



**NOVA SCOTIA
ROAD BUILDERS
ASSOCIATION**



Roads vital to province's tourism, trade industry

Poor condition of some roads, highways keeping many visitors away

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

NO ONE CAN deny there's a vital link between Nova Scotia tourism and trade and the state of the province's roads. In order for us to remain competitive and take full advantage of our economic potential, our travel ways must be in top shape.

While the Nova Scotia transportation department's increased spending on road construction can only be seen as good news, industry experts say a great deal more work still needs to be done.

The poor condition of our highways and secondary routes, they say, is hurting local business and keeping visitors away.

"When you've got tourists writing in comment cards that they love our province, but would never come back again because our roads are too bad, it's not a good sign," says Alan Johnson, executive director of the Nova Scotia Chamber of Commerce.

Dan Davis, communications director with the N.S. transportation department says the government has made a commitment to repair 2,000 kilometres of highway over the next four years.

The targeted areas include many of our scenic travel ways, such as Marine Drive, Collihd Trail, Glooscap Trail, Fleur-de-lis Trail, and the Evangeline Trail.

Davis says 6-10 kilometres of work on each of these tourist routes was undertaken in 2006 and a similar amount of maintenance on these routes is planned for 2007.

While Johnson applauds the gradual



While the Nova Scotia transportation department's increased spending on road construction can only be seen as good news, industry experts say a great deal more work still needs to be done.

ramping up of tourism and trail resurfacing on our scenic routes, he says the work can't come soon enough for the tourism operators he's talked to. Businesses located off the major transportation routes, he says, are starting to feel the impact on their bottom lines. "Every tourism trail in the province needs repair," says Johnson. "We need 40-50 km. of upgrades on each route this year—that's just to scratch the surface."

Although Nova Scotia's motorcycle

tourism offers fantastic seaside views, Johnson says, due to the neglected state of our secondary roads, a leading motorcycle publication carried an article recently advising tourists to steer clear of Nova Scotia and its crumbling pavement and potholes. "Some of our roads are almost impassable," he says. "Our chamber members on the Eastern shore are complaining they can't get fresh eggs from Pictou County because the trucks that deliver them refuse to drive the roads, they're

in such bad shape." Johnson says the province is spending what it can and making slow and steady progress despite budgetary constraints and a staggering \$3.4 billion worth of work still needed to fix our 23,000 kilometres of roads up to standard. "Much of the blame for the sorry state of our travel ways rests with the federal government, he says. The problem is not a shortage of money for road re-

'We need to strike a permanent funding agreement with Ottawa. Canada is the only G7 country without a national transportation plan. The agreement Nova Scotia has in place now is only patchwork... we need something permanent.'

ALAN JOHNSON
Executive Director, Nova Scotia Chamber of Commerce

pairs, he says, but an unworkable funding agreement with Ottawa. He points out that the fees collected \$800 million in excise tax from gasoline sales in Nova Scotia in the last six years, but gave us back only \$30 million.

