



WCR&HCA 2023 Conference – Post-conference Report

Feb. 23, 2023

WCR&HCA 2023 Stronger Together

Feb. 5-9, 2023

Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort

Honolulu, Hawaii

Success

The WCR&HCA 2023 Stronger Together Conference was a success by all measurable indicators – the business sessions were meaty and engaging, the featured speakers did not disappoint, the events drew full attendance, the food was superb both morning and evening and the sun shone for the golf/catamaran leisure day.

Sponsors and delegates were surveyed, post-conference, and the feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the conference location, events and sessions.

- View the survey results in [this infographic](#).

Who came

- Approximately 380 delegates and partners
 - o 116 member delegates
 - o 96 supplier delegates
 - 50 delegates representing sponsor/companies
- 23 sponsor companies
- 7 guests: CCA (Chair, President, VP); CICC (Chair); Canadian Chamber of Commerce (President); Canada West Foundation (Chair); and, former Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall

The Program

- 4 business panels/sessions
 - o Harnessing trade to grow Canada's economy
 - o National advocacy priorities
 - o Innovation alley
 - o Public procurement model is broken
- 2 keynote speakers
- 2 gala dinners
- 3 networking breakfasts
- Evening welcome reception
- Children's programming (2 sessions)
- Day of leisure (golf, catamaran)

In addition, the WCR&HCA Board of Directors held 3 meetings Friday, February 10, where board business, conference review, elections to board and a sponsors' session were held.

Profile

Marketing and Communications strategy was led by WCR&HCA and included

- Catherine Mitchell, MHCA, Manager of Policy & Communications
- Corrine Urquhart, ARHCA, Manager of Events & Partner Relations
- Lindsey Hoemsen-Longstaff, Saskatchewan, Communications Strategist

What they got

Delegates, partners, children, sponsors and guests received a full communications suite of daily emails/social media notifications of what was happening on the ground:

- Daily social media posts from February 3 to 10 (Twitter, Instagram from WCR&HCA, MHCA and ARHCA) highlighting [#2023WCRStrongerTogether](#) events, business sessions, sponsor recognition, with videos embedded.
 - On-the-spot reporting by WCR&HCA via Twitter from the business sessions
- Daily eVoque e-blasts to delegates/attendees on scheduled events, with sponsor recognition
- An early morning [advocacy e-blast February 8](#) and [February 10](#) to delegates from WCR&HCA, summarizing each business day's sessions with sponsor recognition, and embedded video
- Conference ["it's a wrap" e-blast](#) of Friday Feb. 10 WCR&HCA Board sessions, including appointment of new board members, and sponsor discussion re conference experience
- 2 surveys, 1 each of delegates and suppliers, were distributed post-conference. Infographics highlighting the results specific to each can be seen [here](#).
- Up-to-date [conference photos](#) from events and business sessions, including individual couples and family portraits at the 2 dinners; highlighting event and photo session sponsors
- A series of marketing [videos](#) featuring [#2023WCRStrongerTogether](#) location, events, business sessions, and interviews with conference committee leaders, panelists and sponsors
 - These and additional videos will be used on social media to say 'thanks' to sponsors and to prepare the ground for delegates and sponsors for 2025 conference

What they learned

4 business panel discussions and 2 keynote speakers drew full attendance February 7 and 9

Tuesday, February 7

Keynote: The Role Western Canada Should Play in Global Trade

Hon. Gary Mar, President & CEO, Canada West Foundation

8:15 am

Sponsored by Volvo, Great West Equipment, Redhead Equipment, Strongco, Westcon Equipment

Former Alberta cabinet minister and now Canada West Foundation President Gary Mar delivered deep insight as to where Canada falls down on global trade, and the infrastructure that supports moving the goods.

Canada's approach to funding transportation infrastructure has focused – to its detriment – on funding isolated, one-off projects rather than investing in strategic trade routes that hold the highest ROI to our GDP, Mar said.

How do we convince our government(s) to adopt a multi-year infrastructure investment strategy that builds a 20, 30 or 40-year pipeline of nationally significant projects?

The regions, the West can take the lead to make this a national priority: “National leadership in Canada doesn’t always have to be federal leadership.” The western provinces working together can demonstrate the importance of moving to a ‘shovel worthy’ investment approach.

Panel: Harnessing Trade to Grow Canada’s Economy

Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Mary Van Buren, President & CEO, Canadian Construction Association

Hon. Gary Mar, President & CEO, Canada West Foundation

Greg Orbanski, Chair, Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association

Hon. Brad Wall, former Premier, Province of Saskatchewan

Chris Lorenc, President & CEO, WCR&HCA (moderator)

9:15 am

Sponsored by C Duncan Construction and Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association

Canada’s competitiveness on the global trade stage is slipping badly, analyses show, with the forecasted growth in its economy in the next 40 years expected to be half the rate of the last 40 years, Perrin Beatty said.

