



### **Policy Priority 1 – Supporting a Strong Construction Workforce in Manitoba**

The number ONE concern of company owners in the construction industry is the availability of labour – skilled and unskilled. The demographics are working against us as the current average age of the workforce is 41, with 15% of the workforce over the age of 65. It is also expected that 20% of the workforce will be retiring in the next 9 years. Not only will there be a considerable number of people leaving the workforce, but the required skills are also quickly changing due to evolving construction techniques and technology improvements. Early education is the place to start in building this new skillset, and with only 5% of the on-site workforce being women, more needs to be done in early education to encourage construction careers as an option for anybody and everybody.

#### **Support of an Industry/Social Enterprise training Working Group**

Recognizing the need for a diverse and skilled construction workforce, the WCA proposes the establishment of an Industry/Provincial Government/City of Winnipeg Education and Training Working Group. This collaborative effort will identify and address barriers faced by equity-seeking groups in accessing opportunities within the construction industry. By promoting inclusivity, the sector can tap into a broader talent pool and create a more representative workforce.

#### **Will your party support the establishment of this working Group?**

Yes, we do support the establishment of this working group. The question here is identifying the barriers and bottlenecks and breaking them down and providing resources to overcome them.

The shortage of labour is a serious issue in the construction industry, but also extends to many sectors across the province.

First, we should look to our own students to ensure that we making sure students have the supports they need – ensuring that there aren't financial or other barriers to study. There are excellent vocational education high schools in Manitoba and MITT that provide outstanding training. We need to be expanding more of these programs and ensuring schools are fully funded.

We need to be actively working with new Canadians to encourage them to be part of the trades.

We can additionally leverage our workforce here at home. Manitoba's Employment Income Assistance (EIA) system has barely changed in more than 35 years – with social assistance levels largely the same as they were in 1986. While some on EIA face challenges due to disability, it is estimated that thousands of people on EIA could work, but they face language and skills barriers, and the program itself blocks them from working.

Manitoba's NDP/PC EIA system punishes people if they go to school, work, or even volunteer too much. Many people who are receiving EIA benefits and supports want to work. The more a person tries to

work, the less benefits they end up receiving. We will reform EIA to encourage training and skills upgrades.

We will also expand Adult Literacy programs, which are also essential in allowing people of all skill levels to upgrade.

When it comes to attracting workers to Manitoba, we know that the PNP program is not adequate. We know that reuniting people with their families is often the best incentive for people to lay down roots in a community. We will create an enhanced family reunification stream in the Provincial Nominee Program and negotiate with the federal government a larger percentage of new Canadians to Manitoba based on our province's specific labour market needs which include construction and specialized trades.

A Manitoba Liberal government will also create a \$150 million/year "Manitoba Works for Good" voluntary jobs program, which would provide wage and job subsidies for not-for-profit and other organizations to provide work for the public benefit and for community improvements projects. This will provide people with experience and training on projects with community and public benefits.

### **Manitoba Construction Sector Council Support**

WCA emphasizes continued support for the Manitoba Construction Sector Council, which plays a crucial role in providing English training and employment skills necessary for the construction sector. The association advocates for a range of construction skills training programs, including framing, concrete formwork, and focuses on indigenous participation and northern communities. These initiatives will equip workers with the expertise needed to meet the evolving demands of the industry. **Will your Party continue to fund and support the Manitoba Construction Sector Council (MCSC) and the work they undertake?**

**Absolutely, we will continue to support the MCSC and their good work.**

*Bridging programs for skills training are important tools to attract people to join the construction industry. This is particularly true for new Canadians and Indigenous peoples who are underrepresented in many trades sectors. We want to promote equal participation in the workforce. Manitoba Liberals will absolutely continue to fund and support the MCSC as they carry out this very important work.*

### **Apprenticeship in Manitoba**

Apprenticeship is the primary learning model for the construction industry. Construction engages 30 of the 65 designated trades in Manitoba and employs approximately 6600 of the 11000 apprentices working in construction. Apprenticeship leads to high-paying, fulfilling careers.

The system is not perfect. Only 35% of construction employers hire apprentices. The completion rate – the percentage of apprentices finishing their training and becoming journeypersons – is less than 50%. There is a real stigma about entering the construction industry as a trades person.