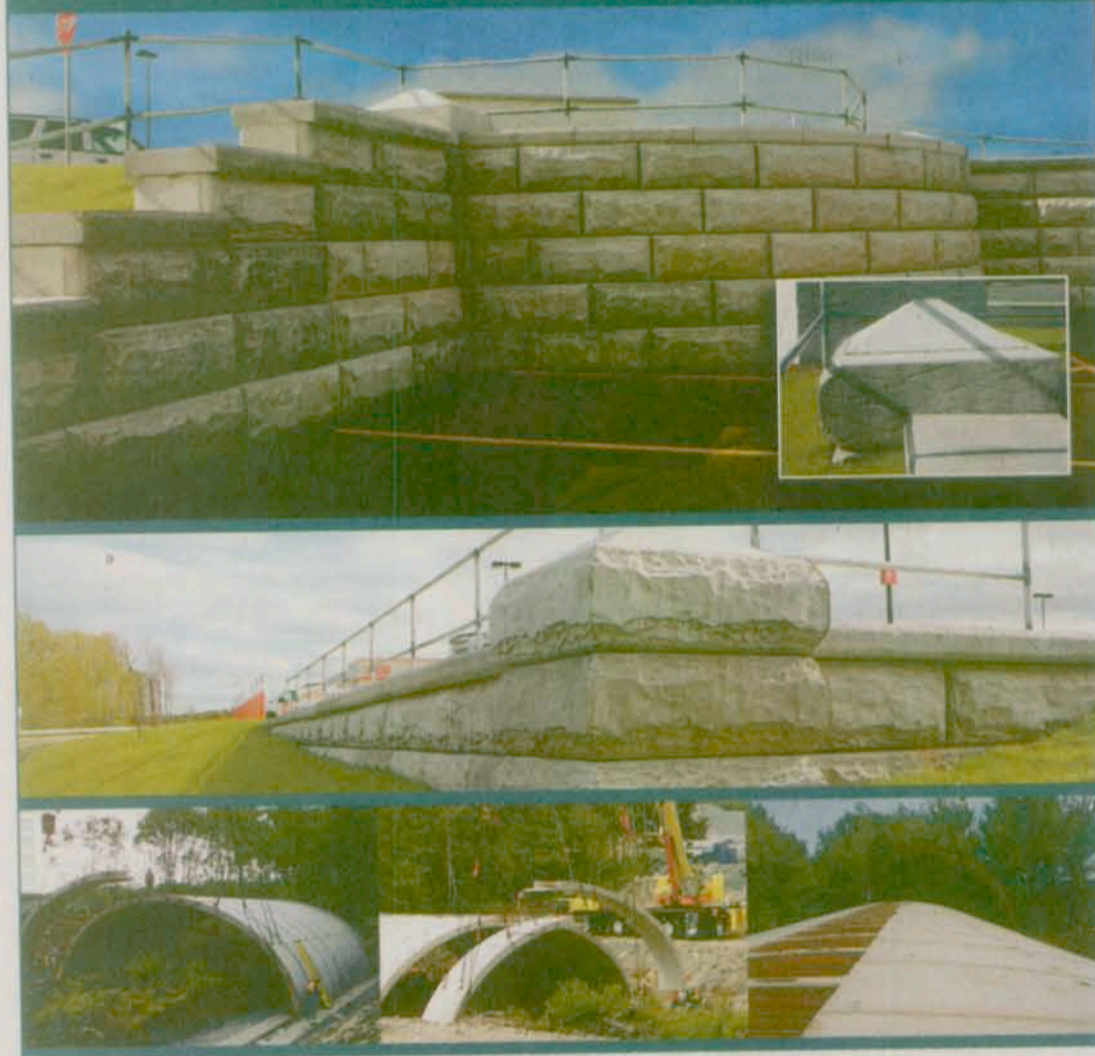
"We need to strike a permanent funding agreement with Ottawa," says Johnson. "Canada is the only G7 country without a national transportation plan. The agreement Nova Scotia has in place now is only patchwork—we need something permanent."

Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia president, Darlene Grant Flander, agrees.

She says our scenic travel ways are critically important to the province's \$1.3 billion a year tourism industry and she'd like to see a long-term, strategic solution to ensure all these routes throughout the province are given top priority.

"We want government to use tourism and trade as one of the filters in their decision making," says Flander. "Our secondary roads are the ones we want tourists to travel on. It makes good business sense to have these routes in top shape. We don't want visitors leaving here and talking about our roads."

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**NOVA SCOTIA
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While road building has a long and storied history in Nova Scotia, going back more than 100 years, today it's one of the province's most modern and progressive sectors. Road builders work on the Commodore Drive extension in Burnside Industrial Park in Dartmouth May 28.

Paving way for future generations

The Nova Scotia road-building industry is a huge economic driver; it employs 7,500 people and pays out an estimated \$375 million in wages annually

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

WHAT COMES to mind for many people when they think of road building is gigantic dump trucks, mountains of steaming black asphalt, workers in orange safety vests and hard hats, and road signs advising motorists to slow down.

While these are essential parts of the road-building industry in Nova Scotia, there's a lot more to the picture than meets the eye.

Road building is one of the province's largest employers and economic drivers, representing a wide cross section of professions and trades.

The industry employs 7,500 people and pays an estimated \$375 million in wages annually. Employees range from engineers and architects to surveyors,

project managers, heavy equipment operators and safety managers, to name just a few.

