



**Chairman's Report to the
58th Annual General Meeting of the
Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association**

February 14, 2001

Cancun, Mexico

Calvin Edie

WCR&HCA Chairman

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Introduction

It is my pleasure to submit on behalf of the Board of Directors, a report that highlights the areas of activity of the WCR&HCA for the period 2000/2001.

National Highways Program; National Infrastructure Program

As you are all aware, the primary focus and thrust of Western Canada Roadbuilder activity, has, and continues to be to press the federal government for a sustained commitment to the funding of Canada's core infrastructure and a National Highways Program.

As an industry, joined by and working together with other key stakeholder organizations nationally, regionally and provincially, we have been unsuccessful in attaining funding for a national highways program. However, we have had more success with core municipal infrastructure.

You are aware that the federal government is committed to a \$6 billion New Federal Infrastructure Program, which has a primary focus on green infrastructure projects. These as you can appreciate will see investment in water and sewer systems. Investment in municipal transportation is another area targeted for investment. Our goal will be to work with the federal, provincial governments and national associations to try to ensure application of funds towards infrastructure investment.

Canada Highway #1 Website

Spearheaded by the Coalition to Renew Canada's Infrastructure, the Canada Highway #1 Website was established. Its purpose was and continues to be, to urge Canadians from coast to coast to e-mail the Prime Minister their support for the funding of a NHP. The WCR&HCA has encouraged the participation of other stakeholder associations to participate in this effort to raise public support.

Government Relations

A key element in these activities is of course our government relations strategy. We continue to support and fund TRIP/Canada as the single most important vehicle through which we press our case in Ottawa. As with any organization it is important to review the manner in which it pursues its objectives.

At the request of the CCA Roadbuilder Council, our President was asked and did draft a revised Strategic Operations Plan, TRIP/Canada Governance Amendments and a descriptive narrative of the Executive Director's position. Input in the preparation of these documents was sought and received from Chief Operating officers of roadbuilder associations, the TRIP/Canada Executive Director, the CCA President and many others.

I am pleased to advise that as a result of these time consuming efforts, all three documents were adopted unanimously at a meeting of the CCA Roadbuilder & Heavy Construction Council in May 2000.

Transportation Association of Canada (TAC)

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) is the only true national association, which has as a primary mandate, focus on transportation systems in Canada with chief attention on roads.

It is TAC, which generated the initial National Highways Program Studies back in 1987. Since the initial reports, updates have been prepared. We are and have been at the point for some years now, where all relevant studies have been completed supporting the need for a NHP. What has and continues to be missing is political commitment from the national government.

TAC itself has been undergoing a serious review. Should it be an association of governments? Should its Board of Directors include only federal provincial and industry representatives? Should TAC begin to tackle transportation issues related to municipal needs, or ought it continue reviewing the national inter-provincial and trade corridor issues?

Interestingly, municipal governments are becoming more involved in TAC because from many of their perspectives, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has not discharged those mandates in a satisfactory manner.

The WCR&HCA has a place at the TAC Board of Directors. So too does Jim Facette TRIP/Canada Executive Director. Together, they have been working with TAC to try and assist in its internal review. Our objective has been and will continue to be, to urge TAC to maintain its role as the pre-eminent transportation authority in Canada.

Communications

We continue to write letters and seek out meetings with political leaders of all party stripes in search of champions for the National Highways Policy. We have written scores of letters to the Prime Minister, to Premiers, Ministers of Finance and Highways, in each reminding of the national importance of a transportation system, which keeps the nation trading together, and growing together.

There is an emerging danger facing this country. We are seeing two economic solitudes emerge – one in eastern Canada trading predominantly north south between Canada and the United States, and the second in western Canada also predominantly trading north south between Canada and the United States.

There is plenty of attention paid by the federal government with respect to investments in the eastern economy and from our view insufficient attention to western Canada's economic future.

A nation that does not trade together begins slowly to lose its reason for staying together. Recent rumblings of western separatism should give us all as Canadians, reason for concern.

An efficient, modern transportation system, which encourages domestic trade and tourism, is good for the country and its future. We have tried to persuade our political leaders that these too, are important reasons for re-investing in our national highways system.

To date our efforts have not borne the fruit of success.

We cannot however, notwithstanding having heard "no" so many times, ignore the important realities, advantages and opportunities that an efficient transportation system provides the country.

Conclusion

We continue to function as a Board and as an Association with a national vision. Financially we manage our affairs in a prudent and responsible fashion. Our attention will continue to be federal even if Ottawa was to

announce a National Transportation Investment Strategy. There will continue to be the need for a unified voice from Western Canada, which reminds the national government of the legitimate economic aspirations firmly embedded in our 4 western provinces.

I would like to close by expressing my thanks and gratitude to each member of the WCR&HCA Board of Directors for their support, opinion and advice given during my tenure in office. I also wish to thank the 4-roadbuilder associations for their ongoing commitment to the WCR&HCA and importantly TRIP/Canada and the principles for which they stand.

I would also like to add my appreciation to the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) and TRIP/Canada for their continuing commitment and support for both a National Infrastructure Program (NIP) and National Highways Program (NHP).

The efforts of the WCR&HCA may not always be visible or bathed in profile. However in the context of national activity, I believe them to be critical.

In closing, I would like to extend my best wishes to the incoming Board Chair and Board members.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Calvin Edie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Calvin Edie
WCR&HCA Chairman