July 28, 2016

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The Heavy News Weekly

Manitoba Signs on to Ottawa's New Infrastructure Plan

Written by Catherine Mitchell, MHCA Policy Analyst

The first flow of federal investment in Manitoba for green and transit infrastructure is scheduled to start later this year after Ottawa and the province penned agreement this week under two new federal programs.

Federal minister MaryAnn Mihychuk (Employment, Workforce Development and Labour) and provincial minister Eileen Clark (Indigenous and Municipal Relations) signed the agreement July 25 for the initial investments out of the new federal Public Transit and the Water and Wastewater funding programs.

Manitoba's share of federal funds in the first phase of the two programs is to be $178 million. The announcement on Monday included an initial list in this phase of 27 approved projects, and $102 million in federal funding. Under the terms of the agreement, that should leverage another $100 million-plus out of the provincial and municipal governments, combined.

More project announcements are expected in the coming months, once the province selects from applications that have been made.

In public transit, Ottawa will invest almost $53 million to upgrade Winnipeg's public transit facilities, mainly an expansion of the transit garage's bus maintenance space, and to add new buses to the fleet. Manitoba will contribute $26.5 million, with an equal amount from the city.

As well, a total of just more than $73.5 million (federal: $49 million; provincial: $24.5 million) will go to 23 projects for clean water and wastewater. The largest project will see a new water treatment plant and pipeline upgrades for the municipality of Russell-Binscarth, with $9.75 million coming from federal funds.

Continued on Page 2

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WORKSAFELY MHCA™

In This Edition:

Unlike in past agreements, these infrastructure projects will be 50 per cent funded by the federal government; previous tri-partite agreements were on a 1/3-each funding basis. The provincial money is to come from the Building Manitoba Fund.

"Municipalities have called for a 'fair say' on how infrastructure dollars are invested, while stressing the importance of clean and safe drinking water as well as efficient wastewater treatment for Manitobans," Association of Manitoba Municipalities President Chris Goertzen said, adding the association is happy to be at the table selecting the projects.

This marks Manitoba's first funding agreements under the Trudeau government's new $120-billion plan for infrastructure over the next 10 years. The first phase is to get more than $10 billion in investments in water/wastewater, transit and social projects off the ground first across Canada. Announcements for the second phase will come over the next year, according to Ottawa.

Over the decade, some $60 billion is earmarked for water, transit and green initiatives. Another $60 billion will go to other infrastructure priorities, such as expanding Canada's trade corridors, with details on investment expected to come as part of the second phase, as well.

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Manitoba Infrastructure's Electronic Bidding Initiative on MERX

Manitoba Infrastructure (MI) is proceeding with its first step toward electronic bidding (or e-bidding).

In the coming months, MI in conjunction with our procurement service provider MERX, will begin to implement e-bidding, starting with MI's larger bonded construction and maintenance contracts on www.merx.com.

E-bidding is a completely paperless process which will allow contractors to place bids online, directly to www.merx.com, eliminating common mathematical errors or administrative oversights in the bidding procedure.

While the bidding process may be conducted online, bonding will, for the time being, remain a paper-based process. Electronic bonding, or e-bonding may be considered in the future, but in order to simplify initial stages of implementation MI is focusing on e-bidding only.

As part of the initiative, MI and MERX will reach out to industry for targeted feedback/input on implementation and to provide training. The Go Live Date is yet to be set, but we ask for your patience and understanding in advance, recognizing that things may change slightly based on stakeholder feedback as we work toward implementation.

Stay tuned for future communications from MI and/or MERX regarding this very important initiative.

