the next level.

"The original training was offered in class or online, over about eight hours," says Dan Blair, founder of Bit Space Development. "We worked with the heavy construction industry to create a virtual world for each one of the modules for RSTS, allowing students to get a sense of presence and a more realistic grasp with the content they were being taught."

Virtual reality allows you to place a student in the eyes of the storyteller, he adds.

"The technology allows us to give a level of understanding that we never could before in the classroom, regardless of what you are teaching."

Virtual reality does not replace on-the-job training, but it enhances the classroom learning and prepares students for entering the job site.

Although Blair acknowledges that simulations have become better, he feels the future will bring more incorporation of soft-skills training before replacing on-the-job training.



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Jeff Love, of Borland Construction, received the 2019
WORKSAFELY Safety Leader Award
MHCA photo

APPLYING PROVEN SAFETY PRACTICES AT HOME

We can all learn from the safety success that has been achieved in the heavy construction industry.

Through safety programming delivered through the MHCA for over 30 years, injuries have been reduced by more than 50% in the heavy construction industry.

Today, 75% of the heavy construction workforce works for companies certified under the nationally recognized COR™ safety program. MHCA's WORKSAFELY™ team and industry have worked hard to get to the point where safety isn't a new topic and is at the forefront of our employers' and workers' minds.

But it is important to keep in mind that injuries often happen off the job and at home. We have put so much focus on workplace safety, but we must remember to focus on safety off the job. Many of the safety practices that have been developed in our industry can also apply to common tasks at home.

There are several benefits of focusing on safety off the job. Consistency is one of them. If you want your workers to wear eye protection it is key to educate them on the real reasons why they would want to use this personal protective equipment (PPE). When people understand the benefits of wearing PPE, they are more likely to do so at home, too.

One of the most important reasons to encourage your workers to work safely at home is that the workers' loved ones and children will also learn to use the equipment also. If a child sees mom using hearing protection when they are mowing the lawn, it will become only natural for them to use the personal protective

equipment also.

WORKSAFELY recently had the opportunity to interview a couple of our Safety Leader Award winners about the importance of our workers bringing safety home.

"If people are only doing safe activities because they have to or because you are paying them and they are willing to comply with rules and regulations, then you haven't given them enough reasons which benefit them," says Marc Rodrigue, of Accurate HD, 2017 WORKSAFELY Safety Leader Award winner.

Jeff Love of Borland Construction is this year's winner.

"Another benefit of reminding your workers to remember off the job safety is it sends the point that your company really cares about them," Love says. "When I talk with my colleagues about the importance of safety even after they leave the jobsite I want them to understand that they are important to our company and to me."

If you build up the safety culture in the workplace, it gets workers to think about safety and assess for hazards all the time, he adds.

"Whether you are driving, boating, doing yard work or shopping, once you are trained to recognize and think about hazards prior to performing a task, you learn that habit and will continuously use it. Safety doesn't stop when the shift ends!"

Love is always discussing safety at home with his children and ensures they all wear safety glasses and hearing protection when cutting the grass, or wearing gloves when using hand tools.

Talking about safety is the best way to educate those around you and in turn they may educate others.

“When I talk with my colleagues about the importance of safety even after they leave the jobsite I want them to understand that they are important to our company and to me.**”**

—Jeff Love of Borland Construction

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CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

— WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?



Joel Gervais, of CBI Health Centre, speaks to an industry workshop MHCA photo

“It’s about setting clear expectations for your workers, about their obligation to come to work unimpaired by any substance that can affect their ability to perform their job safely and productively.”

-Todd Turner, general manager at EF Moon Construction

The legalization of recreational cannabis was a hot topic for Manitoba’s heavy construction industry when the law changed in 2018.

A year later, it appears much of that hype was overblown, says Todd Turner, general manager at EF Moon Construction.

“Most companies in the heavy construction industry have taken this last year to update their existing alcohol and drug policies, as well as the fit-for-duty protocols,” he explains.

“The legalization of recreational cannabis was an opportunity for us to broaden the issues of impairment and substance abuse from a workplace point of view.”

