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Advocacy Bulletin: Political leaders descend upon 2023 Building and Hardware Showcase

The WRLA continues in its quest to build relationships with provincial and federal decision-makers, which helps ensure that the Association and its concerns are top-of-mind for those in charge. The 2023 Building and Hardware Showcase was an overwhelming success, and that success extends to our advocacy efforts, which saw attendance this year from all three major political parties in Manitoba, including two senior cabinet ministers, as well as the involvement of the Premier.

On Wednesday, January 18th, Andrew Reimer, chair of the WRLA board, and his fellow board members visited the Manitoba Legislative Assembly for a quick meet-and-greet with Premier Heather Stefanson.

On Thursday, Minister of Natural Resources Greg Nesbitt and Winnipeg's Deputy Mayor Markus Chambers participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open the show. Both Nesbitt and Chambers then visited the showroom for the next two hours, accompanied by Reimer and WRLA President Liz Kovach.

On Thursday afternoon, Justice Minister Kelvin Goertzen spent an hour meeting with individuals and bearing witness to the innovative products and enthusiastic retailers stationed throughout Winnipeg's RBC Centre. It is important to note that Minister Goertzen served as Premier of Manitoba in 2021, after Brian Pallister retired but prior to Heather Stefanson assuming office.

Day 2 was no less impactful with visits by Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont and his colleague, Dr. Jon Gerrard, who also toured with Kovach.

NDP MLAs Diljeet Brar, Matt Wiebe, Jamie Moses and Candidate Rob Loiselle rounded out Friday afternoon.



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With each visit, WRLA staff and board members took the opportunity to highlight issues important to our members including supply chain bottlenecks, rail constraints, limited trucking options due to the lack of backhaul, and advocating for a home renovation tax credit.

These discussions also allowed our members to remind political leaders about the diverse and strong career options available in the LBM sector and remind them of work being undertaken to ensure young people have the tools and knowledge needed to thrive in this sector and revitalize the labour force.

The visits to this year's showcase come just two months after the WRLA conducted Legislative Outreach Days in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Such days enabled relationship building, which, in the case of Manitoba, continued to be strengthened by invitations to events such as the Building & Hardware Showcase.

The more the leaders know us, the more responsive they are to our events and more importantly, to the subjects we raise with them.