Thanks,

Dustin Booy, M. Eng., P. Eng.
Director
Contract Services Branch
Manitoba Infrastructure

Upcoming MHCA Meetings

Education, Training and Gold Seal -
MHCA Office
August 04, 2016 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Executive Committee Meeting -
MHCA Office
September 07, 2016 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Board of Directors Meeting -
Fort Garry Place
September 14, 2016 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Executive Committee Meeting -
MHCA Office
October 19, 2016 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Annual General Meeting -
RBC Convention Centre
November 18, 2016 - 9:30 am

MHCA Board of Directors Meeting -
RBC Convention Centre
November 18, 2016 - 11:00 am

MHCA Executive Committee Meeting -
MHCA Office
November 30, 2016 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Executive Committee Meeting -
MHCA Office
January 18, 2017 - 12:00 Noon

MHCA Board of Directors Meeting -
Location TBD
January 25, 2017 - 12:00 Noon

2016 MHCA Annual Golf Classic

Team Captains:
If you haven't done so already, please submit the names of the golfers on your team ASAP to christine@mhca.mb.ca
Thank you

NEW: 11:00 AM SHOT GUN START!

Wednesday, August 10, 2016 | Elmhurst & Pine Ridge Golf Courses

SOLD OUT

Please note only registrations cancelled prior to July 20, 2016 will be refunded.

5 Minutes for Business

Crash Dammit! Have Canadian Real Estate Prices Climbed Too High?

July 12, 2016

In 1997, there was a famous cover story in the *Economist* about American stockmarkets entitled "Crash Dammit!" Frustrated analysts just couldn't understand why massively overpriced shares kept on rising year after year. Surely, a crash was coming! Instead, investors rode three more of the best years of the dot-com boom…then it did crash in 2000. The point is it's impossible to predict when a bubble will burst.

After years of experts— including the IMF, the Bank of Canada, the OECD, Canada's biggest banks and its biggest mortgage insurer—warning that Canadian real estate is overvalued and cruising for a bruising, it must be time to write our own "Crash Dammit!"

The trouble is that Canada effectively has three housing markets. In Toronto and Vancouver, price growth is soaring 16% per annum, and affordability has plummeted to crisis levels. Then, there is a boring middle tier of cities—Ottawa, Quebec, Regina, Montreal is a little hotter—where home prices have been mostly stable, rising around 1.5-3% per year over the past five years. Finally, there are parts of Alberta and Newfoundland where home prices are declining.

A Tale of Two Cities: Vancouver and Toronto are in a League of their own

	Average Home Price May 2016	Price Growth in past year (May 2016)	Median Household Income	Price to Income Ratio	Job Growth in the past year at May 2016
Vancouver	1,055,495	16.5%	73,390	14.4	81,600
Toronto	751,908	15.7%	72,830	10.3	77,100
Montreal	354,533	4.7%	73,250	4.8	16,100
Calgary	476,886	2.3%	101,260	4.7	(26,500)
Quebec	266,269	-0.8%	84,160	3.2	(400)
Regina	326,656	2.0%	93,670	3.5	1,600
Winnipeg	290,063	0.9%	77,770	3.7	(3,300)
Ottawa	384,212	-0.5%	101,070	3.8	8,000
Edmonton	382,695	-0.2%	98,480	3.9	30,700
Saint John, NB	165,762	-2.1%	73,600	2.3	(400)
Halifax	294,493	1.1%	82,510	3.6	5,300
St. John's, NL	291,684	-4.3%	91,100	3.2	900
Canada	509,460	13.2%	76,550	6.7	109,000
London	1,173,561		76,397	15.4	
New York City	493,962		85,339	5.8	
USA	360,977		66,414	5.2	

The extreme divergence shows up in the Price to Household Income ratio, which is normally 3 to 4 (e.g. if household income is $50K, then a home costs $150K to $200K). Once that ratio reaches 6 or 7, we get into bubble territory. The only markets that are flashing red warning signs are Toronto and Vancouver.

That's why we're worried that a flood of foreign funds is pushing real estate skyward. In the 12 months through June 2015, Chinese investors bought $18.4-billion (U.S.) of real estate in Australia and $28.6 billion in the United States. Canada (incredibly!) doesn't have hard data on foreign real estate sales, but National Bank estimates that Chinese buyers account for one third of Vancouver's condo market.

