

May 7, 2020

Construction in a Crisis Recovery

The men and women of the Manitoba construction sector should stand proud. When COVID-19 first became a reality in Manitoba in mid-March, the industry responded quickly and strongly. Construction sites changed the way work was done, the number of people on site, how people had lunch and the protective gear they wore to help fight the spread of the pandemic.

As other sectors of the economy start to re-open **the construction industry must remain vigilant**. There will be more interactions in the community, leading to a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. It's more important now than ever to keep practicing these three golden rules:

- Stay home if you have **any** symptoms
- Keep your distance – six feet or two meters
- Wash your hands properly and often

Our industry has proven we can be relied upon to deliver a safe work environment and manage the risks during the COVID-19 crisis. Now is the time for the government to further rely on us to help restart the Manitoba economy.

The best way to improve the economy and improve mental health for Manitobans is through meaningful productive contributions – like those offered by the construction industry.

The benefits to the economy through infrastructure investment are well documented. For each dollar spent on infrastructure, GDP will increase by \$1.43 and \$0.44 is recovered in additional tax revenue. Private-sector investment rises by as much as \$0.34 per dollar spent in the short term, and by up to \$1.00 per dollar spent in the long run.¹

To best deliver on these benefits all three levels of government **need to work together**.

The Province has committed to spending its capital budget for 2020 - but that is not enough. For a full rebound to happen, the Province should bring forward its infrastructure plan for 2021 and 2022 and be willing to match Federal dollars.

We have just seen our neighbours in Saskatchewan commit to an extra \$2B capital expenditure over the next 2 years. This is the type of leadership we want to see in Manitoba.

We also need the federal government to be flexible with infrastructure funding. The federal government developed a successful Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) that has funded billions worth of infrastructure projects across Canada, but much of this remains uncommitted in Manitoba.

¹ The Broadbent Institute, The Economic Benefits of Public Infrastructure Spending in Canada

Manitobans want to see new schools for our children, new aged-care facilities for our seniors, new EMS facilities for those in need and clean water and wastewater treatment for all Manitobans. The construction industry stands ready to deliver on these projects when called upon.

Our government has asked Manitobans to work together to overcome this pandemic, and now we ask our governments to work with the construction industry to deliver the economic recovery.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ron Hambley', with a stylized initial 'RH' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ron Hambley, WCA President