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Mayor's call for help on infrastructure funding a sign of bigger problem

The only real fix is a 'new fiscal deal' for municipalities: Lorenc

Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman's recent call for help from Ottawa to prod the provincial government on its request for accelerated regional road renewal simply underscores the necessity of a complete "re-think" on the access to revenues and funding arrangements between municipalities and higher levels of government, MHCA President Chris Lorenc says.

"The MHCA has stood by its position for many years that municipalities need a new fiscal deal — a rebalancing of roles and responsibilities — that can lead to new revenue sources," said Lorenc. "The fact is that the current model is broken, it doesn't work and until it is overhauled, cities and towns will be constantly begging on the steps at Broadway for more funding to get the job of infrastructure renewal done."

Municipalities, which raise most of their operating budgets from property taxes, simply do not have the revenue capacity they need for all the demands on their services, Lorenc stressed.

Last week, Bowman was in Ottawa along with Canadian big-city mayors, seeking a commitment from Ottawa to accelerate the flow of infrastructure investment dollars, expected to come after the 2019 federal election. While there, Winnipeg's mayor was seeking assistance from the Trudeau government to get Manitoba moving on the city's request that it approve funding for regional road renewal under a federal infrastructure program, the deadline for which is fast approaching.

At the same time, a city council committee was being told that there is trouble with the agreed-upon provincial contribution to the new phase of construction of the southwest transit corridor and other projects. Chief financial officer Mike Ruta told the finance committee the province is holding out on its commitment of \$109.2 million in capital projects in 2017.

The province wants to renegotiate the deal on the transit corridor after the total project cost was cut by \$120 million, to \$467 million.

Lorenc repeated his long-standing call for a collaborative effort engaging municipalities, the province and the private sector to work through the challenge that isn't going to go away, but will continue to get worse if ignored further. "We know the fiscal challenges facing the Manitoba government, and agree those need attention. Realigned municipal/provincial fiscal relations, roles and responsibilities will not happen overnight. But the reality is that the time to start that review was yesterday," said Lorenc.

Advocacy works

MHCA, province discuss end to forced unionization on infrastructure projects

All businesses, workers to get 'equal opportunity' for work on public projects



MHCA's Orbanski and Lorenc joined other organizations at MI Minister Schuler's office

The MHCA has over many years strongly advocated that the forced unionization of workforces employed in publicly funded infrastructure projects is costly and tramples the right of choice of workers and private enterprise.

"It's unnecessarily costly when governments or public entities, such as Crown corporations, set out as part of the tender documents, a rule that companies must agree to unionization or to pay unionized compensation rates in order to bid on public infrastructure projects," said MHCA President Chris Lorenc. "And it's simply unfair — unionization ought to be a decision between employees and employers, not an imposition of provincial government." Lorenc noted that union compensation rates often are below market rates.

In November, Manitoba Infrastructure Minister Ron Schuler told the MHCA Awards Breakfast that his government was intent on eliminating a provision passed by the former NDP administration for project labour agreements. Such mandatory agreements were put in place for the bidding on work required for expansion of the Floodway.

MHCA Chair Greg Orbanski and Lorenc joined other business organizations in consultations this week with Schuler, as the province moves ahead with the plan to introduce legislation eliminating the forced unionization at publicly funded infrastructure projects. Schuler had similar discussions with labour representatives, as well.

An update of the discussions with Schuler led off the agenda of the MHCA Executive Committee meeting February 21.

The committee was told the MHCA would be back at the legislature February 22, to be part of consultations with Schuler again, this time on the sweeping review of Manitoba Infrastructure's service delivery model. A draft term of reference and scope has been circulated.

Other items on the table at the Executive Committee included:

- The Manitoba Employers Council unanimously endorsed at its February 14 meeting a letter to the management consultant team undertaking a review of the Workers Compensation Board's 5-year prevention strategy. The MEC said WCB should focus on workplace injury reduction, and more efficient case management for injured workers (ie. timely access to medical care and support for return-to-work plans). The MEC also said SAFE Work Manitoba should champion safety, education and training by enabling the long-term development of industry-based safety programs
- Discussions by the MHCA and the Winnipeg Construction Association with WCB President Winston Maharaj focused on the need to halt the provision of free workforce safety training by SAFE Work Manitoba, in direct competition with industry-based safety programs
- MHCA will be discussing with Sustainable Development Deputy Minister Rob Olson the province's plans for imposition of a carbon tax on February 23. Among the industry's concerns is the need to know an implementation date for the tax, so that bids on infrastructure projects can include anticipated gas tax hikes
- MHCA will select key industry leaders to be part of consultations planned on prompt payment legislation — either through the review of the Builders Lien Act or separate legislation. The MHCA is working with the Winnipeg Construction Association to engage with other business groups on the matter.
- City of Winnipeg bid documents have recently included a question asking bidders to self-declare whether their business "is at least 51% owned by an Indigenous person of Canada." The MHCA is seeking clarification as to the intent of the declaration's inclusion. MHCA President Chris Lorenc noted that the association was taken by surprise at the provision as the heavy construction industry was not among the stakeholders the city's Indigenous Relations Division consulted prior to the decision.



