October 11, 2018

The Heavy News Weekly

INSIDE

SURETY COMPANIES SAY HEAVY CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY STRUGGLING

Bonding agencies comments underscore provincial budget-cut impact

Repeat provincial budget cuts and under expenditures to the highways capital program since 2016 have undermined the financial health of heavy construction companies, putting their futures at risk.

To help better understand and describe the impacts of budget cuts, the MHCA requested from surety companies their independent assessments of the industry's financial position and, specifically, contractors' fiscal and bonding capacity in the current environment. The feedback is grim.

Six surety companies working in Manitoba said that over the last two years, they have seen companies in the industry becoming pessimistic about their futures because they have suffered declining net worth, and have lost key employees – impairing their and the industry's capacity.

Their relationships with lending and surety companies are strained, and succession plans, including for multi-generational firms, are imperiled with younger employees seeking careers elsewhere.

Some salient points from the surety companies' assessments include:

- Notable declines in the volume of work, competition is reducing profit margins – some bid prices near or at 0% profit margins to retain key employees or for cash flow so as not to imperil covenants with bank
- Borrowing facilities have been suspended; reduced support from banks and bonding companies
- One surety company has seen receiverships

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Cont'd: Surety companies say heavy construction industry struggling

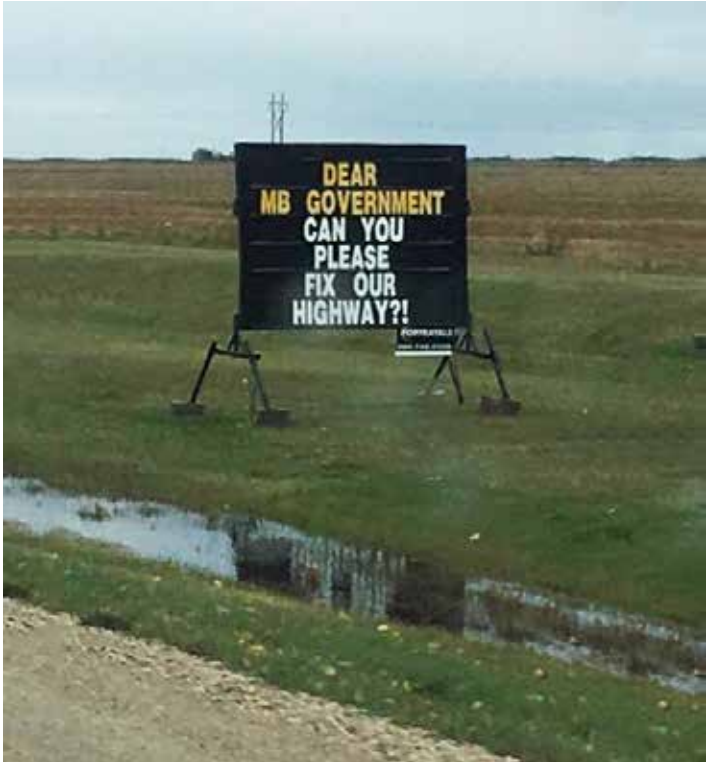
In the face of declining profits or losses, contractors' net worth is falling and debt loads are rising; this reduces their surety capacity, resulting in less work (inability to gain surety).

Companies are reluctant to invest in new equipment, which affects equipment manufacturers.

The surety companies said they are hearing that the next year will bring hard decisions for some firms on whether to downsize or exit the heavy construction industry entirely.

"The surety sector is justifiably alarmed by the reduced provincial government investment in highways infrastructure and by further impacts of continued infrastructure investment reduction," MHCA President Chris Lorenc said. "It takes years for contractor companies to rebuild and revive from the financial and capacity deterioration as was reflected in the surety company letters to us."

The surety firms' assessments were provided to Finance Minister Scott Fielding, copied to five of his cabinet colleagues and the Premier in a September 24 letter, as a follow-up to the MHCA's September 7 pre-Budget 2019 submission to the Premier.



