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August 17, 2022

Hon. Heather Stefanson
Premier of Manitoba
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Mb, R3C 0V8

Re: Harnessing Trade to Grow the Economy – *'If you can't move it, you can't sell it'* - Request to meet

Dear Premier:

As president and CEO of the Canada West Foundation, and on behalf of our partners at the Business Council of Canada, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Construction Association, and the Western Canada Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, I write to seek a meeting of our coalition with you, as Manitoba Premier and as Chair of the Council of the Federation meeting in 2023, to discuss harnessing trade to grow Canada's economy.

Given the importance of trade for Canada, and in light of the initiatives you have undertaken in Manitoba to enable trade to grow the provincial economy, we would like to discuss how, as Chair of the Council of the Federation, you could lead your counterparts to have improving Canada's trade infrastructure to enable economic growth as a consensus priority on the 2023 COF meeting agenda.

Supporting this effort would be a decade of research and the advocacy work of our coalition of associations which are calling upon the federal government to implement a national trade gateway and corridor infrastructure investment strategy as part of the country's first National Trade Infrastructure plan.

This call is an urgent response to the drastic drop in global perception of Canada's trade infrastructure which puts the country's prosperity and post-COVID economic recovery at risk. In 2009, Canada was in the top 10 nations in the World Economic Forum index of trade infrastructure reliability. That has since plummeted to 32nd, in 2019, just ahead of Azerbaijan. Trade, as you are aware, supports more than 65 per cent of Canada's economy and 2.9 million jobs. In Manitoba, trade contributes 53 per cent to its GDP and sustains an estimated 240,000 jobs.

Our coalition of organizations has spent years researching the causes of the decline and developing solutions through cross-country research, stakeholder consultations and roundtables across Canada. This effort resulted in a final report which was released in May by the Canada West Foundation. [From Shovel Ready to Shovel Worthy](#) makes a compelling case for, and sets out foundational steps toward, the creation of a national trade infrastructure plan for the next generation of economic growth. This report describes the critical need to plan 20 to 30 years ahead for the trade infrastructure assets the country needs to compete globally.

We applaud and support your efforts to harness the value of increased trade to grow the economy. In particular, we note the commitment made in your Throne Speech and Budget to economic recovery, to invest in infrastructure, to promote growth through trade with designated cabinet responsibility, and your exhibited partnership with Canada to invest in infrastructure to support growth.

The national reach of the coalition supporting the push to institutionalize trade infrastructure as a national priority, the research that supports this push and the advocacy that enables it all support the initiatives you are undertaking in Manitoba. This research and work by the coalition would also support an effort to bring the trade infrastructure issue to the Council of the Federation and facilitate its reception by the group. In addition, the Canada West Foundation would be available to provide additional, direct support if required

This is a unique opportunity to leave a lasting impact on our country's economic growth and future welfare and to ensure that Manitoban and western interests are front and centre in the creation of new national trade infrastructure policy.

My office will follow up in the next weeks, in hopes of securing the requested meeting date.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Mar, Q.C.
President & CEO

cc. Hon. Cliff Cullen, Deputy Premier
Hon. Doyle Piwniuk, Minister, Manitoba Transportation & Infrastructure
Don Leitch, Clerk of the Executive Council

Business Council of Canada, Goldy Hyder, President & CEO
Business Council of Manitoba, Bram Strain, President & CEO
Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Honourable Perrin Beatty, President & CEO
Canadian Construction Association, Mary Van Buren, President & CEO
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Manitoba Division, Dennis Darby, President & CEO
Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Chuck Davidson, President & CEO
Manitoba Homebuilders Association, Lanny McInnes, President & CEO
Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association, Chris Lorenc, BA, LLB, President
Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Loren Remillard, President & CEO
Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Chris Minaker, VP, Policy & Engagement

PS: We are aware the Group of Six leading business organizations in Manitoba made similar such appeals to you and your government colleagues. These organizations have, as a matter of courtesy, been separately copied.