Majority says carbon tax revenue should go to municipalities

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) recently commissioned a Probe Research poll asking how much, if any, of any new carbon tax revenues should be earmarked for municipalities. Out of 1,000 respondents, 67% indicated that municipalities should get between one-half and all of carbon tax revenues.

According to President Chris Goertzen, the AMM believes carbon tax revenues should go towards climate-related infrastructure, such as flood readiness and public transit. "Municipalities are front line stewards of the environment that have invested considerably in flood mitigation infrastructure."

Only 21% of respondents felt municipalities should get less than one-half of the revenue, while 11% were unsure.

"These numbers are convincing, and they also demonstrate that Manitobans believe that municipalities deserve a 'fair share' of the anticipated revenues to help local communities adapt to climate change and respond to its effects," Goertzen said.

"Climate change represents a significant challenge, while an enhanced provincial-municipal partnership will be required to build a greener and more climate-resilient province."



Uh-oh — is inflation back?

Peter G. Hall, Vice President and Chief Economist



Last week markets were jolted by an unexpected increase in US consumer prices. Suddenly, all the talk is about inflation spikes, expectations for the next few months, whether the Fed is behind the curve, and so on. Just a month ago, I spoke about tame price increases as a sign of sustained growth. Was that preliminary – are we really in for an inflation shocker?

Are we in for an inflation spike?

Let's look at the numbers. The January increase in the US Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 0.31 per cent. While that may not look like much, if it continued for a year at that pace we'd be talking about 3.8 per cent growth. That's a problem; it's a lot higher than the Fed's target range. Then consider that for the past seven months, growth has averaged an annual pace of 3.6 per cent. Are the worry-warts right?

Not so fast – energy costs were a huge source of the run-up. Strip them out of the price series together with the volatile food category, and so-called 'core' inflation is a bit different. The last two months have seen strong gains, at an annual rate of 3.6 per cent. Over the same seven-month stretch, though, the average is just 2.5 per cent. But aren't the most recent numbers really what matter? Good point – let's have a look at the details.

Top surprising rise in vehicle costs

Breaking it down into core goods, it's clear that apparel costs shot up in January. This is likely just a seasonal movement. A more concerning change is the rise in vehicle costs – that may be a signal of something deeper. But remember, in this segment, we were worried about oversupplies and bloated inventories just a year ago; there hasn't been a lot to indicate significantly tighter supplies since then. However, given capacity constraints in the industry, we will keep this under close scrutiny.

Costs of core services have ramped up recently, but only to the growth pace experienced in 2016, which at the time raised few eyebrows. Shelter costs are definitely above the Fed's overall price target, but they have been there for awhile. A key mover of core service costs is vehicle insurance, which is on a steady upswing. So far, it's isolated and as such, not a worry.

Certain hybrid measures of core inflation are a bit more concerning. For example, strip out not only food and energy but also homeowners' rent and tobacco, and core is rising more than at any point in the post-recession period. A few other hybrid measures come up with the same result. So, are we worried?

I've long said that after a very long period of worry about the opposite – disinflation, or worse still, outright deflation – that a little inflation is not a bad thing. Those two dreaded 'D' words are ones for which central banks have a very limited playbook. Inflation? They have that one down pat.

That could be cold comfort, though, if it means that a much tighter interest rate stance is needed. Is that where things are going? Again, not so fast. Sluggish post-recession growth – a decade-old reality – has conditioned a lot of economic behavior to expect and therefore prepare for much less than the economy is capable of. Today's higher growth is a wake-up call that finally more capacity is needed. As we work through this interim adjustment period, it would be natural to experience temporary price increases. Indeed, they are in effect the economy's call to action. Given the capacity the US has to add to its capacity, and clear evidence of pent-up demand, the Fed's role is not to stanch out-of-control growth, but to guide a manageable growth upshift.

Preparing for the rate of inflation

How should we prepare for and approach this shift? First, there are likely to be regular moments of price-panic, but given what's really happening, in each occurrence it should fade quickly. Second, rates will continue to rise – not just at the short end of the market, but increasingly on the long end. Five- and ten-year yields are now on a path that looks a lot more like a return to normal, baking in a rate of inflation at, not below, target level, and also moving toward a more standard risk premium for longer paper. Savvy companies appear keen to lock in lending ahead of what looks like a steady run of increases.

The bottom line?

Prepare for interesting monthly price movements – not just in the US, but across the pond as well. But try to tune out the scaremongers – as far as we can see, this is a welcome by-product of an economy that is finally getting back on its feet. It has been a long wait.