The Budget Numbers – from Public accounts

Highways Capital investment - MB Finance, Provincial Budgets, 2016-2018

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
MI Highways Cap (Budget)	$588.5m (NDP)	$540m (PC)	$502m (PC)	$350m (PC)

MB Infrastructure, Annual Reports, 2016-2017

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Highways Cap (Actual)	$628.4m	$520.1m	$442m	n/a

Budget/actual cuts		$238.4m
Under-expenditures	+	$ 80.0m
Total reduction		$318.5m

- 55% cut to highways capital since 2015-16
- No other government in 27 years has cut the highways capital budget

Infrastructure a ballot issue: MHCA asks the civic candidates

Winnipeg council candidates ranked funding core infrastructure and cutting the investment deficit as high priorities

Brian Bowman

Jenny Motkaluk

The leading mayoral candidates for the City of Winnipeg say they are keen to look at ways to access to new forms of revenues, tied to growth, to help fund the city's core infrastructure demands.

Both incumbent Brian Bowman and his closest challenger, Jenny Motkaluk, recognize transportation infrastructure's critical role in economic growth, and put a priority on ensuring Winnipeg's infrastructure can meet the next decade's population growth.

The views were expressed in response to a questionnaire the MHCA sent to all Winnipeg candidates in the municipal election campaign. Five of the 8 mayoral candidates and 22 of the 54 council hopefuls responded to the survey, which sought their views on the priority they place on core infrastructure as a policy and funding issue.
The responses returned by Bowman and Motkaluk said their campaigns make infrastructure a high priority.

Bowman noted that the record levels of investment made under his leadership in the last four years have reduced the infrastructure investment deficit. The 2% annual property tax levy would continue, should he be elected again, in order to invest "strategically in our roads, along with our federal and provincial partners, with a stable and balanced plan over the next four years to ensure that our infrastructure deficit continues to decrease."

Motkaluk, who has publicly opposed annual tax increases, said she would nonetheless increase funding to the local and regional street renewal program by at least $11 million (the amount raised by 2% tax) each year.

She said she would support a proposal to strike a provincial panel to review options toward a new fiscal deal for municipalities. Bowman said he would push for a "growing source of revenue from the province and I am open to looking at many options to accomplish this."

"Core infrastructure always is held as a top priority of taxpayers and citizens and the responses overwhelmingly indicated that this is what candidates are hearing at the doorstep as they campaign," MHCA President Chris Lorenc said. "Some first-time candidates have a good grasp of why it is important to invest in a strategic, long-term fashion to ensure our streets, roads and other infrastructure assets are up to the job of positioning Winnipeg for growth."

The MHCA asked mayoral candidates about pressing the provincial government to dedicate 1 point of the PST, in legislation, to municipal core infrastructure. Motkaluk said while she is not opposed to the concept, she's not optimistic on the success of such a bid; Bowman said one-point PST dedication is one, but not the only, way to source growth-oriented revenues for the city.

In general, the mayoral and council candidate respondents:

- ranked infrastructure as the #1 - 3 priority for the city
- supported continuing the city's 2% dedicated annual levy for local and regional street renewal
- saw resolving the infrastructure investment deficit as a serious policy issue
- supported the concept of a 'new fiscal deal' for municipalities
- supported investment in the Capital Region strategic transportation plan

Some candidates had good recognition of the value core infrastructure investment holds to our economy and to our city's growth.

Continued on page 4

Cont'd: Infrastructure a ballot issue

Glenn Churchill, running for council in St. Norbert-Seine River, said the local and regional street renewal budget must be adequately funded to make headway against the infrastructure investment deficit.

"As a transportation engineer, I know the value a good road system brings to the productivity of economic trade partners within Winnipeg and the surrounding areas. It is vital to the health of our city and more needs to be done to help offset detrimental effects poor infrastructure has on city residents and business."

Further, he noted: "Sewer infrastructure has an even larger deficit. This work is not front and centre because it isn't visible. It's not a "sexy" topic that allows for impressive press conferences. But this needs to be addressed. Currently, the city receives no funding from other government sources for this need. Both the provincial and the federal governments need to be pressed on this issue to secure funding for continuing (combined sewer overflow) work and upgrades to the city's sewer infrastructure."

Jeff Palmer, a city planner running in Ft. Rouge-East Ft. Garry, said Winnipeg "has benefitted from many recent strategic investments. Long overdue, we are today replacing our infrastructure at a rapid rate."

Palmer and other candidates stressed that infrastructure planning and investment must consider all modes of transportation, including transit, pedestrian and cycling.

"We need to ensure that these investments in our infrastructure reflect the way we want to live in the future," Palmer noted.