Turner notes that impairment can come in many forms – sleep deprivation, over-the-counter cold medicine, and even stress. It is important that employees know the potential impact any of these sources of impairment.

“I think what legalization of recreational cannabis has done is put a spotlight on issues that already existed in most workplaces today,” Turner says. “It’s about setting clear expectations for your workers, about their obligation to come to work unimpaired by any substance that can affect their ability to perform their job safely and productively.”

Joel Gervais, addictions and training specialist at CBI Health Centre, says there has not been a whole lot to report on the issues from a workplace and, ultimately, from a safety perspective.

“Many employers have ‘stepped up’ and educated their employees on the signs, symptoms and impacts of cannabis and other impairing substances in the workplace, in addition to doing their due diligence in reviewing and updating policies,” he says. “Many companies are reaching out to associations, like the MHCA, to get good advice and training.”

Gervais says some of the advice he dispenses to employers is that this actually isn’t that new.

“If you were already doing a good job of monitoring and responding appropriately to substance abuse in the workplace you really shouldn’t be doing anything different.”

He stresses that the legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada doesn’t erode the employer’s right to insist workers are free from impairment when they show up to work. And that legalization does not change the employer’s right to control drug use where it affects the workplace.

“One of the key messages that I try to convey when I am training is that, regardless of whether the drug is legal or not, employers have the ‘absolute’ right to ensure a safe workplace,” Gervais says.

“I think that the legalization of cannabis strengthens the message, especially when employees say they have a ‘right’ to use whatever they want. Last time I checked, impairment wasn’t a basic human right.”



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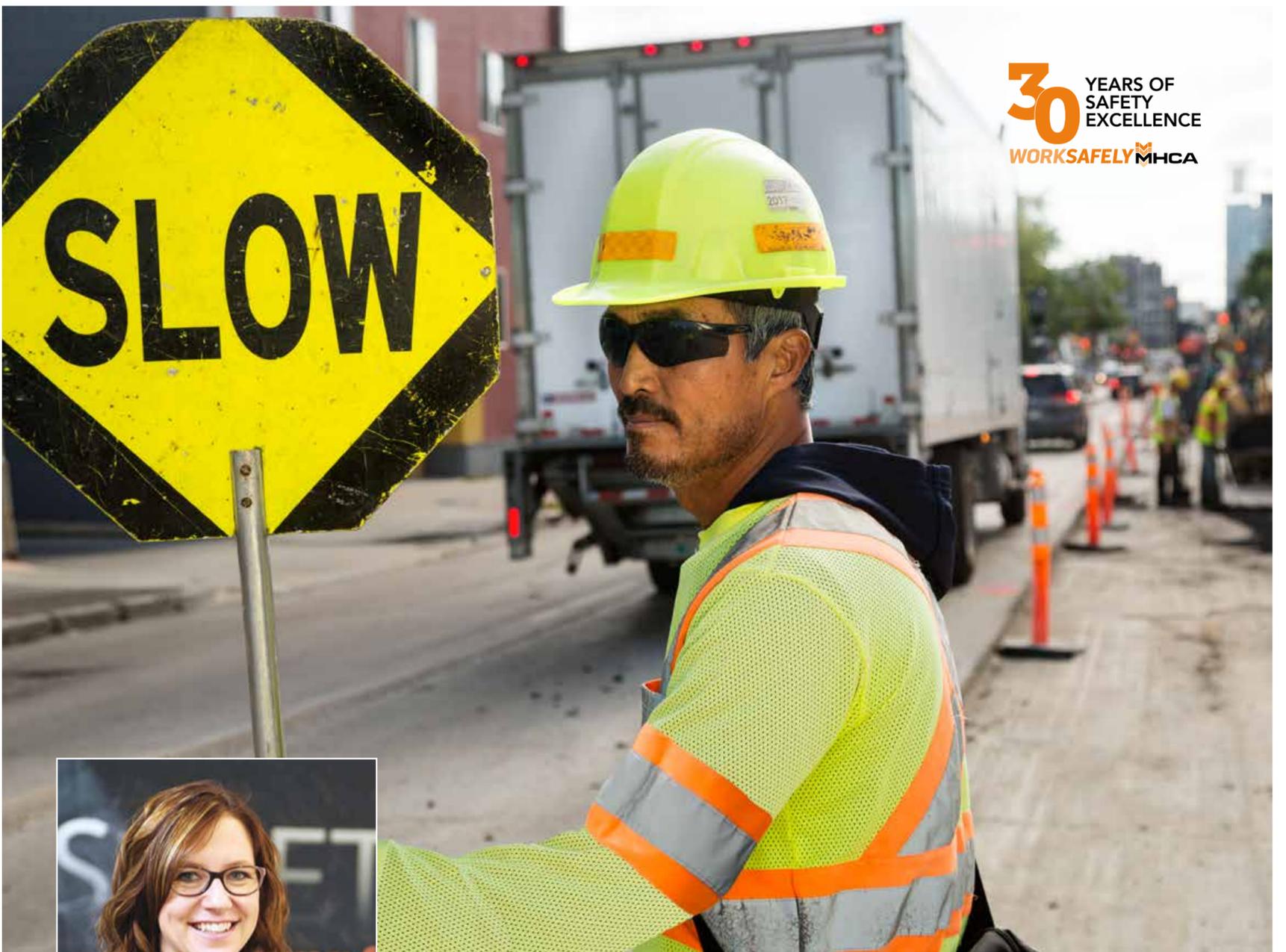
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Jackie Jones is an education and training advisor at MHCA's WORKSAFELY.