But the second factor is that Toronto and Vancouver have accounted for almost all of Canada's job creation over the past year. This is a world-wide phenomenon where big globalized cities like London, Paris and New York are pulling in the hot new service sector jobs—finance, technology, design—and surging ahead of the rest of their countries.

So the question is what to do? Is the public policy goal affordability for everyone? Reducing speculative risk? Preventing bubbles? Tighter mortgage rules are a good idea, but they haven't solved the problem. Before we consider taxes on foreign buyers, we need better data and to agree what the goal is. There is not a national policy that will work for Vancouver and St. John's. We also have to beware of unintended consequences. In 1974, Ontario brought in a 50% tax on profits from land sales to prevent speculation. The market collapsed overnight.

For more information, please contact:

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5 Minutes for Business

Global Backlash: Is it Time to Rethink Our Approach to Trade?

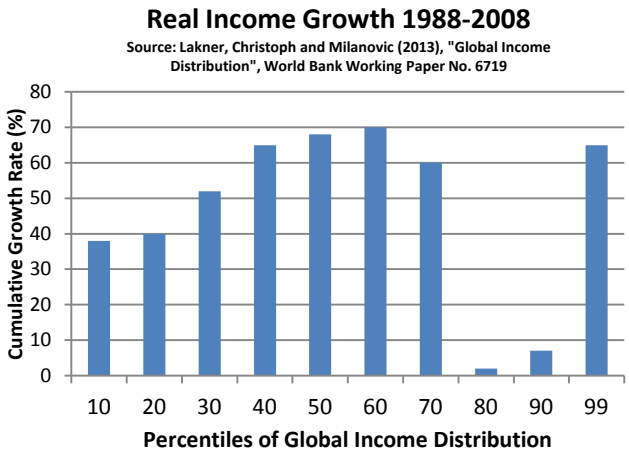
July 26, 2016

The overarching theme at last week's Republican convention was one of anger—fury at government and "a rigged system" and rage at an economy that is supposedly "not working." But, Donald Trump's biggest applause came when he slammed trade and immigration ("Build the wall! Build the wall!").

And yet this is not just an American phenomenon. These themes would have been familiar to the British who voted to exit the European Union or in France, Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden where extreme-right parties are leading in the polls. So why are voters so angry? Have trade and globalization gone too far?

Or maybe not far enough! The graph below shows how incomes have grown over 20 years for people at different levels of the global income distribution. We can see that the bottom 10% saw incomes rise almost 40%, so the world's poorest are better off. The really big winners came from Asia where China's urban median income grew by almost 300% while in Indonesia and Thailand, it roughly doubled. The top 1%, of course, did well.

Those who gained the least were in the 80th and 90th percentiles—people in rich countries who are in the lower halves of national income distributions. In the mighty German economy, those folks gained just 7% in real terms over 20 years while the U.S. was essentially flat, and Japan saw incomes decline.



Should we blame trade? Research shows that some workers in the rich world struggled with the rise of China's exports. Trade creates lots of jobs, but when losses are concentrated in certain sectors or regions, it's difficult for workers to find other employment.

However, a recent paper by the IMF shows that almost all of the world's income inequality and working class wage stagnation is driven by technology. This is because the automation of routine work by robotics and computing has increased the demand and price premium on higher skills while reducing opportunities in relatively lower skill sectors. From robot greeters and automated checkouts to self-driving vehicles, this transformation is accelerating.

No one can build a wall that will stop technology from coming, so it's easier for populist leaders to blame trade and immigration. This is not surprising. In 1824, Thomas MacAulay said, "*Free trade, one of the greatest blessings which a government can confer on a people, is in almost every country unpopular.*" We've been arguing about immigration for just as long even though all the evidence shows that immigration actually raises incomes of native workers.