Even more carbon confusion as provincial tax gets shelved

Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, October 10

In a surprise move, the provincial government announced last week it will not move ahead with the proposed $25/ton carbon tax that was set to take effect later this year.

In explaining the change, Premier Brian Pallister said the province did not receive assurance from the federal government that it wouldn't implement additional carbon taxes within Manitoba to eventually bring the rate up to $50/ton.

The Winnipeg Chamber supported the province's original plan for a made-in-Manitoba carbon tax as it gave the provincial government the opportunity to design a tax and distribute revenue in a way that reflected local priorities.

Our recommendation was that carbon tax revenue should be allocated toward:

1. Helping industry transition to lower carbon operations;
2. Investing in clean technology and the development of more green industries in Manitoba;
3. Infrastructure improvements that contribute to carbon reductions; and
4. Relief for low-income Manitobans who might have trouble absorbing an additional tax.

While the province had indicated a preference for using carbon tax revenue to pay for offsetting personal income tax and sales tax reductions, we were hopeful it might reconsider, and we were pleased the decision was Manitoba's to make.

The Chamber is disappointed the federal government will not give Manitoba time to demonstrate whether its tax model could be as effective as the proposed federal tax in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"If it's a choice between a higher tax or Manitoba pushing back, we support the province in pushing back," said Chamber CEO Loren Remillard.

While the province won't be implementing a carbon tax, it will still proceed with its Climate and Green Plan which outlines options to reduce carbon emissions by more than a megaton over the next four years.

Waiting on Ottawa

While the provincial carbon tax is dead, that means a new federal carbon tax is on the way instead. The federal government has clearly stated it will begin charging a $20/ton fee in January 2019 in any province that doesn't have its own carbon tax scheme (or equivalent) in place. That fee will increase by $10 per year until it reaches $50/ton.

However, Ottawa has not been as clear on what it intends to do with the carbon tax revenue. While revenue will be returned to the province where it's collected, it's unknown at this time whether that will be through a direct payment to individuals, by flowing the money through the provincial government, or another option.

That uncertainty is a major concern for the business community, which will bear a significant portion of the cost of the carbon tax. The Winnipeg Chamber will be following this issue closely and having direct conversations with federal representatives on how they can implement a carbon tax without stifling economic growth in Manitoba.

MANITOBA HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

AWARDS BREAKFAST & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, November 16, 2018

RBC Convention Centre
York Ballroom 2

8 AM - 11:30 AM

Keynote Speaker Mr.Don Leitch, Business Council of Manitoba

Tickets $49 + GST (per person)

No. of tickets

Annual Chairman's Gala

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2018

RBC CONVENTION CENTRE
YORK BALLROOM

COCKTAILS 6:30 PM
DINNER 7:30 PM

ALL INCLUSIVE TICKETS
$210 + GST (per person)

Tickets are available as individual or tables of 10

No. of tickets_____

Company_____ **Contact person**_____

Phone_____ **Please Invoice**_____

Credit card #_____ **Exp. Date**_____ **3-Digit Security Code**_____

Card Holder Name_____ **Signature**_____

Delta Winnipeg, reservations: 1-844-294-7309 - room rates starting at $159

Quote: Manitoba Heavy Construction Association | Rooms are limited so please reserve early

Fill out this form in full and fax to Christine Miller at the MHCA office at 204-943-2279 or email christine@mhca.mb.ca.
To request a special meal, to accommodate any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions, please call or email Christine at 204-947-1379.

USMCA's impact on the Canadian construction industry

As you know, over the last few months, the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) has made its voice heard about the necessity for the federal government to attract and maintain investment in Canada. CCA is somewhat satisfied that Canada has reached a tentative trade agreement with the United States and Mexico.

Canadian Construction Association

The new agreement, to be known as United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), will take effect in late 2019 or 2020. The agreement follows extensive negotiations to revise the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Now that Canada has agreed to sign the USMCA, the agreement will need to be approved by the Parliament.

Tariffs
A point of contention during the USMCA negotiations were the existing tariffs on steel and aluminum; key materials used in most projects. The 25 percent tariff on steel, the 10 percent on aluminum, and prices of these products remain intact under Section 232. President Trump has called for an import quota if the U.S. government removes the tariffs. The Government of Canada officials have been vague about when or if the tariffs will be removed., and CCA will continue to engage with the government to find a solution and has been vocal about not introducing safeguards.