While road building has a long and storied history in Nova Scotia, going back more than 100 years, today it's one of the province's most modern and progressive sectors.

Represented by the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA), the industry works cooperatively with government to standardize road-building processes and develop environmental and safety regulations.

It also strives to implement safe working conditions and utilize environmentally friendly road building technologies and construction methods.

"Safety and the environment are the two big issues on our agenda," says NSRBA president, Don Maillet.

"We have a strong relationship with government departments and we follow strict guidelines and standards. We try very hard to keep our construction sites safe for the motoring public and our workers and we're always looking for greener solutions."

The NSRBA was founded in 1947 and represents the majority of the province's road and bridge construction contractors and industry suppliers. The association's 140 members are engaged in road, bridges, heavy, marine, sewer and water main construction.

Membership encompasses many sectors of the economy and ranges from engineering firms and paving contractors to energy, insurance, and telecommunications companies.

One recent initiative, in which the NSRBA played a consultation role, involved the creation of a traffic-control manual by the Department of Transportation and Public Works, which it completed this year. The manual, which is now in use, sets out safer procedures for conducting traffic at road construction sites.

And every June, the NSRBA is part of a transportation department campaign

advising highway motorists to slow down near construction. Maillet says contractors are also utilizing new technologies and creative ways to reduce their environmental footprint. For example, he says, for the process of heating up asphalt, paving companies are switching to cleaner-burning, more efficient fuels like natural gas.

"Road building is changing," says Maillet. "We do a lot more reusing and recycling these days, with technologies like concrete reclaiming, reclaimed asphalt pavement, and the recycling of roof shingles to make liquid asphalt. Our association also promotes continuing education and training courses on environmental practices like culvert and erosion blanket installations and sediment controls."

Labour shortage and outward migration in search of higher wages are the greatest challenges facing the industry right now, says Maillet.

"Alberta is a big draw for young people," he says. "If people can foresee that they'll have work here over the long term, they'll be more likely to stay. Long-term planning is the key."

Maillet says the industry is also trying to head off anticipated labour shortages resulting from its aging work force and the lack of local training infrastructure. These issues are being addressed, he says, through partnerships with educational institutions like Nova Scotia Community College and recruiting efforts in high schools.

"We're in need of a permanent, long-term funding agreement with both levels of government," he says. "In the past, we've been far behind other provinces on these issues, but that's beginning to change."

Maillet says the provincial government has increased its transportation budget every year since 1990 and is slowly closing the funding gap. He says the province is also finalizing a new highway cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

"Our industry is in good shape," says Maillet. "Our members are busy and it looks like they'll have steady work over the long term. This is very encouraging for our members because it allows them to make capital investments and plan for the future."