Ellice Avenue - Bituminex Paving

MHCA/Colin Corneau photo

CONSTRUCTION FLAGGERS KEEP US SAFE – SLOW DOWN, OBEY THE SIGNS

BY JACKIE JONES

Road construction slows the commute for everyone: motorists, bus riders, cyclists and pedestrians. That can be frustrating.

But if frustration gives way to impatience, it can be dangerous or deadly – particularly for the workers trying to get the job done.

Joe Dooley has been a heavy equipment operator for the province for over 19 years. Four years ago, life changed for him.

“It was a clear spring day, and I was following two graders that were doing road shoulder clean-up. I was driving behind them with a self-propelled sweep off broom truck doing about 10 km/hour,” he recounts. “Even though we had followed all of our safety procedures, this didn’t stop a motorist from rear-ending me.”

“When I was hit, my head smashed the back window, and my truck was thrown into the ditch,” he said. “I was lucky to walk away with a concussion, broken ribs and bones.”

Dooley was off work for five months. Now, with fall here, the need for caution when passing through road construction sites is as important as ever as the heavy construction industry is diligently working to finish projects before snow flies.

The MHCA WORKSAFELY team would like to remind all motorists to reduce their speed and drive with extra caution, as contractors wrap up construction projects.

The MHCA led the initiation in 2004 of an education campaign geared to increase awareness among motorists and the general public, and encourage them to pass construction sites in a respectful and safe manner. The intent is to keep everyone safe, including construction, utility and emergency services personnel,

equipment operators and all who work on, or adjacent to, our roadways.

The annual campaign has had an impact, leading to increased awareness among drivers of the need to protect the safety and health of Manitoba workers, explains Chris Lorenc, MHCA president and chairman of the SAFE Roads committee.

“Our key messaging usually begins in the spring and reminds the public that those working on and around our roadways deserve a safe and healthy workplace, as all workers do,” Lorenc says. “However, this message needs to be reiterated throughout the year.”

That became clear several weeks ago. A flagger on a local road construction site was going about his work duties, directing traffic, when he was struck by a vehicle. He was seriously injured.

Ray Bissonnette, safety manager of Nelson River Construction, stresses that the public must recognize that contractors setting up for construction are following provincial regulations for traffic control.

