



“Fix my infrastructure” - main voter message in civic election

For Immediate Release: Monday, September 8, 2014 — Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association (MHCA) launched a campaign today focused on voters' number one issue in the October municipal election—infrastructure and how to fund and fix it.

The *Fix My Infrastructure* campaign includes radio advertising and distribution of thousands of flyers that remind candidates running for mayor and council that infrastructure is a problem for their constituents and a key to improved quality of life for Manitobans.

“In the four years since the last election, voters have had a dramatic change in attitude,” said Chris Lorenc, President of the MHCA. “For years, citizens said their main concerns were crime and health care. In the last year, deteriorating infrastructure has become their number one priority province-wide. Our campaign encourages Manitobans to vote for a mayor and council that will fix our broken infrastructure.”

Polls taken by Probe Research this spring showed 42 per cent of Manitobans say infrastructure is the most pressing issue facing their community -- surpassing crime, jobs and the economy, taxes and health care – in that order. That number jumps steeply in the capital where an unprecedented 61 percent of Winnipeggers say infrastructure is the most critical issue facing the city. That’s nearly double what it was just a year ago. It’s unusual to see such a dramatic shift in the general public’s thinking in such a short time.

“We only have to look at the headlines about frozen pipes, and complaints about pot holes and sink holes in the last year to see why people’s tolerance has changed,” Lorenc said.

Voters in Manitoba also make the connection between fixing their streets and the economic health of the province. When surveyed, 89 per cent of Manitobans agree that investment in infrastructure creates a healthier economy.

“The fact is, dollars spent fixing a road, upgrading a sewer line or building flood protection create jobs for engineers, planners, contractors, and truck drivers who in turn buy groceries, invest in homes and pay taxes. It’s those tax dollars, paid by employers and the workers they hire, that help pay for hospitals, schools, universities, and recreation facilities – all essential amenities that enhance our social well-being and quality of life,” said Lorenc.

In addition to launching the *Fix My Infrastructure* campaign, MHCA is also interviewing the mayoral candidates in Winnipeg and Brandon (who registered before July 31, 2014) to see what their solutions are to address the \$14 billion infrastructure deficit in Manitoba.

“We’re looking to see if they understand that not all infrastructure is created equal, and that some pay bigger dividends for the whole community,” Lorenc said. “Smart infrastructure investments are those projects that have the biggest economic payoff in the long term.” The results of the interviews will be released in the coming weeks.

-30-

Manitoba Heavy Construction advocates for infrastructure planning that is built upon six principles: a permanent plan, one that focuses on economic growth, embraces innovation, harnesses partnerships with the private sector, is funded by transparently dedicated revenues and that undergoes required transparent periodic public reviews.

For further information, see the attached Fact Sheet or contact:

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Facts on infrastructure

- We’ve fallen so far behind in building and maintaining core infrastructure—like roads, waterlines and sewers—that we’d have to invest \$14 billion to catch up! That’s more than the provincial government spends in just one year on health, education, family services and the justice system combined.
- The Conference Board of Canada conservatively estimates that for every \$1 spent on infrastructure, the return to the economy is \$1.16.
- Canadian and American evidence shows that for every \$1 billion invested, between 8,000 and 36,000 person years of employment are created – the vast majority being middle class jobs.
- The U.S. Brookings Institution reports that one in every 10 Americans in the workforce holds an infrastructure-related job and that only 15 percent of those workers are in the business of building infrastructure. A more substantive 77 per cent are hired after construction to operate and maintain the infrastructure systems. Experience tells us the story would be the same north of the border.

Probe Research survey

- 56 per cent of Manitobans say local governments should spend more money on streets, roads, bridges, and water and wastewater projects.
- 89 per cent of Manitobans say that investment in infrastructure creates a healthy economy.
- 87 per cent of Manitobans are not satisfied with the condition of their roads and streets.
- 76 per cent say the cost of repairing and improving core municipal infrastructure should be shared fairly between the three levels of government based on their access to taxation revenues.

Not all infrastructure is created equal

- Smart infrastructure investments are those projects that have the biggest economic payoff in the long term.
- Building the Red River Floodway, contentious in Duff Roblin’s time and expanded under Premier Doer, has already prevented \$30 billion in damages according to the Manitoba government.
- When Hwy 75 between Winnipeg and the U.S. border was closed during the 2011 flood, the cost to the trucking industry was \$1.5 million a week.

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