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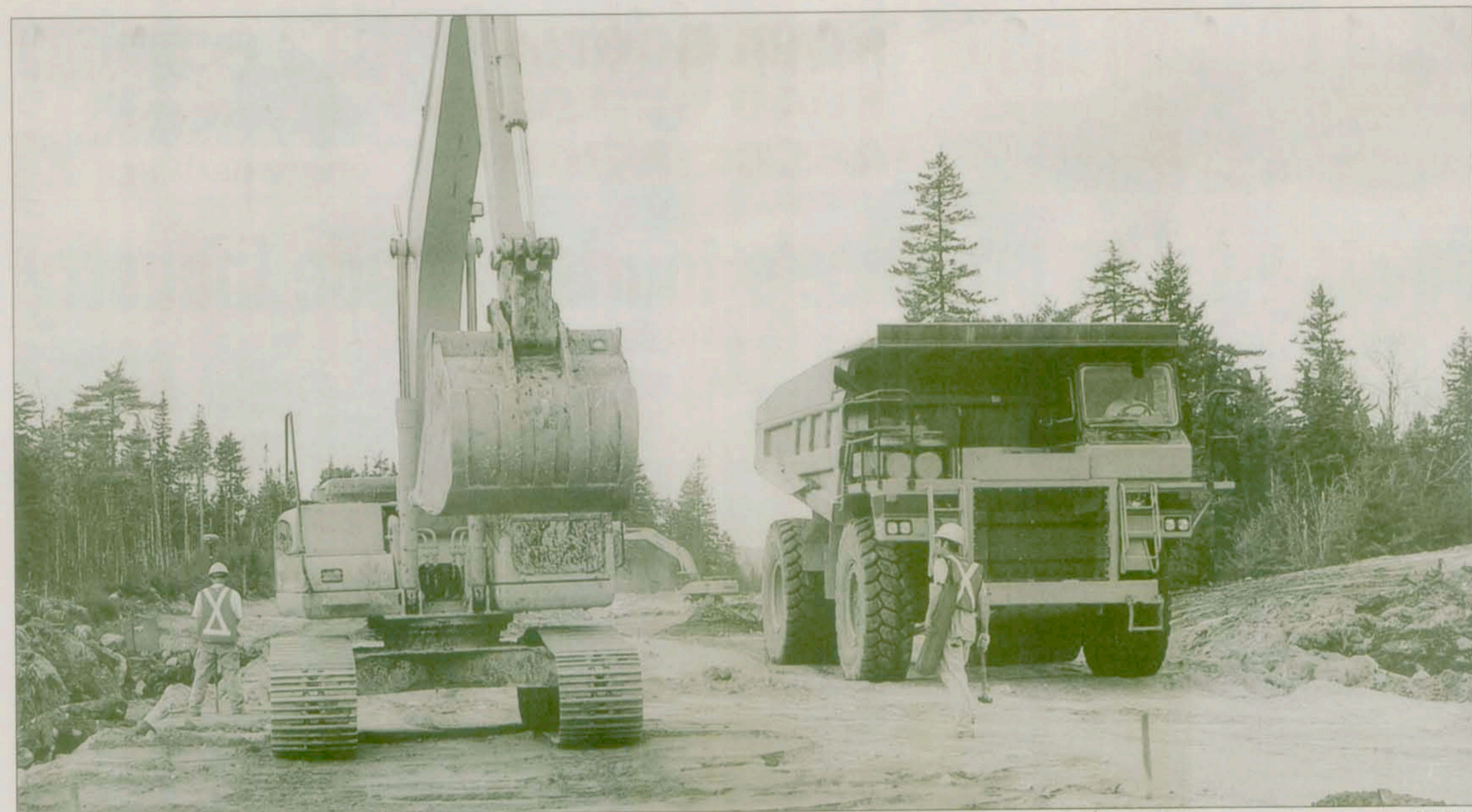
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Nova Scotia Road Builders Association 3rd Annual Hockey Challenge Cup

The Nova Scotia Road Builders Association held its 3rd Annual Hockey Challenge Cup in January. The game, part of the annual NSRBA Annual General Meeting events, took place at the Halifax Metro Centre with the Southern Atlantic Cats defeating the Northern Atlantic Explosive Bulldogs. A great time was had by all. Special thanks to Challenge Cup sponsors Atlantic Tractors and Atlantic Explosives.



Although it may look simple, road building is a complex, time-consuming process. It requires many kinds of engineering expertise and usually involves the cooperation of various trades people.

The Process

Road building is a time-consuming, complex exercise requiring many levels of expertise

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

AS MEMBERS OF the motoring public, most people are quite familiar with Nova Scotia's highways and byways. We use them every day for practically everything we do.

What many people may not know, however, is how roads are made. Although it may look simple, road building is a complex, time-consuming process. It requires many kinds of engineering expertise and usually involves the cooperation of various trades people.

Another dimension is permitting, which is also time-consuming and exacting. And Nova Scotia's unique geography and geology also present many challenges for construction. Road builders must take great care not to disturb the province's many bodies of water and other sensitive environmental areas.

Steps in the road-building process
There are many steps required in the construction of a road and each step is completed according to an original design that meets the needs of the planned route. The first step is the clearing and grubbing of the area where the

road will be built. This entails removing all trees, shrubs, and roots.

After this process is complete, the land must be levelled to meet the design grade for each section of road.

"Excavation is needed when the land is above the desired grade," explains Marcel Poitras of Dexter Construction. "And, the fill of materials is required when land is below the desired grade. Fill consists of either the previously excavated materials, or new material brought in."

As fill is added there's an additional requirement of design compaction.