Protectionism is always bad news for Canada. We have to press ahead with CETA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership while doing a better job explaining the benefits from trade. Building walls is a dead end.

For more information, please contact:

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Growth: Brexit Affects It

By Peter G Hall, Vice President and Chief Economist

The British referendum result sent a seismic shock across the globe, and the aftershocks are still being felt. Analyzing the implications of the unexpected result is no small feat. Key events immediately following the vote shrouded the UK's near future in an inky darkness, and at this point it's unclear if anyone is close to finding the light switch. Concern among Canadians is high. Both Canadian and international CEOs cited the impact of global forces on business among their top three concerns in a recent KPMG study, and questions about Brexit ranked second overall on my recent cross-Canada speaking tour. Is it possible at this point to assess the impact on Canadian exporters?

Clearly, there's a lot at stake. $15 billion of Canadian goods are shipped to the UK annually, enough to rank as our third-largest international market. In addition, the UK accounts for 5.5 per cent, or $5.5 billion, of Canada's total export of services. These are big numbers, but our largest exposure actually comes from a third source. Canadian firms with operations in the UK generated over $30 billion in annual sales during 2013, the last year of official foreign affiliate sales data. No wonder we're concerned.

It's critical to know how much of this is at stake. This is where the political murkiness makes things especially difficult. First, Britain is left in a state of electoral fragmentation. Voters in the UK were almost evenly split on the issue, and separately, Scotland, Northern Ireland, London and other zones voted conclusively for the 'Remain' side. The fractious outcome could have implications on future political stability. Second, there was an immediate political void. The Prime Minister resigned, succession came down to the last person standing, 'Leave' advocates were in disarray and had no plan, and dissent wracked the pro-Remain opposition. Amid the chaos, post-referendum rhetoric suggested that many voting to leave weren't quite sure what it meant or how far it was to go, suggesting that the new leadership has a very unclear mandate. To complicate matters, the surprising British outcome has emboldened Euro-dissenters on the Continent and either boosted or inaugurated anti-establishment rhetoric elsewhere. Political uncertainty has spread beyond the UK.

The new paradigm is already affecting the economy. The pound sterling immediately lost 10 per cent of its value, and has in the intervening weeks plumbed new depths. If sustained, this, together with increased business uncertainty, is expected to lower Canadian exports by as much as 8 per cent in 2017. That same uncertainty has thrown investment plans into limbo. Unsure what form the eventual commercial arrangement between the UK and the EU will take, international investors are likely to be extra cautious before embarking on significant new British ventures. Skittishness is likely to spread, and Canadian investors will be no exception. Delays and deferrals can be expected to persist until there's greater clarity on UK-EU relations. At that point, more permanent investment decisions will be made. For Canadian investors, this will be contingent on the nature of their commercial relationships, supply-chain activities, intended sales destinations, dependence on official trade agreements and the extent to which we are prepared to invest into commercial voids left by other exiters. Lack of strategic clarity makes it almost impossible to measure likely effects.

To these direct effects must be added the broader existential questions that the UK outcome raises. Is this the first of a wave of international challenges to globalization? And if not a direct challenge, does it at least suggest a more fractious political environment in the EU and beyond? Might it reinforce the anti-trade rhetoric in the US election? Are multilateral trade deals in danger, and can we expect more bilateral efforts? Suddenly, basic assumptions that businesses made just a few weeks ago are now in question, and at a time when the world can ill afford it.

Still, money continues to flow and business decisions must be made. Doing so in the dark raises the risk, and consequently the need for risk mitigation – at least until things get clearer.

The bottom line? The Brexit debacle will have negative near-term effects on Canadian exporters and investors. The ultimate impacts await the re-crafting of the UK-EU relationship, which itself may be complete before the full costs of fragmentation are broadly understood. In the meantime, it will pay to proceed with caution and communicate clearly with all affected clients.