Buy America/Buy American
During the trade negotiations, the Canadian government sought a procurement process for Canadian businesses so that they would be able to participate in U.S. sub-federal infrastructure projects. Unfortunately, they didn't succeed, and the stipulations within the Buy America/Buy American Acts mean that only US companies can bid on those projects. This is unfortunate for the construction sector that could have grown the procurement market as was the case with the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union.

Ease of trade for construction supplies
The original NAFTA eliminated almost all tariffs between the three countries, and the USMCA maintains these benefits. It does however, include a new Customs Administration and Trade Facilitation Chapter which will standardize and modernize customs procedures to facilitate the free flow of goods.

Conclusion
Overall, the USMCA keeps business as usual for the Canadian construction sector. Despite not gaining access to sub-federal procurement and the continued tariffs on steel and aluminum, companies should not be affected by small changes in the agreement.

Manitoba highways budget cut taken to national level

MHCA report to CCA focuses on 55% cut to highways

The Manitoba government's lack of attention to provincial highways and repeat budget cuts will be on the table when MHCA representatives attend the fall meeting of the Canadian Construction Association Board of Directors.

"The heavy construction and related industries in this province are facing a very challenging relationship with the provincial government as it relates to infrastructure investment," the MHCA advocacy update to the CCA states. "This file is consuming the bulk of our advocacy efforts."

The report notes that notwithstanding repeated assurances heading into and immediately after the April 2016 election, the provincial government has reversed course on infrastructure, and does not regard it as an investment priority despite its proven value to economic growth.

Since 2016, the provincial government has:

- Broadened the definition of core infrastructure from the traditional (roads, highways, bridges & structures, sewer water, water distribution & wastewater treatment plants) to now include healthcare, education and related
- Ended the dedication of one point of the PST to traditional municipal core infrastructure
- Frozen, reduced or obliterated long-standing agreements related to provincial share of investment in municipal infrastructure funding
- Walked away from commitment to introduce an annual and five-year program accompanied by release of its highway's infrastructure investment deficit report
- Reduced the highways capital program (budget cuts and under-expenditures) by 55%; no provincial government in the last 25 years has cut the annual highways capital program
- Completely ignored the demonstrated negative impacts on: the overall financial health of the industry; increased and earlier lay-offs; rising rate of unemployment; weakened workforce stability
- Ignored a broad business coalition that has pressed for strategic investment in trade-enabling infrastructure, in recognition that 53% of Manitoba's GDP is derived from trade

Manitoba's update to the CCA also includes its pre-Budget 2019 submission to the Premier, dated September 7, urging the government to:

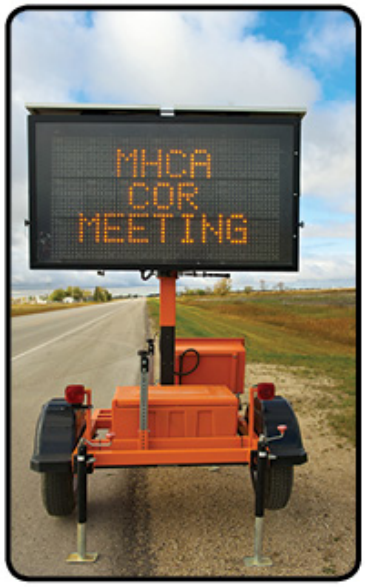
1. Restore the highways capital program to a minimum of $500 million, annually, 2019/20-2023/24;
2. Accelerate MI's service-delivery review, and transition inhouse service delivery to the competitive market;
3. Release the report on the transportation infrastructure investment deficit (understood to be ~$6 billion), with annual and five-year rolling budgets to support a capital-asset management strategy;
4. Solicit, in partnership with the business community, from Canada West Foundation (or similar institution) an estimate of ROI from trade-transportation investment strategy, and the lost value of delaying this strategy (including the compound effect on Manitoba's infrastructure investment deficit); and
5. Strike an 'experts panel' to review the infrastructure funding model, with recommendations to provide some measure of certainty and predictability to all public and private stakeholders going forward.

In the absence of a sign the province will meaningfully address the concerns, the MHCA Board has unanimously resolved to invest in a public-messaging campaign from early November to mid-December 2018. MHCA is soliciting partners to that campaign.