“We are out there working to improve Manitoba’s roadways for the public,” Bissonnette said. “Improving our road infrastructure takes hard work and time – please understand that they (construction crews) want to keep you safe. Please respect that you are in their workplace, so be patient and slow down and pay attention to keep them safe.”

For Dooley, who is also the trades component director for the MGEU, the SAFE Roads message “Slow Down. We Work Where You Drive” hits home.

“My message to the public is to slow down when approaching workers on our roadways during all seasons, including winter,” Dooley

stresses.

“This is also important to remember as we approach winter road-maintenance season. When you know there is a snow storm but you have to travel, leave a bit early. Do not pass snow removal operations.”

Stories like these serve as important reminders of why the MHCA puts a high priority on promoting the awareness of work zones and the need to be respectful of workers on our roadways.

“The MHCA is proud to be one of the founding organizations of the SAFE Roads campaign,” Lorenc said. “It was and remains our goal to highlight the importance of using extra caution around work zones. These men and women risk their lives each day to ensure roadways remain safe for all users.”

Work zones include areas where road construction, maintenance or utility activities take place. By following the tips below, all road users can stay safe and help protect crews at work:

Plan ahead – before setting out on the road, research your route to avoid work zones where possible and use available detours

Stay focused – keep your eyes on the road and avoid distractions such as cellphones and eating

Slow down and keep your distance – lane closures, reduced speeds and traffic-pattern shifts are common in work zones. Be alert and expect the unexpected

Obey all signs – be aware of signage throughout work zones as they provide important information that warns drivers of approaching road conditions and disruptions

Protect workers – slow down as you approach workers, give them room and prepare to stop.

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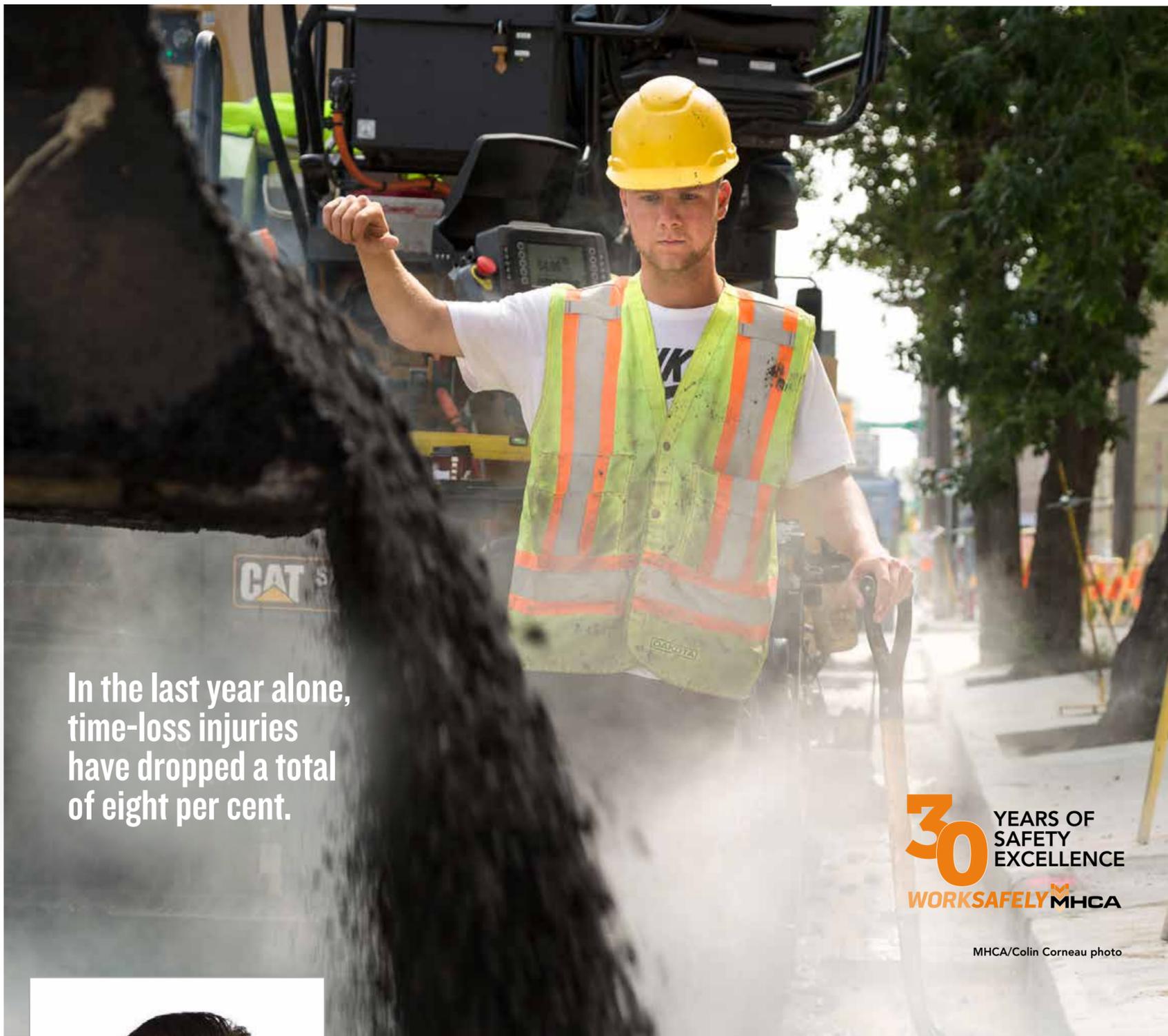
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In the last year alone, time-loss injuries have dropped a total of eight per cent.

