

February 18, 2004

Report from the Chairman to the Annual Meeting of the WCR&HCA

Good morning.

This has been a busy year for the WCR&HCA Board of Directors as it attempted to continue the efforts at a regional and national level in support for our three primary program objectives which are:

1. An national infrastructure program targeting investment in Canada's core municipal infrastructure;
2. A National Highways Program to reinvest in Canada' national highways system; and
3. Strategic Infrastructure Investments which seed funding for infrastructure assets which create or facilitate new economic activities.

To illustrate the challenge that we face, particularly on the transportation front, let me begin with an illustration.

Every morning, most working Canadians wake up, grab a bite to eat, clutch their coffee as they're running out the door, get into their car and while driving or taking the bus, curse the bumps, jars and congestion that disrupt their morning commute. And all this happens before they start their workday.

The unfortunate part of this scenario, is that so few motorists and Canadians in general, realize that an inadequate transportation system wreaks more havoc on their lives, than some spilled coffee after hitting a pothole.

It is and should be a real concern to us, that so many Canadians are still unaware of the enormous role that transportation plays in their daily lives. They do not realize how our economy - and many jobs - would disappear without a safe, well maintained multi-modal transportation system.

And, where there is no public concern . . . there is no political concern. So time and again, the need for a safe, well-maintained transportation infrastructure takes a back seat to other priorities. But of course, you know that.

To bring you up to date, about a year ago, after years of frustration, a broad range of transportation stakeholder organizations, independent of one another, came to a similar conclusion. We met and **agreed**, that to change public policy, we must have the support of an informed and active body of public opinion – Canadian voters.

All of us were already doing our own lobbying of government, based upon our own specific agendas, and would continue to do so.

But this, was something we could work on together – one voice, one vision, – an entity, representing multi-modal transportation users and builders from all regions of Canada, speaking directly to Canadians – about transportation.

We combined the efforts of several similar organizations such as the Canada West Foundation, the Van Horne Institute, WESTAC, the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC), Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Airport Council, the Railway Association of Canada and the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association to name a few.

We concluded that Canadians need to be convinced of the “**why to’s**” of transportation:

- **why** transportation is important in their daily lives;
- **why** it’s so vital to their jobs and high standard of living;
- **why** it affects every single person, every single day;
- **why** it is a part of the foundation upon which we build careers, economies, enhance our quality of life and make possible, lifestyle choices.

We agreed, that it was only after we had persuaded the public about the “**why to**” that we could have any hope of dealing with the politicians on the “**how to**” resolve transportation policy issues.

And thus in February of 2003, the Transportation Awareness Partnership (TAP) was formed. Its mission? *“To motivate the public to demand world class transportation system from its governments.”*

TAP was initiated as a result of the early efforts of the Alberta Roadbuilders who decided to focus on public opinion. It was supported by the Alberta government. It became a reality in part because of the efforts of the WCR&HCA Board of Directors and acting on its behalf, the Chief Operating Officers of the four member associations.

There does appear to be an emerging concern about the state of Canada’s infrastructure, **but**, there continues to be a lack of sufficient political, financial or policy priority attention.

Too few Canadians understand the link between transportation and Canada’s quality of life, economic prosperity and international competitiveness.

Too few Canadians realize that the poor state of our transportation infrastructure puts us at risk.

Too few think about the vital role played by an efficient, seamless multi-modal transportation system.

These important national assets underpin our economy and quality of life.

In recent years however, there has been some shift in public mood and public policy. Consider these developments:

1. Public polling by Pollara, Western Opinion Research, Canada West Foundation and Environics over the last three years has demonstrated:

- public dissatisfaction with the condition of roads, highways and infrastructure;
- public concern that its quality of life will deteriorate without sustained investment in the infrastructure; and
- new public support for dedicated taxes.

2. The implementation in March 2003 in British Columbia, of increased road use fuel taxes that the provincial government dedicated to highways investment projects.

3. Paul Martin's announcement in Winnipeg on May 31, 2003, committing to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) that as Prime Minister he would allocate 5 cents of every litre of federal fuel tax towards municipal infrastructure and transportation.

4. Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray's 'New Deal' proposals launched in August 2003, which focused investment of new civic revenues directly to address Winnipeg's \$1 billion infrastructure investment deficit, including transportation, which did not generate any public objection.

5. The Gas Tax Symposium hosted by the CCA in September 2003 involving national stakeholders which resulted in broad interest and consensus around the notion of allocating fuel taxes to sustainably fund infrastructure and transportation`

6. The announcement in October 2003, in Ontario by Premier McGuinty of a new ministry - 'Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal' with responsibility for the province's schools, hospitals, sewers and transportation systems.

7. On October 7, 2003, the House of Commons voted 202 in favour, to 31 against, in support of this resolution: "*That in the opinion of the House, the federal government should initiate immediate discussions with the provinces and territories to provide municipalities with a portion of the federal gas tax.*" This vote signaled that a federal dedicated gas tax was an idea whose time had arrived.

8. The initiation of Transportation Optimization Partnership (TOP) and FCM's "Bridging the Gap," each being transportation and infrastructure awareness and policy promotion efforts in recognition of the serious lack of government policy and funding.