WORKSAFELY MHCA™

MHCA Certificate of Recognition COR™ WORKSAFELY MHCA

You're invited to attend our next COR™ meeting!



AGENDA:

- WORKSAFELY™ Update:
  - substance abuse in the workplace
  - customized training
  - Respirable Crystalline Silica Research Project
- Workplace Safety & Health Update
- SAFE Work Update

DATE: November 7, 2018
WHEN: 10:00 am - 12:30 pm (lunch served)
WHERE: **Allen & Bolack Excavating Ltd.**
1540 - 14th St. East
BRANDON, MB

Please RSVP on or before October 29th to Kristen Ranson; kristen@mhca.mb.ca

MHCA

MANAGING IMPAIRMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

WORKSAFELY™ will be hosting workshops on impairment in the workplace.

Alcohol and drug use can have substantial consequences for the workplace.

These workshops will give you information based on a 'best practice' model for responding to alcohol and drug-related risk in the workplace.

FOR HR/SAFETY PROFESSIONALS/ SUPERVISORS

November 13, 2018
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM
MHCA Office - Unit 3 - 1680 Ellice Ave
WINNIPEG

December 4, 2018
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM
St. John Ambulance - Brandon
Shoppers Mall - 1570 18th St.
BRANDON

To register contact Kristen Ranson at 204-947-1379

WORKSAFELY MHCA

The importance of COR™ documentation

Back to you

Don Hurst
Director of WORKSAFELY™, Education and Training

Once you have your safety and health program established, documentation and record keeping become critical elements to ensuring the program's effectiveness.

The skillful management of your program includes continually gathering evidence of your program and all its components. You must be able to demonstrate how you are implementing your safety and health policies, procedures, practices and training.

Your documentation supplements and benefits your safety and health program by:

- Providing evidence of your proactive safety and health program and compliance with provincial safety and health legislation
- Assisting with continuous improvement
- Demonstrating your commitment to ongoing improvement
- Informing company management/ownership of safety performance

Once you have your documentation in place, where do you store it? WORKSAFELY™ offers a safety management software, e-COR™, that allows your safety and health program to go paperless. This allows you to quickly retrieve all hazard assessments, inspections, incident reports, training certifications, safety talks and more. E-COR™ enables you to easily confirm supporting documentation of your safety and health program, all with just a few clicks!

For more information on e-COR™, please contact Phil at 204-947-1379.

KNOW YOUR WORKSAFELY™ TEAM

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WORKSAFELY MHCA

SAFETY TALK

Fatigue awareness

As we near the end of the season, crews may be working longer hours and fatigue can lead to accidents and injuries.

What's the danger?

Immediate symptoms of fatigue:

- Tiredness
- Memory lapses
- Difficulty concentrating
- Slower reaction times

Fatigue is hazardous; it impairs:

- Ability to make decisions
- Communication skills
- Ability to stay focused
- Reaction time
- Performance and productivity

Protect yourself

Tips for workers

At work:

- Vary routine work tasks so you stay alert
- Take small breaks
- Tell your supervisor if you're feeling fatigued
- Work with your employer to manage fatigue-related risks in the workplace

Outside of work:

- Make sleep a priority
- Eat light, nutritious meals, drink plenty of water and limit your caffeine and alcohol intake
- Watch for the warning signs of fatigue

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:

_____

_____

_____

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Training Schedule
Construction Safety Excellence™

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

WINNIPEG - MHCA Office
3-1680 Ellice Ave.

October 2018

15-16	**COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
17	**COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
18-19	**COR™ Auditor**
23	Train the Trainer - Facilitation Skills
29	Excavating & Trenching 1/2 day AM
29	Transportation of Dangerous Goods 1/2 day PM

November 2018

1	**COR™ Auditor Refresher 1/2 day AM**
5	Winter Roads 1/2 day AM
5	Emergency Response 1/2 day PM
13	Impairment in the Workplace 1/2 day AM
19-20	**COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
21	**COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
22-23	**COR™ Auditor**

December 2018

4	Safety Committee/Representative 1/2 day AM
4	Flagperson 1/2 day PM
5	Train the Trainer-Facilitation Skills
6-7	Traffic Control Coordinator
10-11	**COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
12	**COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**
13-	**COR™ Auditor**

BRANDON
St John Ambulance

October 2018

29-30	**COR™ Leadership in Safety Excellence**
31	**COR™ Principles of Health & Safety Management**

November 2018

1-2	**COR™ Auditor**

Are global exports faltering?