"Basically, what this means is that the land that the road will be built on must be strong enough to support the road and its traffic without caving or shifting," says Poitras. "After the road has been sufficiently compacted, a sub-base is laid, which consists largely of gravel and spans the length of the designed road. This adds additional support to the road's structure."

The last step is laying the finish material of the road's surface, which is what the traffic will ultimately drive on. This layer usually consists of asphalt; however, depending on the needs of the road, it may be made of concrete or a combination of the two products.

Permits and permission

All land that the road will pass through must be owned or purchased by the developer. If any excavation is required there must be verification of the utilities which may be found in that area. If the road passes over or near any body of water, precautions must be taken to satisfy environmental regulations. If blasting is required, permits must be obtained.

Poitras says the most difficult road building process is probably excavation.



Nova Scotia's unique geography and geology presents many challenges for road and highway construction.

"The excavation of materials is the most costly and time-consuming process in road construction," he says. "The Halifax Regional Municipality consists largely of rock, therefore the majority of cases require rock excavation. Rock excavation becomes more expensive and takes more time because the additional cost of blasting must be considered, as well as restrictions on the size of blasting that can be done at one time, and the times of day when you're allowed to do it."

Environmental protection

In addition to the challenges of tight deadlines, other challenges involve Mother Nature. Nova Scotia has many lakes, rivers, and streams, and other sensitive areas, which road builders must take great care to leave undisturbed. The province has in place many strict environmental regulations that contractors must adhere to.

"There are some public misconceptions about the road construction process," says Poitras.



The excavation of materials is the most costly and time-consuming process in road construction here in Nova Scotia.

"People sometimes think road building takes much longer than it should to complete. This may be due in large part to the slow phases of construction that occur early on in the process, like clearing and excavation. Many times people also question why traffic needs to be re-directed when no actual construction is being done at that particular moment. There are often many reasons for this, including the safety of the workers."



Rock excavation becomes more expensive and takes more time because the additional cost of blasting must be considered, as well as restrictions on the size of blasting that can be done at one time, and the times of day when you're allowed to do it.

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Road building major driver of Nova Scotia's economy

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

WHILE MANY PEOPLE would agree that building and maintaining the road system in Nova Scotia is as important to the province as other basics, like health care and education, there's another side to the industry that's often overlooked—its economic impact.

Road building is one of the province's largest employers and economic drivers, representing a wide cross section of professions and trades. The industry employs 7,500 people and pays an estimated \$875 million in wages annually. Employees range from engineers and architects to surveyors, project managers, heavy equipment operators and safety managers, to name just a few.

The road-building industry is well established in Nova Scotia, with a history going back over 100 years. The Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA) was founded in 1947 and represents the majority of the province's road and bridge construction contractors and industry suppliers.

The association's 140 members are engaged in road, bridge, marine, sewer and water main construction. Membership encompasses many sectors of the economy and ranges from engineering firms and paving contractors to energy, insurance, and telecommunications companies.

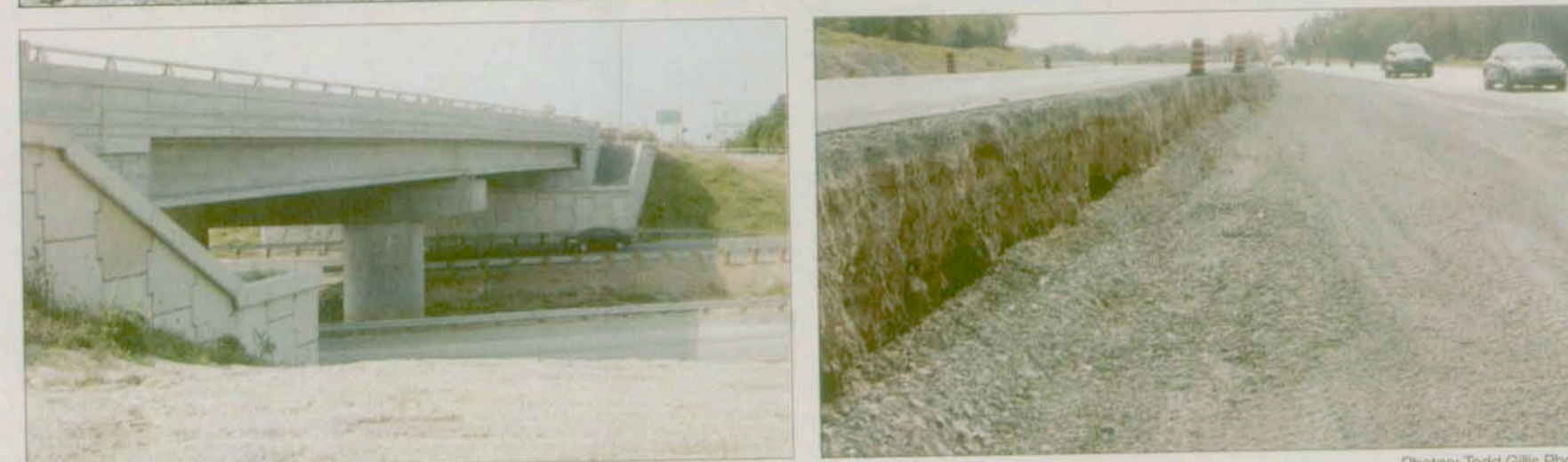
"The road-building industry is a major part of the economy in Nova Scotia," says NSRBA executive director, Barry Hunter. "Our association has members from practically every sector and our work has a huge impact on the service and supply industry."

