



Asia won't wait for us

By Roger Gibbins, Canada West Foundation

Western Canadians increasingly see the almost explosive growth of Asian economies as the solution to waning export prospects in our traditional North American market.

The combination of growing Asian demand for natural resources and the vast resource base in Western Canada is seen as the key to sustained prosperity. However, it may be a difficult key to turn.

Faced with what is likely to be a prolonged economic downturn in the U.S., growing turmoil over pipeline access to continental markets (witness the recent postponement of the Keystone XL pipeline decision), a glut of shale gas and growing economic protectionism (often wrapped in the green flag of environmentalism), western Canadians, and indeed all Canadians, have every reason to be concerned about our singular reliance on American markets.

Relying on a single buyer is always a risky strategy, and it becomes even more so when that buyer encounters the problems Americans face. There is, then, a growing push for market diversification, and in the case of western Canadian resources, diversification means opening up markets in Asia.

Our salvation will not be found in Europe, even though incremental increases in trade may be possible, and it will not be found in Russia or South America, which are far more likely to be fierce competitors. For western Canadians, Asia is really the only game in town.

And here, there is a strong sense of optimism across the region. In the face of rising Asian demand, western Canadians are quick to say we have what the world wants -- natural resources and food -- and thus believe the world will beat a path to our door. When we put our huge resource

...Continued on page 2

In this issue

MHCA Member Company up for Award		3
AGM & Gala Registration		5
Training in Your Region		8
Weekly Tenders		10

base up against Asian demand that is growing almost exponentially, it is easy to assume our future economic prosperity is assured. However, the assumption that growing Asian demand will offset declining American demand ignores a host of troublesome realities.

At present, Asian markets are largely hypothetical because we have no way of moving much of our energy production to the West Coast and beyond. There are no pipelines to carry oilsands production to the West Coast, no natural gas pipelines from northeastern B.C. or Alberta and no liquefaction capacity on the West Coast.

We have bits and pieces of the needed energy infrastructure, but nothing of the scale needed if Asian markets are to replace waning American demand.

Nor have we come to grips with the distance of many Asian markets from western Canadian suppliers. India and China are not exactly close, and there are other natural-resource suppliers that are closer to them. On geographic grounds alone, we will not be the supplier of first choice.

It is also not evident, despite a large Asian-Canadian population, that we are well-equipped with the soft skills we will need to crack Asian markets. In many ways, Canadian exporters have been spoiled by our location next door to a huge American market that shares the same language, legal systems and cultural norms, and where many if not most exports take place within the same firm.

This experience does not equip us well to penetrate Asian markets where very significant language, cultural and legal barriers exist.

We too easily assume that because "we" have what "they" want, we will be able to conduct any negotiations on our terms.

In short, we take a false sense of security from our vast asset base. We may have what the world wants and needs, and specifically what Asian markets want and need, but we do not have a monopoly on supply. Far from it.

All of this means that rather than counting on the world beating a path to our door, we will have to do much of the beating.

We will have to figure out quickly how to get our natural resources to and off the West Coast. And, we will have to do so within an environmental management system that is world class and is seen by others to be world class.

Unfortunately, our inbred Canadian sense of complacency leads us to believe there is no urgency, that we can move at our own leisurely pace and that Asian markets will wait for us. However, we ignore at our peril that other countries are queuing up to meet Asian demand and our window of opportunity will not remain open forever. Asia will not wait.

If you believe, as I do, that market diversification is essential for sustainable prosperity in Western Canada, then there is no avoiding the conclusion the routes to such diversification all lead through Asia. But Asia will not come to us; we will have to go to Asia, and soon.

Roger Gibbins is the president and CEO of the Canada West Foundation.



Progress Continues on Renewal of PTH 75 South of Winnipeg: Ashton

Southbound Lanes Reopened Following Upgrades

Work to improve safety for motorists and commercial truckers has been completed on the southbound portion of PTH 75 south of Winnipeg and the lanes are now fully reopened, Infrastructure and Transportation Minister Steve Ashton said this week.

