

MHCA calls out provincial highways budget cuts

Radio ads aim to show the real cost of cutting investment in roads

Investing roads, trade corridors and highways has amongst the highest returns to an economy. Yet, since 2016, the Manitoba government has reduced its highways capital investment by \$330 million, in budget cuts and under-expenditures. That hurts Manitoba's roads and its economy.

This is the message the MHCA is taking to the public this month, in a series of rolling advertisements on radio. The radio ads, running at rush hour daily on a variety of stations, bolstered by an ad on digital billboards at high-traffic intersections in Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Steinbach.

"Manitobans need to know that repeated, severe cuts to the Manitoba highways capital budget have significant, trickle-down costs to their economy," MHCA President Chris Lorenc said. "Further, it's pound-foolish because putting off repairing roads dramatically compounds the deterioration and eventual expense of fixing a degraded stretch of highway."

Infrastructure investment – the wise dollar

\$1 invested in strategic infrastructure returns \$1.60 to the economy (Finance Canada, Report to Canadians, 2011)

Manitoba's economy pivots on trade – interprovincial and international, including through the Emerson border port to the U.S. Protectionist sentiment south of the border, however, makes this a crucial time to strengthen our trade relations overseas. Manitoba cannot capitalize on new or pending trade deals if we don't keep our regional trade corridors in top shape.

The provincial government, since 2016, has effectively reduced Manitoba Infrastructure's highways capital budget by 40%. "No other sector, public or private, has been made to shoulder a similar burden, in the pursuit of cutting Manitoba's deficit," Lorenc stressed.

The public awareness campaign will run through the coming weeks and then it will revive in the fall. Manitobans are urged to call the premier and their MLA, and ask them to "fix our roads."

"We simply cannot allow the highways capital budget to remain at \$350 million, where it is now. The health of our economy and this industry is at risk, along with the incomes of the thousands of workers we employ," Lorenc said. "We believe that when Manitobans are fully aware of the extent of the damage that will be done by the highways budget cuts, they will tell the province to ***Fix Our Roads.***"