**What will you do to help us make the necessary improvements and encourage Manitobans to consider an Apprenticeship?**

*We need to do a much better job of making it clear that construction jobs are good jobs, and that good jobs change lives.*

*We need to be clear about it, as a government, in education, in a public messaging campaign, and with actual funding for projects.*

*This means taking the benefits of the industry out into the community – letting future workers know about the personal benefits, and creating new opportunities for exposure and engagement that let people test out and practice skills.*

*This begins early on, especially by promoting various positions within industry trades at both the high school and post-secondary level. We need to make young people more aware of the opportunities and benefits of the industry. Emphasizing rewarding careers and breaking down stigmas will help build the foundation of young people entering the industry to enhance and strengthen a skilled workforce so that Manitoba will continue to prosper.*

*Besides engaging young people, we need to emphasize and empower diverse communities to enter the construction industry, Women and First Nations continue to be underrepresented in the construction and trades industry and part of what we need to do is break down the negative misconceptions surrounding their participation in this very important work. Manitoba Liberals will work to give institutions greater tools to showcase underrepresented people in the incredible careers that are available in various industries. We will also look at better incentives for employers to encourage inclusion in the industry to build a more diverse workforce.*

## **Policy Priority 2 – Improving Public Procurement in Manitoba**

The Province of Manitoba purchases (procures) over \$1.5Bn of schools, hospitals, recreation facilities, water and waste water treatment plants, highways, bridges, and streets annually. Procurement processes adopted by government can have a dramatic impact in the overall success and value for taxpayer dollars on these projects. WCA continually reviews procurement methods and recommends improvements.

### **Government Wide Contract Policy Review**

The Government of Manitoba developed a government-wide construction contract policy which attempts to enshrine safety, payment of wages, participation in apprenticeship, and indigenous engagement. This policy is poorly crafted and is often ignored by industry and government. The original intents of the policy were, and continue to be, laudable. However, the policy is badly in need of rework. WCA is seeking an immediate review of the Government Wide Contract Policy

### **Will you commence the mandatory review of the Government Wide Contract Policy within a year of the election (by Oct. 3, 2024)?**

*We will absolutely make this a priority. This is important on so many levels, the first being the health and lives of workers, which must be paramount. The second is that we want to work with the industry so that we are operating at the very top level of standards because that is the best way to keep everyone safe, keep costs down, and ensure projects are completed on time and on budget.*

*Safety, along with the compliance of other provincial standards such as wages, are important safeguards for workers in the industry. However, no policy is effective without the buy-in of industry and stakeholders involved in the process.*

*A Manitoba Liberal government will bring WCA and industry leaders to the table and revisit this policy as soon as possible to ensure that it is effective and works for all parties while safeguarding the intent by which it was created.*

### **Provincial Procurement Process Changes**

Competitive bidding is the backbone of construction procurement. The rules are tried and tested in the various courts of the land. Open, fair, and transparent processes are imperative in the procurement process. Despite what some believe, the owner (the Province) is not obligated to use the lowest bid.

The various Provincial departments have introduced a number of different procurement options that attempt to ensure the best construction team is in place, for the best prices. The procurement methods include RFP, RFQ, and various prequalification processes. In some cases these procurements have become tedious, very time consuming for contractors to respond to, and the outcomes challenge the notion of fairness. Many capable contractors are deciding not to participate – and we have seen many example of this. This ultimately impact the price of construction.

Also, WCA seeks amendments to the current Provincial Procurement Process. This includes amending timeframes when providing essential information at the time of tendering is required, implementing a twostage process for requests for proposals (RFP) with pre-qualification, and eliminating the three-way negotiation with a 'Best and Final Offer.' These changes aim to streamline and simplify the procurement process, allowing for increased efficiency, improved trust in the process and fair competition among contractors.

### **Will you commit to engagement directly with Winnipeg Construction Association on the current Provincial procurement process to ensure it promotes fair competition?**

*We absolutely agree the Manitoba Government's procurement policies are cumbersome and unfair.*

*Manitoba Liberals are dedicated to working to develop a process that is fair, that is efficient, that is thorough, and that considers "community return on investment." We are committed to ensuring that Manitoba and Winnipeg companies are not being unfairly excluded.*

*Under the PCs, Manitobans have often seen blatant conflicts of interest and an undermined procurement system that awarded lucrative government contracts to their wealthy donors or to those with strong ties to the PC party. Whether it was awarding a lengthy air ambulance contract to a firm with strong PC ties, or the PC transport minister approving the construction of dangerous road with highway access in*

*Brandon to a PC donor against his own department's advice, there are too many examples of a flawed procurement system.*

*A Manitoba Liberal government will work with the WCA and all stakeholders to ensure the provincial procurement process is fair, open, and transparent bidding process is followed when it comes to awarding government contracts. At the same time, we want to ensure that Manitoba-based businesses are prioritized when it comes to procurement.*

*We will additionally strengthen provincial conflict of interest laws, where successive NDP and PC governments have failed to restore the public and industry trust in the procurement process.*

### **Vertical Infrastructure Plan**

In addition, the association advocates for the commitment to a three-year vertical infrastructure plan, updated meaningfully on an annual basis. A comprehensive plan will provide certainty and long-term visibility to the construction industry, enabling businesses to plan effectively and invest in growth.