"These safety upgrades demonstrate our increased commitment to Manitoba's highways and will improve traffic flows," said Ashton. "We have invested nearly \$2.3 billion at the halfway point of our commitment to invest \$4 billion over 10 years and this project is part of \$520 million budgeted this year for improved roads and bridges right across the province."

The project over the past two years on the southbound lanes of PTH 75, from Ste. Agathe to Morris has included extensive concrete repairs, surfacing work, installation of rumble strips, improved turning lanes at intersections and shoulder repairs. The work this year, to add additional safety features and repair the highway, covered 27.3 kilometres of the major north-south route.

In 2012, plans for more improvements include reconstruction of the highway through the town of Morris.

The work this year was completed on time and within the budget of \$24.6 million, Ashton said. Under Manitoba's Highway renewal plan, about 1,100 km of highway are scheduled to see improvements in 2011.

MHCA Member Company in Running for National Award

Manitoba is once again presenting a strong field in the annual 50 Best Managed Companies program, and MHCA member Vector Construction is in the running to be included on the list for the first time.

Established in 1993, Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies is the country's leading business awards program, recognizing excellence in Canadian-owned and-managed companies with revenues over \$10 million. Those that make the grade will be announced in December.

Vector Construction Group was founded in 1965 by Don Whitmore, who is past Chair of the MHCA and of the Canadian Construction Association (CCA). Vector has been an MHCA member for 42 years.

Don currently runs the business with his son David and son-in-law Robert Spriggs.

Vector employs over 500 people and has annual revenue of more than \$50 million.

Vector has offices throughout North America and offers an extensive portfolio of solutions to extend the service life of concrete and masonry structures and facilities.

Vector is a recognized leader in the areas of concrete restoration and protection, and corrosion technologies for reinforced concrete and masonry structures.

The MHCA would like to congratulate Don Whitmore and MHCA member Vector Construction Group on this nomination. We wish Vector luck in winning this award!



From left, Dave Whitmore, Don Whitmore and Bob Spriggs of the Vector Construction Group



Chris Lorenc, MHCA President

The MHCA Welcomes New Members !

Jacob Bros. Construction Ltd.

Scott Jacob
101-19162 22nd Ave.
Surrey, BC RV3S 3S6
Ph: (604) 541-0303
Email: scott@jacobbros.ca

Web: www.jacobbros.ca

Additional Information: A multi-disciplined general contractor with a specialty in road and bridge construction, heavy earthmoving and utility construction. Head office is in Surrey, BC, but has a large fleet of equipment and a mobile work force capable of supporting projects across Western Canada.



Superior Technologies Weighing & Controls Inc.

Trish Forde
1673 Dugald Road
Winnipeg, MB R2J 0H3
Ph: (204) 661-6482

Cell: (204) 791-9800

Email: tforde@superiortech.com

Additional Information: Custom Design and install large industrial weighing equipment, process control, automated feed plants & hog facilities. Service for all types and sizes of scale/weighing equipment. ISO 9001 & Measurement Canada Certified.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
March 20-22, 2012
The Winnipeg Convention Centre


MHCA
MANITOBA HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

**Heavy Construction Expo:
Building WORKFORCE Excellence**

WORKSAFELY MHCA **WORKFORCE MHCA**

Early Bird Registration Info Coming Soon !



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, November 25, 2011 • 8:00 am – 12:00 noon
Winnipeg Convention Centre — Pan Am Room (2nd Floor)

Keynote Speakers:

Hon. Steve Ashton, Minister of Infrastructure & Transportation

- » MIT Highway Awards Presentation
- » 2012 MIT Program & Early Tender Release

Mr. Bob Silver

- » Co-Chair of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC)
- » Chancellor at the University of Winnipeg

Bob will reflect in his role as Chair of PEAC, on the northern visions and economic and social opportunities associated with the broad 'Churchill, Canada's Northern Gateway' Vision.

Awards & Membership Presentations to follow.

\$35.00/person No of tickets: _____



Groundbreaking



CHAIRMAN'S GALA

'A Night to Remember...Mardi Gras Style!'