Hunter says goods and services required by contractors are purchased locally wherever possible, which helps small businesses throughout the province.

He adds that industry workers originate from both rural and urban communities and their payroll and benefits far exceed minimum standards. Hourly rates for many road building jobs range from \$13 to \$22 per hour.

Capital investment is another way in which the industry helps the economy, says Hunter. He points out that some of the major pieces of equipment needed for road building can cost over half a million dollars.

"Our industry is very healthy right now and we're encouraged by the province's commitment to address its infrastructure needs," says Hunter. "If we have sustained budgets for road building, the industry will remain a strong economic driver and Nova Scotia's economy will continue to grow."



Continuing work on the Harbour Solutions Project has generated road work throughout Halifax and Dartmouth, including Lower Water Street (top). The major Highway 103 twinning project was completed last year and shown above, left, is one of several new overpasses that were built. Above, right, is part of the road-building process that took place on the 103 last year near Exit 4.



The Nova Scotia Roadbuilders Association Board of Directors includes (front, left to right): Ron Dunn, director; John MacLean, director; Don Mallett, president; Andrew Lake, director; Trevor Chisholm, director. Back, right to left: Greg Chapman, director; Carl Baillie, immediate past president; Marcel Poltras, director; Guy Kendziora, director; Paul White, vice-president; Brad Scott, director; Barry Hunter, executive director. Missing: Steve Williams, managing director.

Road work takes on all forms, from small fixes to major highway projects. Road work was being done, above, in Halifax last summer near Casino Nova Scotia.



Carl Baillie, left, immediate past president NSRBA; and Steve Williams, P.Eng. managing director, NSRBA; present a cheque to Cheryl Matthews with the Children's Wish Foundation. The NSRBA is a proud supporter of many charities throughout Nova Scotia.



Traffic makes its way along Highway 103 last summer.



Road work continues on one of the largest ongoing retail construction projects east of Calgary at Dartmouth Crossing.

The Projects

Many high-profile projects completed in the last year; several underway

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

PICTURE THOUSANDS OF army ants working together determinedly. Now, in your mind's eye, turn them into engineers, surveyors, heavy-equipment operators, safety managers, and the hundreds of different workers that make up the 7,500-employee road-building industry, and you can imagine the current pace of road building activity across the province.

"Risk would be a good way to describe it," says Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA) president, Don Mallett. "Our industry is very healthy right now and there's lots of work for our members. It's very encouraging."

With the help of the industry's 140-member NSRBA, the N.S. Department of Transportation and Public Works completed several important, high-profile projects in the last year and began work on many others.

The projects highlight the province's new focus on upgrading its transportation infrastructure.

One of the largest jobs this year was the Highway 118-Wright Avenue interchange at Dartmouth Crossing, which cost \$18 million.

"Dartmouth Crossing is a good example of the role government is playing in providing transportation infrastructure," says Department of Transportation and Public Works Minister, Angus MacIsaac.