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Construction Workers are Working Past Their Best-Before Dates: Professor

Written by Shannon Moneo for the Journal of Commerce website on July 18, 2016 and published in the Canadian Construction Association newsletter

"Over 75 percent of Canadians do not feel prepared for their retirement but they stay in the workforce. We're chasing the pension," said Carolin Rekar Munro, a professor in the faculty of management at Royal Roads University in Colwood, B.C.

One of her research "passions" is why people decide to remain in the workforce past their best-before dates.

"It's the hang on factor. People feel they have no choice," she said.

But the problem, particularly in construction or other labour-intensive jobs, is that the punishing nature of the work can hamper performance.

"We've got to give them (workers) a way out," Munro said.

Costs climb when older employees are kept on the payroll, she explained. Greater absenteeism, error rates, injuries and benefit use are all factors. As performance diminishes, shoddy construction can occur, she said.

"That's when it starts to make sense, to make it attractive enough for older workers not to stay in the workplace," Munro said.

In addition to covering up injuries, older workers may self-medicate with drugs or alcohol, which can contribute to fatigue and affect work performance. Older workers also require more time to recover from injuries. Employees in their 60s take four times longer to get over an injury than an 18-year-old, Munro said.

A 10-year (1998-2008) U.S. study of workers aged 50 and over found that compared with white-collar workers, construction workers had increased odds of arthritis, back problems, chronic lung disease, functional limitations, work disability and work-related injuries. The Health and Retirement Study recommended that retirement and pension policies should address the needs of older construction workers.

A German study of almost 5,000 construction workers, aged 40 to 64, found that compared with white collar workers, construction employees had a higher prevalence of hearing deficiencies, signs of obstructive lung diseases, increased body mass and musculoskeletal abnormalities. Construction workers' disability rates were also eight times greater.

In Canada, depending where construction industry employees work, they may have personal, union or workplace pension plans. All contribute to the CPP, which, at age 65, is bolstered by Old Age Security. Low-income seniors get the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Canadians can draw a reduced CPP at age 60.

A recent federal proposal to enrich the CPP so that retirees have higher incomes was welcomed by most provinces.

Occupations with generous employee collective agreements, such as firefighters, police officers, Canadian Forces members and teachers, can retire with full workplace pensions at age 55 or 60.

The vice-president of the B.C. Regional Council of Carpenters admits carpentry is very demanding.

"The work can beat up your body," said Hamish Stewart. "If you don't take care of your body, it won't take care of you."

Typically, young employees do heavy, industrial jobs while older workers move to inside jobs, such as finishing work, he said.

Stewart has seen carpenters retire at age 55 but they get bored and return to work.

In B.C., 65-year-old journeymen carpenters toil away at various worksites.

There's also been concern about labour shortfalls if all of the baby boomer employees retire, but Stewart said there's never been a problem with a shortage of carpenters on Vancouver Island.

"We have a mechanism to bring in workers from across Canada, or America," he said.

A social policy professor at the University of Victoria said that inequities in pension plans are a reality.

"If somebody stops working at age 55 in construction there's not much there in terms of public programs. Unless they have their own plans, their own RRSPs, they have to wait until they're 60," said Michael Prince.

"People with aches and pains, injuries, soldier on and their condition worsens. By their late 50s or early 60s, with their bodies worn down, construction workers are asking, 'Where's the safety net?'"

He believes there's definitely a market for employee-led pension, insurance and health plans, particularly as there's a shift away from union jobs with good benefits and defined benefit plans. A dedicated group of workers would join forces to create their own plans.

One pension misconception is that the CPP doesn't have enough funds for the coming waves of retirees, but Prince said that's fear-mongering by the financial services industry, which wants people to buy their products.

The CPP has $300 billion in assets, he said.

Something to consider, said Prince, is the federal government's promise to spend billions on infrastructure over the coming years. With the construction industry front and centre on the vision it could be a chance for the industry to seek concessions on pension plans for construction employees.

Munro would like to see B.C.'s provincial government pilot a pension project for workers in physically demanding jobs. But a national trial would be even better she said.