Friday, November 25, 2011

- Cocktails: 6:30 pm
- Dinner: 7:30 pm
- Tables of 8 and 10

Silent Auction & Raffle – proceeds supporting Variety, the children's charity of Manitoba

\$175.00 + GST / person (all inclusive)

No. of tickets _____

Delta Winnipeg:

- Room rates starting at \$119.00/night
- Reservations: 1-800-311-4990
- Block Code: 1111MANI_002



Groundbreaking MHCA



Company: _____ Contact person: _____

Ph: _____ Fax: _____ Please invoice: _____

Visa/MC/AMEX # _____ Exp date: _____

Card holder: _____ Signature: _____

Fax this form to Christine at the MHCA office @ 204-943-2279
For more information call 947-1379 or email at christine@mhca.mb.ca



US Recovery: Not Now, Not Never

By Peter Hall, Vice-President and Chief Economist of Export Development Canada

Frustration is building. It is now almost two-and-a-half years since the US recession officially ended. We would normally be well into the next growth cycle by now. Not this time. Instead, growth sagged in the summer, unemployment remains stubbornly high, and news is mostly negative. Talk of double-dipping even surfaced amid speculation of long-term stagnation. Will the US economy ever recover?

Talk to the average US consumer, and you'd likely get a resounding 'no!' From the recessionary band where it hovered for over 30 months, consumer confidence has taken a rare tumble back into the abject pessimism zone last seen at the height of the financial crisis in 2009. Why so glum? You would be too if widespread financial crisis carved 29% from your real estate holdings, and three years later one-quarter of the housing market was still underwater. Add to that Europe's woes, a plunge in stock markets and a general sense of malaise, and you get their gloom. But is the gloom warranted?

Consider US housing. With affordability measures at their best levels since the 1970's, mortgage rates hovering at 30-year lows and vacancy rates for rental properties falling, homeownership is becoming increasingly attractive. Also, construction of new homes is in better shape as new builds take place in regions where demand is heating up. By late summer, there was a 6.6 month supply of new, unsold homes on the market, admittedly well above the 4.5-month stability mark, but a vast improvement over the 12.2-month peak in 2009. The ratio of housing stock to households suggests a return to equilibrium sometime in 2013 – enough to boost 2012 housing starts by a stunning 42%.

Also, check out that US consumer. Radical changes in saving patterns have reduced average debt loads from a peak of 130% of disposable income in Q4 2008 to just 115% by mid-2011, a path that will see debt fall below 100% of disposable income by mid-2012. This is far faster progress than most economy-watchers expected, and will bring increased momentum to US consumer spending next year. In fact, momentum is already building, in spite of the gloom. Real spending – a whopping 70% of US economic activity – is now rising at a steady and sustainable pace. It's good news for the US, but also for a fledgling world economy in search of a hefty and dependable growth engine.



At the same time, American business has never been in better shape: corporate profits reached an all-time record high of USD1.9 trillion in the second quarter, and corporate balance sheets are flush with over USD2 trillion of cash. Access to credit is also vastly improved, with the Federal Reserve survey reporting six consecutive quarters of loosening credit standards. Commercial and industrial loans grew by USD34.3 billion in the second quarter of this year, and USD22 billion in August alone; at the current rate of growth, business loans will be back to pre-crisis levels in just over a year. But is there any current activity? You bet. In spite of swooning business sentiment, non-defense factory orders are booming, up this year by an impressive double-digit pace.

The bottom line? Cut through the headlines to real US activity, and three solid points emerge: first, the world's number one economy is steadily healing. Second, businesses and banks are poised and ready with the ammunition to accommodate a fast-approaching and robust recovery. And finally, just when we needed a bit of assurance amid the volatility and gloom, actual activity levels among US consumers and businesses are rising significantly. Pray that this process doesn't get interrupted.

NEWS RELEASE

WCB Communications, 333 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4W3
www.wcb.mb.ca

Tel.: (204)-954-4113
Fax: (204)-954-4968

For Immediate Release

Date: November 16, 2011

No increase in average WCB assessment rates for 2012

(WINNIPEG) – The average WCB assessment rate in Manitoba will remain stable at \$1.50 next year, despite an unpredictable investment environment.

Manitoba employers will not see an increase in the average assessment rate in 2012. Instead, they will pay an average of \$1.50 per \$100.00 of their assessable payroll to the WCB for injury insurance coverage, including wage loss payments, medical benefits and rehabilitation services. The employer's own rate may be higher or lower than average, depending on their injury experience and the safety and health risk of their industry.