"A huge investment has been made in Dartmouth Crossing and thousands of people will be using it every day to shop or to work. The investment benefits greatly from the department's provision of a well-designed connection to Highway 118."

This year, the department also completed the twinning of Highway 103 from Otter Lake at Exit 3 to Upper Tantallon at Exit 5. The complex, four-year, \$46-million project involved the construction of several structures and 15 km. of new lanes.

The Barrington bypass on Highway 103 was also completed recently. The work began in 1997, but fell victim to budget cuts and didn't get back on schedule until 2002 and a big push finished it in 2006. Total cost was \$21 million. The Coxheath Interchange, which is now helping Sydney drivers find a better way on and off Highway 125, also wrapped up last year.

Funding commitment
Since 1999 the government has increased its annual transportation budget every year and for 2006-2007 it earmarked \$202 million in capital spending—double what it was four years ago.

The urgency for a greater funding commitment was spelled out in a 2001 needs assessment, done by the transportation department, which identified a \$3.4 billion infrastructure deficit for highways. The report estimated \$340 million needs

to be spent every year over the next decade to maintain our long-neglected highways and bring them back up to standard.

Minister MacIsaac says the government is taking great strides to close the funding gap and is finalizing a new highway cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

"We're very excited by the new infrastructure-related funding programs announced in the recent federal budget," says Minister MacIsaac. "Nova Scotia's entitlement under the programs is expected to total several hundred million dollars over the next seven years."

The initiatives include the Building Canada Program, the Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, the Equal Per Jurisdiction Funding Program, and the P3 Projects Fund. A major problem with federal funding in the past was that Ottawa took far more out of the province in fuel taxes than it returned in highway funding.

In the last six years the feds have collected \$800 million in excise tax from gasoline sales in Nova Scotia, but given us back only \$30 million.

"Nova Scotia and other provinces and territories have lobbied the government of Canada for long-term, stable and predictable infrastructure funding for many years," says Minister MacIsaac. "Up until the recent federal budget, these appeals fell on deaf ears. However, the new cost-



Workers apply new asphalt on a section of Lower Water Street in Halifax last summer.

sharing programs announced in the Federal budget this year will go a long way toward enabling Nova Scotia to achieve its full potential as an international transportation gateway and to facilitate much needed road improvements."

Minister MacIsaac says the department is waiting to learn more about program parameters so it can put in place the agreements and protocols necessary to allow cost-shared projects to proceed as quickly as possible.

Tourism routes and secondary roads
This year's N.S. transportation budget will also address long overdue repairs on the tourism routes, trunk highways, and secondary roads.

The province is now in the second of a four-year commitment to pave 2,000 km of these travel ways, which will include work

on many tourism routes in 2007, including Route 383 near Peggy's Cove and on the Cabot Trail near the Gaelic College.

Ongoing work
Work currently underway on the 100 series highways includes the twinning of two sections on Highway 101 through the Annapolis valley; one section from Saint Croix to Three Mile Plains, and the other from Falmouth to Avonport.

Together these two sections total 112 km and will cost an estimated \$53 million. In Pictou County, work is underway on Highway 104 Trans Canada Highway.

Currently, the section between New Glasgow and Sutherland's River is under construction and later this year the highway will be developed around the Town of Antigonish.

Work also continues on the Steel Truss

Bridge Program. Now in its fifth year, the initiative provides money to replace the province's many aging steel truss bridges. It is budgeted for \$5-million this year and will be extended for another three years starting in 2008.

"One of the most important roles of Transportation and Public Works is to provide a provincial highway system that is safe for all road users," says Minister MacIsaac.

"The budget for 2007-2008 designates \$016,000 to our road safety program, with \$350,000 of that going to social marketing initiatives. We're focusing on road safety related projects to influence smarter choices by Nova Scotians, be they drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists. We're examining the attitudes and behaviours toward road safety and we're educating road users to make better decisions."

