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Addressing Labour Challenges Head On

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The WRLA is continuing its efforts to influence decision-makers over the summer months. Two weeks ago, we met with Mark Rosner, Chief of Staff to the Leader of the Manitoba New Democratic Party. Last week, we sat down with Jerin Valel, the Deputy Minister of Economic Development and his colleague Michael Swistun, the Secretary to the Economic Development of the Manitoba Cabinet.

Thanks to Jonathan Middlestead, Steve Buckle and Andrew Reimer for their participation in these efforts. Their contributions were integral to demonstrating the challenges faced by the LBM sector. As Mr. Buckle noted in the meeting with the two deputy ministers, WRLA member firms remain local and are committed to their communities. Buckle later stated, “Our industry is local to the community we serve and provides excellent jobs right here at home. The jobs in this industry are many, and there’s upward mobility and an entrepreneurial path as well.”

Reimer added, “It is vital that we reach out to decision-makers to ensure our industry’s voice is heard loudly and clearly. We must continue telling our story. This is about good jobs here in Manitoba and beyond, and we are working hard to ensure our industry thrives.”

In the meetings with government and opposition representatives, we emphasized the current labour force challenges facing our industry, and we offer solutions on how we can partner with the province to solve these issues. We want to connect Manitoba’s talented workforce with our industry’s innovative leaders, to create sustainable jobs, with long-term growth prospects.

The focal point we articulated in these meetings was the Let’s Go Build campaign. We are stressing that there are endless opportunities available everywhere in the industry, and benefits like work-life balance, exciting and enjoyable work, inclusive culture, transferable skills, and good pay.

Manitoba will soon be holding a general election, and it is important that the WRLA continue to inform all parties, plus public servants, of the vital work being done by the LBM sector. While the official election will be called in early September, the campaign is unofficially underway. Members may notice less communication by government departments, which is



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due to Manitoba election laws. From August 3rd onward, government resources cannot be used for political announcements, in order to level the playing field for all political parties vying for office.

While the Progressive Conservatives led by Premier Heather Stefanson have had their challenges since the pandemic began, the polls now show a competitive race province-wide between them and the New Democrats led by Wab Kinew.

A recent Mainstreet poll, published on July 27 showed that among decided voters, the PCs had the support of 42% of Manitobans, with the NDP at 38% and the Liberal Party at 12%. However, the key battleground will be in the City of Winnipeg, where the NDP has been polling around 50 percent for months on end. Ridings such as Riel, currently held by the PCs, will help determine which party forms government in October.