9. The announcement on November 20, 2003 in the Manitoba Throne Speech, that the provincial government will pass a law "*requiring that all provincial revenues raised through gas and diesel taxes are spent on highways, roads and infrastructure.*"

10. The meeting January 22-23, 2004 of the Big City Mayors in Toronto to press for realization of the fuel tax allocation commitments with respect to funding for municipal infrastructure and transportation. The funding issue by then shifted to collapsing the 10 year CIWP to three years, exempting cities from GST, or flowing funds from fuel taxes commencing in 2005.

11. The meeting of TAP partners on January 23, 2004 at which the base of support was broadened and the commitment to proceed with an awareness campaign reflecting its mission was re-affirmed.

12. The announcement in the Martin Government Throne Speech on February 2, 2004 that municipalities would receive a GST rebate in 2004 and have access to either a share of federal fuel taxes or other arrangements with which to provide predictable, credible and long term funding to address Canada's municipal infrastructure including their transportation assets.

But what is still missing, is a commitment to predictable and sustainable funding for Canada's national highways system.

Over the past year, TAP took a good, hard look at what solid information it possessed:

- **One**, we know that our transportation system is in need of sustained investment and is receiving far less attention than required by all levels of government;
- **Two**, we know that the public needs more "*personal*" information about how crucial transportation in general is to their daily lives; and

- **Three**, polling research demonstrates hardening public opinion concerned about transportation and in support of increased investment.

We decided then, to examine what the elements of a strategic social marketing approach were, and found that:

- They have to be focused, visible and of reasonable duration;
- They require a believable message; and
- They have to connect on a personal level.

Most importantly, we found that they work.

An example? Think about fiscal deficits and balanced budgeting. Until the public became truly worried and vocal about growing government deficits, there was no political will to reduce them. Think of all the publicity, ads and media coverage around healthcare, anti-smoking, environmental laws, education and the ongoing political attention they all receive.

Social marketing campaigns are effective. They generate political results. They work.

They are all based upon well funded public opinion & policy research, which allows development of campaigns with messages, which resonate with the public, and cause the public to 'act' politically.

Our task is not without cost - but it can be prudent. It must have the above stated elements. If successful, it will have left an important legacy for our country.

Our task to persuade Canadians to demand that their governments '*fix transportation*' is not easy. It is not a sexy issue. But it is essential to our ability to compete in a cutthroat global economy and therefore indispensable to the future of this nation.

That is what TAP is all about – a multi-modal stakeholder partnership engaged in identifying a connection for the public between transportation and wealth generation, and quality of life.

That is why it is important for the WCR&HCA to have supported and to continue supporting the TAP initiative and related efforts which speak to the public about the need to "*fix transportation*" in this country.

While TAP consumed a fair amount of WCR&HCA attention, it was not the only area. To highlight, the WCR&HCA addressed the following matters:

- We are in process of establishing a WCR&HCA website at which we will post briefs, position papers, information about the association and what it stands for;
- It will attempt to serve as a reservoir of information about the importance of transportation and infrastructure to Canada's economic competitiveness and quality of life;
- It will have links to key associations including the four members associations, the CCA, TRIP/Canada and other related and supportive stakeholders groups;
- It may provide information about Gold Seal training programs and career information to help attract new employees to our industry; and
- It will facilitate on-line registration for our annual conference.

On the national front, the WCR&HCA had a visible presence at meetings of the CCA Roadbuilder & Heavy Construction Council, with a seat at the Council's Management Committee, which oversees the activities, strategies and directions of TRIP/Canada.

We supported and were present in September 2003 at a meeting with then Liberal leadership hopeful Paul Martin, to demonstrate to him the cohesive views of the construction industry related to the importance of sustained investment in Canada's infrastructure assets. As a result of the meeting there has been an expressed willingness to meet with the industry annually.

We tried albeit unsuccessfully, in partnership with the CCA, to persuade the provincial and federal government to amend its Hours of Service Regulation.

We adopted two position papers addressing strategies and policies for investment in Canada's infrastructure. One is entitled "National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) and the second "Federal Fuel Tax Allocation to the National Highways Program." Each of these briefs are available for members to take.

We created a binder of information entitled: "*A Reflection of Activities*" which chronicles the areas of activity, briefs, positions papers and efforts of the WCR&HCA for the period 1997 to present. Our objective is to annually update this binder and ensure that each association has one at its offices. When you examine the material, it really is quite remarkable, how many areas of activity the WCR&YCA has pursued.

When you consider that the term of office for the WCR&HCA Board is one year, 2003 was indeed busy.

Given the changing public and political moods, it is reasonably safe to be optimistic about sustained and increased levels of investment in Canada's infrastructure. The cautious side of all of us must temper that optimism against a "*show me the funding*" reality.

It has been a privilege to have served with and for this Board, and to have had the opportunity of supporting the efforts of the heavy construction and related industries.

I thank all Board members for their support. Most importantly I express my appreciation for the ongoing support we receive from the four member associations.

Our work is not done. We are closer. We must continue.

I thank you.



Frank Rizzardo,
WCR&HCA Chair 2003-04