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Winston Maharaj is president of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

WCB EVOLVING

TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS

Today's workplaces are evolving at what seems to be an unprecedented pace - new technologies, flexible work arrangements and an increased focus on wellness are just a few drivers of this progress. Manitoba's workers compensation system is constantly modernizing to meet the changing needs of employers and workers.

Over the past five years, the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) has made investments to enhance this system. These efforts have increased our focus on injury and illness prevention, while maintaining the delivery of high-quality compensation and return-to-work services.

Among the major achievements of these efforts are:

- We established SAFE Work Manitoba, along with a renewed emphasis on injury and illness prevention that included:
 - the expansion and enhancement of our province's safety infrastructure through industry-based safety programs
 - a new safety certification program for employers called SAFE Work Certified
 - a prevention rebate, rewarding employers who demonstrate commitment to safe and healthy workplaces

- We updated our rate model, customized to the needs of small, medium and large employers; this change provides for better protection against large rate increases while reducing rate volatility, more fairly balancing individual and collective risk
- Our new compliance framework helps workers and employers understand their rights and responsibilities in reporting workplace injuries, including a pilot program to work with employers who may be at risk of non-compliance
- We enhanced our focus on best practices in customer service and use of technology in new ways, including data analytics and business intelligence to identify employers who would benefit from personalized services

The positive effects of our efforts are evident. Most importantly, we are continuing to see a reduction in illness and injury in the workplace, including a steady decline in injuries that cause Manitobans to be off the job. The time-loss injury rate in 2018 was 2.6 injuries per 100 full-time workers, compared to five years earlier, when the rate was 3.2 injuries per 100 full-time workers. In the last year alone, time-loss injuries have dropped a total of eight per cent.

At the same time, we maintained our focus on reducing the WCB average assessment rate which is now the lowest in Canada at \$0.95 per \$100 of payroll. We expect the rate will remain stable at this level for at least the next five years. In addition, this year the WCB returned \$74

million in surplus funds to employers, which is further evidence of the results of strategic prevention and return-to-work efforts along with responsible financial stewardship.

Collectively, our changes have established a solid foundation for the next five-year plan, which incorporates a renewed focus on return to work, builds on our efforts in prevention and continues to place great value in providing high-quality customer service.

As we remain dedicated to working with employers and workers to create a world-class compensation system for Manitobans, our new plan will help us realize an even safer and healthier province.



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Monique Buckberger, District Manager, PCL
John Bockstael, President & CEO, Bockstael Construction;
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