



**WESTERN CANADA ROADBUILDERS &  
HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION (WCR&HCA)  
A Reflection of Activities 1997/98 to Present**

**Lots to be proud of – lots more to do!**

**Introduction**

The Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association (WCR&HCA), originally known as the Prairie Roadbuilders Association, has its origins in 1943. Its founding members were the roadbuilder associations from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. At that time they were the nucleus of the Prairie Roadbuilders Section of the Canadian Construction Association (CCA).

In 1956, the Alberta Roadbuilders Association joined and the 'Prairie Roadbuilder Association' name was formally adopted. When the British Columbia Roadbuilders Association joined in 1973, its name was again changed to the Western Canada Roadbuilder Association. To more fully reflect the broad nature of industries it represents, the name was further amended in 1996 to its current *Western Canada Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association (WCR&HCA)*.

**Mandate**

The WCR&HCA has from its inception been concerned about the need to properly invest in Canada's infrastructure, including its transportation network. The record of the Annual Convention held in Saskatoon in 1953 shows that the following resolution was adopted:

*"1. Continued Federal Aid Asked in the Building of Highways*

*NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED – That the Prairie Roadbuilders urges that the Federal Government in Canada set up a National Highway Commission to co-ordinate the planning, financing and construction of main highways in Canada and provide the Federal appropriations in keeping with the financial abilities of the Canadian people, to be made available to the provinces on a percentage basis having due regard to area, population, vehicle registration and the ratios of mileage of road per unit of population."*

The building of the Trans Canada highway in the late 50's and early 60's partially addressed the resolution's thrust. However, the arguments cited in support of a National Highways Commission to administer the planning, financing and construction of main highways in Canada were as sound at the 1953 convention as they are today.

**Networking**

One of the advantages provided by the WCR&HCA is the ability to network, mix & mingle, meet senior elected official and administrators, and make connections with customers, clients and potential business associates. The Annual Conference hosted by the WCR&HCA provides a balanced mix of business sessions, personal development and exchange of information within our industry(s), and as between industry and those with influence over public policy directions. These conferences have been a successful annual event for over 50 years.

**TRIP/Canada**

Commitment to the above principles led the WCR&HCA to initiate in 1983, the formation of The Road & Information Program Canada (TRIP/Canada). Since then a number of TRIP/Canada reports on the

condition of Canada's municipal infrastructure and highways were prepared and circulated to all three levels of government.

Recognizing that TRIP/Canada's mandate should be broadened, the WCR&CHA successfully recommended in 1997 that TRIP's name should stand for "*The Road & Infrastructure Program of Canada (TRIP/Canada)*".

The WCR&HCA has a seat around the TRIP/Canada Management Committee which oversees the day to day lobby efforts of TRIP/Canada.

### **TAC Reports**

The WCR&HCA supported the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) calling for and completing a series of reports addressing the concept of and funding for a National Highways System. These reports, begun in the late 80's and completed by 1994, culminated in the shaping of the National Highways System footprint, identifying its funding requirements & options and documenting the cost-benefit to the nation. They form the basis for federal-provincial negotiations. The WCR&HCA is represented on the TAC Board of Directors.

### **National Transportation & Infrastructure**

The WCR&HCA has consistently maintained a focused attention on broad national infrastructure policy issues. In 1996/97 the Board of Directors adopted a National Infrastructure Policy (NIP) which targeted its attention at three program component parts:

- **National Infrastructure Program (NIP)** to address core municipal (street, sewer, water, bridge) infrastructure investment deficits then estimated at \$44 billion (today \$55 b);
- **National Highways Program (NHP)** to address the national highways system requirements then estimated at \$12 billion (today \$19 b); and
- **Strategic Infrastructure Investments (SII)** aimed at creating new areas of economic activity.

The above approach was in substance subsequently adopted by a significant number of national, provincial and regional associations.

In 1998 the WCR&HCA prepared a brief (updated in 1999) on national infrastructure policy, which fleshed out the "*Guidelines to a New Infrastructure Program*", adopted by the Premiers at their 1996 and 1997 Annual Premiers Conference. The brief was then used in national, provincial and municipal government lobby efforts to pursue adoption by the federal government of a formal National Transportation & Infrastructure Policy.