A starting point would be to define what is physical effort, the frequency of the effort and under what conditions the worker exerts their body, Munro said.

It's also incumbent that workplace education about retirement starts early and that the language around retirement options/plans is crystal clear so that workers understand exactly what they get and don't get, she said.

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TO REGISTER, PLEASE CONTACT:
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kristen@mhca.mb.ca

Training Schedule

August

COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Aug 15 - 16	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Aug 17	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Aug 18 - 19	MHCA Office
Flagperson 1/2 day AM	Aug 23	MHCA Office
Committee/Representative Training 1/2 day PM	Aug 23	MHCA Office
Traffic Control Coordinator	Aug 24 - 25	MHCA Office
Excavation & Trenching 1/2 day AM	Aug 30	MHCA Office

September

COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence	Sep 19 - 20	MHCA Office
COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management	Sep 21	MHCA Office
COR™ Auditor	Sep 22 - 23	MHCA Office
Flagperson 1/2 day AM	Sep 26	MHCA Office
Committee/Representative Training 1/2 day PM	Sep 26	MHCA Office
Traffic Control Coordinator	Sep 27 - 28	MHCA Office
Train the Trainer	Sep 29	MHCA Office
Excavation & Trenching 1/2 day AM	Sep 30	MHCA Office

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WORKSAFELY MHCA

SAFETY TALK

Hearing Protection

Just the Facts:

Construction workers may be exposed to hazardous levels of noise on a daily basis. This exposure puts them at high risk for losing their hearing and the high frequencies are the first to go. This poses challenges for understanding speech in noise, causing frustration and withdrawal.

In addition to hearing loss, noise in the workplace also is the main cause of ringing or buzzing in the ears.

The noise exposure that construction workers are exposed to daily requires the consistent and conscientious use of hearing protection. Sometimes workers forget or don't think their work environment is loud enough to warrant wearing hearing protection.

The Dangers:

Many workers are overexposed to noise. In time, overexposure can damage your hearing.

Hearing loss prevents you from hearing other hazards on the job. It also causes problems in your personal life.

- It interferes with how you hear normal speech.
- It prevents you from socializing.
- It can cause high blood pressure.
- It is permanent.

Identify Controls:

Hearing loss is preventable. The best prevention is hearing protection.

Noise is measured in decibels (dB). For example, a quick-cut saw produces 115 decibels; a jackhammer, 110 decibels; a drill, 100 decibels.

Noise power doubles every time noise increases 3 decibels.

Thank about that. When the noise level is 80 decibels and it goes up to 83, the noise is twice as loud.

In the same way, the noise level drops 3 decibels when you double your distance away from it.

Without hearing protection, your safe working limit for an 8-hour day with no other noise exposure is 85 decibels. This is the loudness of a room full of people.

Demonstrate

Identify tasks on site that require hearing protection.

Review company policy and procedures regarding hearing protection.

Show two types of hearing protectors:

- ear plugs
- ear muffs

Show how to insert ear plugs:

- Reach one hand around back of head, pull ear upwards to straighten S-shaped ear canal, then insert plug with other hand according to the manufactuer's instructions.

2017 Canada Summer Games Gear

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We may have to wait until 2017 to experience the excitement of the Hottest Summer in Half a Century, but we don't have to wait to wear official 2017 Canada Summer Games merchandise!

With last month's Countdown to the Games: One Year To Go celebration kicking off 365 days until the Opening Ceremonies, we're getting ready now more than ever to welcome the nation to Winnipeg in 2017. We invite you to shop t-shirts, hoodies, and shorts in fan apparel, polos in performance gear, or pick up a journal, coffee mug, or a hat to show your support for the Games.

Shop online at canadagames.ca/2017 or visit the 2017 Canada Summer Games office at 270-240 Graham Avenue in Winnipeg, between 8:30AM – 4:30PM, Monday to Friday.

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