By Stephen Tapp, Deputy Chief Economist

Hearts skipped a beat in early 2018 with the release of trade data. US exports suddenly turned sour in the opening months, and the scourge spread to Europe and the emerging world before the year was half over. Softness led to speculation that the multi-month strong run was over, naturally tapped out, and further beset by tariffs and other walls, real and imagined. Did the pessimists prove right, or is there another story in the work?

There's good news and bad in the global numbers. Monthly figures from CPB in the Netherlands, adjusted for price movements show that the story was looking a bit bleak in March. Real exports were down 1.2 per cent from December 2017 levels, or almost 7 per cent at annual rates – thus the concern. Thankfully, they've picked up since then, and the trend through July is good. However, that has only just brought the level of global exports back to the January peak. In-year annualized growth is a modest 1.2 per cent, quite a bit below earlier expectations.

US near tops in the export growth charts

What's the picture in different parts of the world? Well, the place with the loudest official trade-bashing banter – the United States – is actually doing quite well in the growth charts. So far this year, US exports are up 5.7 per cent from year-ago levels, against a developed-world average of 3.4 per cent. Japan has also managed above-average growth of 4 per cent, although most of their momentum came from late-2017. Europe, at justover 3 per cent, is pulling down the average. And other OECD countries – including Canada – were even worse, managing just over 2 per cent growth.

Emerging markets typically enjoy faster growth. However, the results for Latin America and Africa are particularly weak so far, at just 0.6 per cent and 0.1 per cent growth through to July, respectively. It gets better from there. Emerging Asia grew by 5.2 per cent, and Emerging Europe comes out on top with a 6.3 per cent export expansion.

What's the story on export prices?

Pockets of performance aren't, on their own, enough to portend better times ahead. If there is bright news, it's on the price side. Year-to-date prices are up 9 per cent globally over 2017 levels, an impressive jump. But the US and Japan are not the drivers. Western Europe, on the other hand, is up 12 per cent, and other OECD countries, 10 per cent. On prices, emerging markets are running a bit behind the developed world, although Emerging Europe breaks the pattern with yearly increases of 19 per cent.

Some of this is due to currency shifts. Inflation 'doves' shouldn't be too dismissive, though. Price movements like this demand scrutiny – and it may be that poor volume showings aren't so much about soft demand as tight supply constraints. In the developed world, labour is clearly getting harder to find, and not just the skilled type. Constraints have also emerged in industrial capacity.

Inflation spike coming?

Does that mean we're hitting an inflation wall? Not necessarily. We think there are still plenty of spare workers in the economy, left behind by years of sluggish growth. Where skills have atrophied, training or re-training could help a lot. And on the industrial capacity side, we've long argued that protracted under-investment has become entrenched, and price spikes are the jolt that business needs to reset investment behaviour.

The presence of pent-up demand in major markets suggests that growth itself isn't faltering, but that the economy is hitting a new stride that requires a significant adjustment to hiring and investment practices. If such engagement occurs, global exports still have lots of life left in them.

The bottom line?

Exports aren't faltering; they're blessed with strong fundamentals. Current movements are sending out signals that it's time to create new productive capacity. Increasingly, future growth depends on it.

CONCRETE 101 WORKSHOP

November 6th 2018 – Victoria Inn Brandon

November 7th 2018 – Victoria Inn Winnipeg

Registration 8:30am ● Presentation 9:00am – 4:00pm

Full Day Workshop $90.00 + GST

**Includes light breakfast, lunch, and break snacks*

- ✓ **Basic Concrete Technology**
- ✓ **Concrete Materials & Mix Proportioning**
- ✓ **Concrete Control Tests**
- ✓ **Proper Use of Finishing Tools**
- ✓ **Edging, Joint, Curing, & Protection**
- ✓ **Cold Weather Concreting**
- ✓ **Hot Weather Concreting**

Recommended for: Concrete Producers, Concrete Placers, Contractors, Engineers, Consultants, Students, or anyone interested in learning about Concrete.

To register:

email info@concretemanitoba.ca

or call 1-204-599-8630

concrete manitoba