### **Infrastructure Funding**

Clearly funding Canada's massive infrastructure investment deficit presents an enormous financial challenge to the federal, provincial and municipal governments. At the national level, the WCR&HCA has consistently advanced the notion of allocating a portion of the \$5 billion annual federal fuel tax towards the National Highways System.

At first, politicians of virtually every political stripe and finance department officials objected to the concept. Working through our national, regional and provincial lobby efforts, the WCR&HCA continued to press the case.

On May 31, 2003 Paul Martin announced in Winnipeg at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Conference a commitment to allocating on a sustained and predictable basis, a portion of federal fuel taxes towards the funding of municipal infrastructure and transportation. That announcement was a major break-through. It put the next Prime Minister on record, gave reason for Mayors of Canadian cities to press the case with their urban constituencies, resurrected the policy profile with premiers, and ensured that it will be the subject matter of policy in the next federal election.

### **Public Opinion Research**

The WCR&HCA has advocated the value and need to research public opinion and act upon the findings. In a public opinion survey of Canadians, conducted in July 2002 for the Coalition to Renew Canada's Infrastructure (CRCI), by Pollara:

- 58% supported federal funding for the NHS through an allocation of gasoline taxes;
- 55% believed that funding improvement of Canada's NHS should be shared between the federal and provincial governments;
- 38% of prairie respondents believe that the federal government should fund 75% or more, of the NHS cost.

Polling in Manitoba conducted by Western Opinion Research in November 2002 found the following:

- 59% of Manitobans felt that the condition of highways is embarrassing;
- 65% of Winnipeggers felt that its streets were in poor to very poor condition;
- 70% of Winnipeggers believed that the City and provincial government were equally responsible for the condition of streets;
- 79% of Manitobans believed government should increase spending on improving streets and highways; and
- 85% of Manitobans believed that every single penny of gas tax dollars should be spent building and maintaining highways - 93% of Northern Manitobans agreed with this statement.

Polling conducted by Probe Research in 2003 on behalf of five major Canadian cities found that 81% of the public supports allocation of a portion of federal fuel taxes to fixing streets and highways.

The conclusions, which might be drawn from the national, provincial and local polling, are:

- There is dissatisfaction with the condition of streets and highways;
- Canadians believe that the federal and provincial governments are responsible to improve the condition of the National Highways System with a sizable percentage believing that the federal government should shoulder the primary responsibility;
- There is strong support for dedicating provincial fuel taxes towards provincial highways and federal fuel taxes towards the National Highways System;
- There is strong support for increased funding towards streets and highways;

It is submitted that all levels of government are aware of the public's overall dissatisfaction and concern about the state of streets and highways. Canadians have made it clear that they don't believe the federal and provincial governments are pulling their fair share of responsibilities to ensure that we drive along streets and highways that are safe and fit for the purposes intended. They also believe that gasoline taxes should be allocated towards these purposes.

What remains is that practical, cost-effective solutions be implemented to address the problems backed by an informed and supportive body of public opinion.

### **Transportation Awareness Partnership (TAP)**

If the public had an active appreciation for the critical contribution that transportation makes towards life in Canada, to the same extent it has for healthcare and education, governments would be obliged and better able to address their policy challenges and issues more effectively.

The polling results demonstrate evidence of concern for investment in infrastructure, which should be translated into political concern.

A broad range of transportation stakeholder organizations in western Canada came to similar conclusions. To change public policy, we must have the support of an informed and active public opinion.

It is in this regard that the Transportation Awareness Partnership (TAP) was formed in early 2003 with the active participation of the WCR&HCA Board and organizational involvement of the Chief Operating Officers of the four member Associations.

Its objective quite simply is to participate in an awareness campaign that seeks to raise public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the significance of transportation in people's daily lives, such that it is motivated to demand a world class transportation system from government.