Beatty said Canada is at an “inflection point” where we have to decide how we want to meet the new global trade economy – we either decide to lead or we lose, big.

Canada is rich in natural resources and commodities the world is thirsting for – potash and critical minerals, for example – but we need the infrastructure capable of delivery the goods to market.

Brad Wall said it’s important for those from the private sector, such as roadbuilders, to talk to elected officials because they have the market-based, practical experience that must inform such investment decisions.

Panel: Federal Advocacy Priorities

Brendan Nobes, Chair, CCA

Nicole Chabot, Chair, CCA Civil National Advisory Council

Brad Scott, Chair, Civil Infrastructure Council Corporation

Mary Van Buren, President & CEO, CCA (Moderator)

11 am

More voices count when it comes to getting heard on Parliament Hill, leaders in the heavy civil construction industry say. That’s why CCA needs to hear the voices of the local construction associations, to bring that message to the federal government, Nicole Chabot said.

CCA’s recent efforts have focused on two industry priorities: workforce development; and a sustained, long-term infrastructure investment plan.

Brendan Nobes said CCA’s priorities must echo those of the industry when it meets MPs and ministers. CCA adopted a deliberate outreach strategy, visiting LCAs on their own ground across Canada.

Thursday, February 9

Keynote speaker: A Tale of Perseverance

Jessica Holmes

8:15 am

Royal Canadian Air Farce comedian Jessica Holmes took us through the perils – for everyone -- of the ‘hidden illness’. Holmes reminded us that hiding depression steals valuable time from our lives, our families and our careers. When someone reaches out, remember: validate, listen, take them seriously. And gently nudge them to go for help.

Innovation Alley presentations

Mike Lenzie, Caterpillar Construction Technologies

Dr. Ray Gallant, Volvo Construction Equipment

Mark Wiese, McAsphalt

Allan Cleiren, Fire & Flood

Bob Vaughan, Bob Vaughan & Assoc.

9:15 am

Dr. Ray Gallant:

- The move to green technology for heavy civil has been slow and will continue as such, by comparison, because of our unique needs. Those needs include moving very heavy equipment around sometimes long (and frigid) construction sites. Our machines don't just transport, they are workhorses so reliability is vital. At the moment, practical electric batteries are capable of delivering good energy density, but can't keep a charge long enough for our needs. The near future will see alternative fuels working in tandem with diesel to reduce the carbon footprint of the heavy construction industry. That will come in the form of new heavy equipment, including hybrids, operated or assisted by batteries.

Mike Lenzie

- Caterpillar is delivering to market small and (soon) mid-sized heavy equipment that, depending on the construction project, will work well. The power of autonomous technology will change the industry's work and business plan. An autonomous excavator allows a less-experienced operator to move material from a road to a set grade, and then it finishes up with greater precision to a final elevation.

Mark Wiese:

- A new mix from McAsphalt can be applied to cracked, rutted blacktop without the need for milling because of its special polymer binding property. That efficiency saves time (money), but among the other advantages, EverLife Mixes can be applied at lower temperatures and therefore spinoff lower greenhouse gas emissions. It works in very hard climates, including in Manitoba where cities are built on clay substrate, because it is resistant to rutting and cracking.

Allan Cleiren:

- Fire & Flood delivers rapid, efficient and effective fire and flood fighting, and containing/cleaning up spills. The "water gate" barrier is effective for holding back and even re-routing flood waters, and can be rapidly deployed, sometimes with a couple of workers at any site.

Bob Vaughan:

- Building trust relationships among all contract partners holds dividends for the procurement and construction process, by working through the concerns and needs of owners, multi-discipline consultants, contractors and subs. Such work can set aside the sometimes-warring interests to focus on the goal.

Our Public Procurement Model is Broken: How do we fix it?

Rodrigue Gilbert, Snr VP Public Affairs & Procurement, CCA

Moderator: Matt Pitcairn, VP, BCRBHCA

11:15 am

Gilbert said construction projects take far too long to see shovels in the ground, and it's largely because the needs of contractors – the experts on the ground – are not recognized in the writing of specifications, design of projects, tenders to the market and the many contracts and contractual requirements that follow.

The industry rates "risk" because too often most of it sits on a contractor's shoulders. Risk should be fairly shared between owner and builders, but it's not.

A survey conducted among members of CCA found that frustration is high at the security clearance processes and requirements at the federal level of procurement.

The answer is talking, ensuring those in government – elected members and civil servants – know that there is a problem, it has to be fixed, the solutions will save everyone money and they need to hear from the experts who are expected to deliver the goods.