**Will you commit to a three-year vertical infrastructure plan reviewed meaningfully at least every year?**

*Yes – a Manitoba Liberal Commitment is to develop budgets that provide multi-year guidance.*

*Manitoba has an infrastructure debt in the billions of dollars – and that is holding us back. The poor quality of Manitoba's roads and bridges adds to the cost of doing business and overhead of the entire economy. The PC government's 6-year funding freeze caused a lot of setbacks to municipalities, having to absorb inflationary pressures and being unable to budget for subsequent years.*

*Public infrastructure is not a cost. It is an investment in improving the economy and making it more efficient for everyone. Water treatment plants, roads, bridges, and transportation are all factors of production, and investments in the shared growth and prosperity of our economy, private and public.*

*Especially for our municipalities, they need long-term funding to ensure predictable budgeting and planning for the success of their own economic growth and development.*

### **Policy Priority 3 – Supporting Manitoba Through Infrastructure Investment and Incentives**

The buildings WCA members construct is where Manitobans work, learn, play and heal. These are truly 'quality of life' buildings that attract and keep people in Manitoba. Overall, ICI construction in Manitoba is a good barometer of the health of the economy and the willingness of government to invest

in the Province. It is important for the government to continue to invest in this infrastructure but also encourage and create the environment for increased private investment in Manitoba.

### Builders' Liens Act Update

The WCA highlights the need for a full review and update of the Builders' Liens Act, as outlined in the Manitoba Law Reform Commission Report of 2018. By addressing any outdated provisions, the act can better protect the rights of contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers involved in construction projects.

#### **Will you commence a full review of the Builders' Liens Act within the first year after the election?**

*This is absolutely a concern we will work to see addressed. Prompt payment legislation was introduced and passed this year in the legislature. Manitoba Liberals voted in favour of this legislation.*

### Energy Code Adoption

Manitoba has recently adopted the 2020 National Building Code, and the 2020 National Energy Code. The National Energy Code contains options prescribing various levels of energy performance in building construction – these are known as Tiers. The Province adopted Tier 1 as of January 1, 2024 and is committed to considering high tiers of energy efficiency in future.

The WCA urges the government to invest in and facilitate the responsible adoption of higher energy tiers of the National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings (NECB). Embracing energy-efficient practices and technologies will not only reduce environmental impact but also lead to long-term cost savings for both the construction industry and the province as a whole.

#### **Prior to adopting higher energy tiers will you consult with the construction industry?**

*Yes. We are committed to adopting these higher energy tiers, and we want to bring them in as quickly as is realistically possible. We want to work with and hear from stakeholders to identify the key challenges and roadblocks we need to overcome to make adopting these new standards and making them a reality.*

*To make a difference in climate change, we need to make it easier for Manitobans to do the right thing. Manitoba Liberals are committed to protecting the environment, harnessing clean hydro energy, while helping Manitobans reduce their energy costs.*

*As part of our Green Plan, we have committed to taking control of the Carbon Levy and environmental policy and creating a new \$300-million annual Green Fund so all Manitobans can be part of fighting climate change.*

*We have committed to bringing in modern building codes for new builds as well as retrofits. We will further update Efficiency Manitoba's mandate to include fighting climate change.*

*A Manitoba Liberal government will always strive to ensure proper consultation and partnership with industry stakeholders with the adoption of new energy policies.*

## **Municipal Permits and Inspections**

Finally, the province has jurisdiction over the City of Winnipeg. The WCA continues to be concerned that the Permit and Inspection department in Winnipeg is over collecting in fees and not delivering commensurate quality of services.

In the interest of economic development for Winnipeg, WCA will be seeking to work with the Province and the City of Winnipeg to ensure fees collected for permit and inspection services do not exceed the reasonable expected cost of providing those services.

### **Will your party work with the construction industry to ensure the City of Winnipeg continues to improve its permit and inspection service value?**

*Absolutely. There have been chronic problems with permitting at the City of Winnipeg, and many questions that need to be answered about permitting irregularities.*

*Again, we want the highest possible standards, delivered professionally and efficiently. Oversight and safety is critical, regulations need to be clear, enforcement needs to be consistent, and projects that have no issues should never be held up by a late permit.*

*We have committed to a public inquiry into the construction of the Winnipeg Police Headquarters. We will work with the City of Winnipeg and industry stakeholders to ensure that permit and inspections work seamlessly and where possible, improve the efficiency and efficacy of the process.*