### **Other**

In addition to focusing its efforts on the above substantive issues, the WCR&HCA has intervened on behalf of the industry on a broad array of issues and activities including:

- Since 1972 promoted use of the term "infrastructure deficit" which is now common parlance with politicians and the media;
- In 1977 participated in a private meeting with Prime Minister Chrétien to personally advance the case for a National Infrastructure Program;
- Initiated the concept of and assistance in managing the hosting of a first ever stakeholder conference in 1998, to which Ministers Martin and Collenette, along with Senators, MPs and 80 stakeholders attended to debate federal funding for infrastructure and highways;
- Presented the National Infrastructure Policy (NIP) brief in 1999 to the Big City Mayors Caucus meeting in Saskatoon, which was later substantially adopted by them;
- Hours of Service Regulation intervention with federal regulators, provincial premiers and Transportation Ministers along with their deputies;
- Asphalt emission controls;
- Promoting the use of Canadian developed technologies in the implementation of national infrastructure programs;
- Presentations to successive federal ministers including Axworthy, Collenette, Dhaliwal, Goodale, Manley, Pettigrew, Young, Hnatyshyn, Mazankowski, Pagtakhan, Duhamel, McClellan and many others;
- Instrumental in drawing up TRIP/Canada's Strategic Plan, Mission and Internal Governance strategies;
- Made presentations to Standing Committee on Finance and Transportation in support of our infrastructure messages;
- Met with the federal highways caucus to pursue political support;
- Played a material role in shaping lobby strategies at the national level;
- Participated in Western Corridors Initiative which sought, through a stakeholder coalition, strategies to raise the profile importance to the economy in western Canada of key transportation corridors;
- Made presentations in each of 2001 and 2002 to the Prairie Association of Municipal Governments (PARM) on National Infrastructure Policy directions;
- Presentation in April 2002 to the western Transportation Ministers, urging that WESTAC become more proactive and aggressive publicly in its support for transportation funding, upon which advice the Ministers acted through a series of steps which re-organized WESTAC;
- Established ongoing linkages with important think tanks, including the Van Horne Institute, WESTAC, Canada West Foundation, Transport Institute of Manitoba; and
- Adopted in 2003, two policy briefs entitled "*Federal Fuel Tax Allocation to the National Highways System (NHS)*" and "*National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS)*" through which to advance WCR&HCA positions related to transportation and infrastructure policy.

### **National Affiliations**

The WCR&HCA is an active member of the Canadian Construction Association (CCA); is a member of the CCA Roadbuilder & Heavy Construction Council and TRIP/Canada; supports efforts of the Coalition to renew Canada's Infrastructure (CRCI); is on the steering committee of the Transportation Awareness Partnership (TAP); and has a seat on the Board of Directors of the Transportation

Association of Canada (TAC). It maintains contact with a host of national and regional and provincial associations in pursuit of its National Infrastructure Policy objectives.

### **Organization**

The WCR&HCA currently headquartered in Winnipeg, has 4 member associations, which represent the heavy construction industry in western Canada. They are: B.C. Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association, Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association, Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association of Saskatchewan and Manitoba Heavy Construction Association.

The governing body of the WCR&HCA is its Board of Directors. It is made up of two (2) directors plus the Chief Operating Officers from each of the 4 member provincial associations. The office of Chair rotates annually, with the annual convention hosting association concurrently holding the office of Chair.

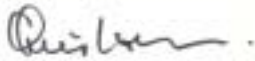
### **Conclusion**

Federal government policy today, closely mirrors what has been advanced by the WCR&HCA solely or jointly with its infrastructure partners. There is the Canada Infrastructure Works Program, an emerging recognition of the need to fund the National Highways System, and a Strategic Infrastructure Fund. More remains to be accomplished to realize on current inadequacies, but these clearly are major steps forward.

Most significantly there is a growing body of public opinion and support for the notion of allocating federal fuel taxes towards the funding of core municipal infrastructure and transportation, as witnessed in the national, provincial and local polling and by the Paul Martin announcement in Winnipeg.

The WCR&HCA has a record of accomplishments coupled with a tradition of credibility.

**Lots to be proud of – lots more to do!**



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