New infrastructure funding sources step up in Canada

Scott Van Voorhis, by Engineering News - Record

A shrinking budget deficit is usually good news, but a drop in federal debt in Canada is raising concerns over delays in government efforts to funnel infrastructure money into projects. The country's federal deficit is poised to drop by \$1.1 billion, mainly due to government delays in keeping up with ambitious infrastructure spending pledges, says a report by the Parliamentary Budget Office. Only about half of the \$2.9 billion budgeted for infrastructure in 2016-2017 actually got out the door.

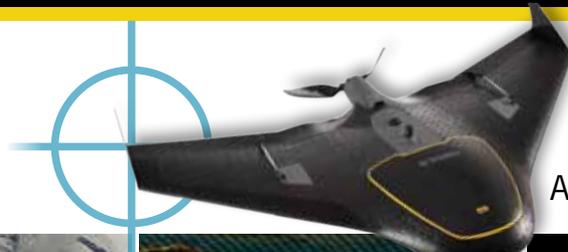
The report comes as the government prepares to release in March its budget for the coming year; it previously pledged to spend more than \$142 billion over the next decade on everything from new roads to affordable housing. "There is some anticipation and reservations about how quickly the dollars are getting to the projects," said Matti Siemiatycki, an associate planning professor at the University of Toronto.

But more infrastructure work is actually taking place than the federal government is credited for, says Brook Simpson, a spokesman for the federal infrastructure ministry. The federal government only reimburses municipalities on public works projects after construction is finished. "The reality is that information our partners have provided shows that the vast majority of projects are underway," he says. Chris McNally, chair of the Canadian Construction Association, agrees, but wants myriad infrastructure initiatives already in place to be consolidated. Each pot of money includes its own restrictions and approved uses, requiring provinces to sign agreements with the federal government on how infrastructure dollars are spent. The multiyear plans tend to overlap, he says.

The new Canada Infrastructure Bank will start investing in projects by year-end, with plans to leverage \$27.7 billion in federal dollars into hundreds of billions in private capital. Montreal's \$5-billion light-rail project, which selected contractors earlier this month, is considered a top prospect, says Siemiatycki. Quebec's Caisse de dépôt pension fund is overseeing the project and providing \$2.3 billion in financing. With heated debate in Parliament last year over need for the bank, "all eyes are going to be on what that institution's first moves are," he says. Montreal also just announced a plan to spend another \$5 billion on road, transit and water projects in the next three years.

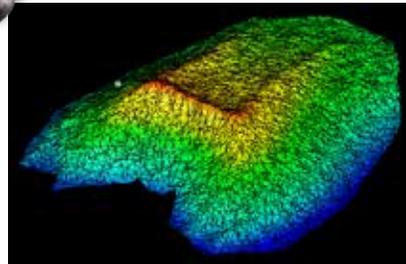


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Taylor McCaffrey LLP can be contacted at:

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E: ccannon@tmlawyers.com



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HWM Construction can be contacted at:

Bill Hopkins
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Craig Kelman & Associates

Craig Kelman & Associates are the publishers of MHCA's Equipment Rental Rates & Membership Directory.

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MHCA is pleased to announce:

Breakfast with the Mayor

Mayor Brian Bowman has accepted an invitation to be speaker on April 10 at MHCA's first '**Breakfast with the Leaders**' event in 2018.

The Mayor has been asked to give us his prospective look at the city's future, touching upon:

- the role he sees that strategic investment in core infrastructure will play
- the city's fiscal challenges and the potential solutions
- key intergovernmental challenges
- how Winnipeg can advance economic growth and influence
- the importance of thinking regionally and globally

This is an important opportunity to listen to the Mayor's reflections in his 4th year of office. We urge you to reserve your seats early as space is limited.

When: April 10, 2018

Where: Madison A & B Room
Holiday Inn Winnipeg Airport Polo Park
1740 Ellice Avenue

Cost: \$35/pp (taxes incl.)

Agenda:

7:30am – doors open/registration

8:00am – hot breakfast served

8:20am – Mayor's presentation followed by Q & A

To register, please contact MHCA Operations Manager Christine Miller, by email christine@mhca.mb.ca or by phone 204.947.1379

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For more information, please contact **Carol Paul**
cpaul@mbcsc.com | 204-272-5092



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Your Voice Heard

The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association (MHCA) is the voice of Manitoba's heavy construction industry, promoting sustainable municipal infrastructure development, sustained investment in core infrastructure, and seamless, multi-modal transportation systems.

We want your voice to be heard. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding our industry, the MHCA, or the services that we provide, contact us directly by visiting our website www.mhca.mb.ca or calling 204-947-1379.



THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY SEVEN PILLARS TO GROWING MANITOBA'S ECONOMY

In today's globally competitive business environment it is imperative that government create a climate that attracts new business and allows existing businesses to grow and thrive. For Manitoba to reach its full potential there are seven key public policy pillars that must lead economic and investment policies in the province:

FISCAL COMPETITIVENESS

Manitoba must have an effective and fiscally prudent government committed to creating a competitive tax jurisdiction to attract and retain new investment.

VENTURE CAPITAL

Commitment to the creation of an accessible venture capital fund and supportive tax credit policies to leverage investment in the growth of new and existing businesses.

GLOBAL TRADE

Commitment to pursuing an expanded global trade profile for Manitoba which derives substantial economic benefit.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Commitment to a strategic, sustained, disciplined approach to investment in Manitoba's core infrastructure.

ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT

Commitment to the creation of an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy to ensure inclusion and partnership in economic growth policies.

SKILLED WORKFORCE

Commitment to attracting, educating, training and retaining a skilled, responsive workforce is fundamental to ongoing economic growth.

"NEW FISCAL DEAL" FOR MUNICIPALITIES

Commitment to address the existing fiscal framework between the province and municipalities to meet the challenges of the future.

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SAFETY

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Registration: rwang@mbcsc.com



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For more information on creating a safety & health manual for your company, or about our e-COR™ program, please contact Sarah Craig at 204-947-1379.

KNOW YOUR WORKSAFELY™ TEAM

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To contact your WORKSAFELY™ advisor assigned to your area, please see mhca.mb.ca/worksafely/know-your-advisor



Training Schedule

Construction Safety Excellence™

**TO REGISTER,
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kristen@mhca.mb.ca

WINNIPEG - MHCA Office

3-1680 Ellice Ave.

BRANDON - St. John Ambulance

Shoppers Mall, 1570 18th St.

March 2018

- 6 Auditor Refresher 1/2 day PM
- 12-13 COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
- 14 COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
- 15-16 COR™ Auditor**
- 19 Flagperson 1/2 day AM

March 2018

- 12 Flagperson 1/2 day AM
- 12 Safety Committee/Representative 1/2 day AM
- 19-20 Traffic Control Coordinator
- 21-22 Train the Trainer – Heavy Equipment Operator

April 2018

- 4 Train the Trainer - Facilitation Skills
- 11 Flagperson 1/2 day AM
- 11 TDG 1/2 day PM
- 16-17 COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
- 18 COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
- 19-20 COR™ Auditor**
- 23-24 Traffic Control Coordinator

April 2018

- 23-24 COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
- 25 COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
- 26-27 COR™ Auditor**

May 2018

- 7 Safety Committee/Representative 1/2 day AM
- 7 Excavating & Trenching 1/2 day PM
- 11 Auditor Refresher 1/2 day AM
- 11 Flagperson 1/2 day PM
- 14-15 COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
- 16 COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
- 17-18 COR™ Auditor**
- 23-24 Traffic Control Coordinator



SAFETY TALK

Ergonomics in the office

Ergonomics is the science of matching the work to the worker. Office ergonomics includes workstation design, job design and the work environment.

What's the danger?

A poor fit between the worker and the environment causes physical and psychological stress, which can result in physical health problems such as injuries to muscles, joints and nerves.

Protect yourself

Tips:

- Look up and away from the monitor regularly, blinking your eyes, to reduce eye fatigue
- Avoid over-reaching, twisting and bending. Place frequently used work materials in a comfortable arc in front of you
- Fitness and good posture are important to maintaining a healthy spine

- Regular work breaks can help prevent repetitive strain injuries by allowing time to stretch or change body positions

Adjust your workstation:

- When sitting, adjust chair height so your knees are level with your hips and use a footrest if your feet are not flat on the floor
- Adjust the lumbar support of the chair to support the curve in your lower back
- Use the chair's backrest for support to prevent muscle discomfort and fatigue
- Forearms should be alongside your body, elbows at 90 degrees when using the keyboard and mouse – support your arms with armrests
- Mouse and keyboard should be on the same level
- The top of the monitor screen should be at eye level directly in front of you – not off to one side

Print and review this talk with your staff, sign off and file for COR™ / SECOR audit purposes.

Date: _____

Supervisor: _____

Performed by: _____

Location: _____

Concerns: _____

Corrective Actions: _____

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____



75 in 2018

The MHCA is 75 in 2018 and we're telling our story. The heavy construction industry has helped build this province, its economy and foundational infrastructure: roads, highways, bridges, and water/sewer. As part of the commemoration, which will include celebratory features throughout 2018, we are asking for your memories, your photos or any archived materials that can help tell this tale in displays at our marquee events.

Do you have something to share? Please email Catherine Mitchell at catherine@mhca.mb.ca

Thank you,

Greg Orbanski
Chair, MHCA

Chris Lorenc
President, MHCA