Last year, the WCB average assessment rate fell to \$1.50 from \$1.60 the year before. The rates had previously held steady at \$1.60 since 2008.

"Rate stability is possible because of significant reductions in the injury rate over the last decade and a focus on safe and timely return to meaningful employment for injured workers," says Doug Sexsmith, WCB President and CEO. "This allows us to continue to offer a competitive advantage for Manitoba employers by keeping assessment rates low. The fact that most employers will either see a decrease in their rates or no increase tells us that our message of workplace safety is being heard, although there is still work to be done in that area."

Sexsmith adds that the average assessment rate the WCB sets is one of many factors that determine what an employer pays in premiums. "The best way for employers to reduce their premiums is to prevent injuries and to return injured workers to meaningful work as soon as it's safe to do so."

Overall, about 39 per cent of employers will pay lower WCB assessment rates in 2012, while 12 per cent will pay more and 49 per cent will not see a change in their rates. Those employers who had the largest declines in their injury experience benefited the most. In 2011, Manitoba had the second lowest workers compensation assessment rates in the country, a status that will likely stay the same in 2012.

"We are committed to changing the way Manitobans think and feel about workplace safety through prevention, education and outreach," says Sexsmith.

The gradual increase in the maximum assessable earnings cap also continues, with the 2012 ceiling set at \$104,000.

The Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba is a mutual workplace injury and disability insurance agency funded by employer premiums. With a mandate to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses, the WCB is committed to building a culture of health and safety in Manitoba through the SAFE Work program and community partnerships. Workplace injuries and illnesses are preventable but should they occur, the WCB is here to help injured workers, their families and employers.



WORKSAFELY MHCA

News Weekly

Construction Safety Excellence™

Groundbreaking  MHCA



We're Training in Your Region!

We are holding training in Brandon from November 28th to December 2nd, located at St. Johns Ambulance

1325 Princess Ave
Brandon, MB, R7A 0R4

COR Leadership in Safety Excellence	November 28 th - 29 th
COR Principles of Safety Management	November 30 th
COR Auditor	December 1 st - 2 nd

To register for training or for more information, please contact Becky at becky@mhca.mb.ca

Please note that a minimum of 6 students is required to hold the training. WORKSAFELY policy states cancellation must be made at least two business days in advance, otherwise full course fee charge will apply.



WORKSAFELY
MHCA

Ph: 204-947-1379 Fax: 204-943-2279

- ALSO AVAILABLE:**
- Safe Work Procedures — November 28th @ 6:00 PM
 - Workplace Safety Committee — November 29th @ 6:00PM
 - COR Auditor Refresher — November 30th @ 6:00 PM

WORKSAFELY MHCA

Construction Safety Excellence™

Training Schedule

Register by:

» Email: safety@mhca.mb.ca

» Fax: 204-943-2279

Cancellation Policy:

The *WORKSAFELY* policy states cancellation must be made at least two business days in advance, otherwise full course fee charge will apply.

NOVEMBER 2011	
November 10	Excavating & Trenching (1/2 day AM)
November 10	Flagperson (1/2 day PM)
November 14-15	COR™ Leadership
November 16	COR™ Principles
November 17-18	COR™ Auditor
November 21-22	Train the Trainer
November 23	WHMIS (1/2 day AM)/ TDG (1/2 Day PM)
November 24	COR™ Auditor Refresher (1/2 day AM)

DECEMBER 2011	
December 5-9	COR™ Training Week - Winnipeg
December 12-13	Train the Trainer
December 14	WHMIS (1/2 day AM)/ TDG (1/2 day PM)
December 16	Excavating & Trenching (1/2 day AM)
December 16	Flagperson (1/2 day PM)

Winter Roads Training Week	
December 5-9	Thompson, MB

COR Training Week	
December 12-16	Riverton, MB

REMINDER:

WORKSAFELY requires at least six people registered to deliver the course.

Customized training is available for your specific requirements.

Call the *WORKSAFELY* Office at (204) 947-1379 for more information.