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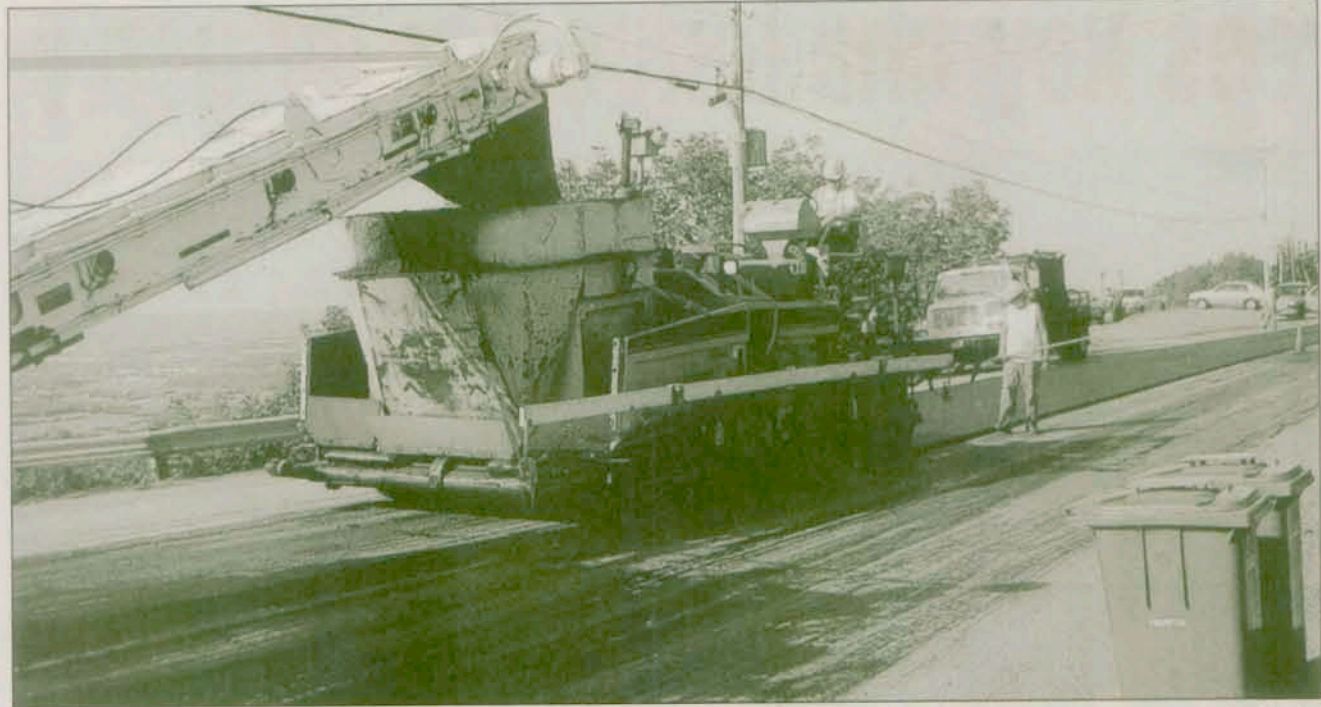
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The road-building industry in Nova Scotia is implementing a number of new technologies and creative ways to reduce its environmental footprint and help save the planet.

Road builders reducing environmental footprint

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

THE ENVIRONMENT is playing an increasingly larger role in almost all human endeavours nowadays. Practically every field from politics to industry to education is factoring environmental thinking into its decision making.

The same can be said for the road building industry in Nova Scotia, which is implementing a number of new technologies and creative ways to reduce its environmental footprint and help save the planet.

Steve Wellwood, with Ocean Contractors Ltd., says the company is continuously seeking newer and better ways to reduce pollution and waste.

"When we're looking for ways we can improve, the environment always comes up," he says. "We're always looking for more environmentally-friendly construction methods."

Wellwood says the company recently invested \$180,000 in new technology at its concrete plant in Halifax to reclaim the aggregate materials from concrete. The concrete reclaimer takes the leftover concrete mix from construction jobs and separates the sand, stone and water so these materials can be reused instead of wasted.

Also, at its asphalt plant, Ocean now uses re-refined oil for heating up asphalt. Wellwood says the company's switch to the more environmentally-friendly fuel has cut back its use of number-2 furnace oil by 90 per cent.

Ocean has also partnered with a local recycler and uses ground up roof shingles to help make asphalt. Wellwood says the process saves the company on virgin liquid asphalt, and reduces the amount of shingles that end up in the dump.

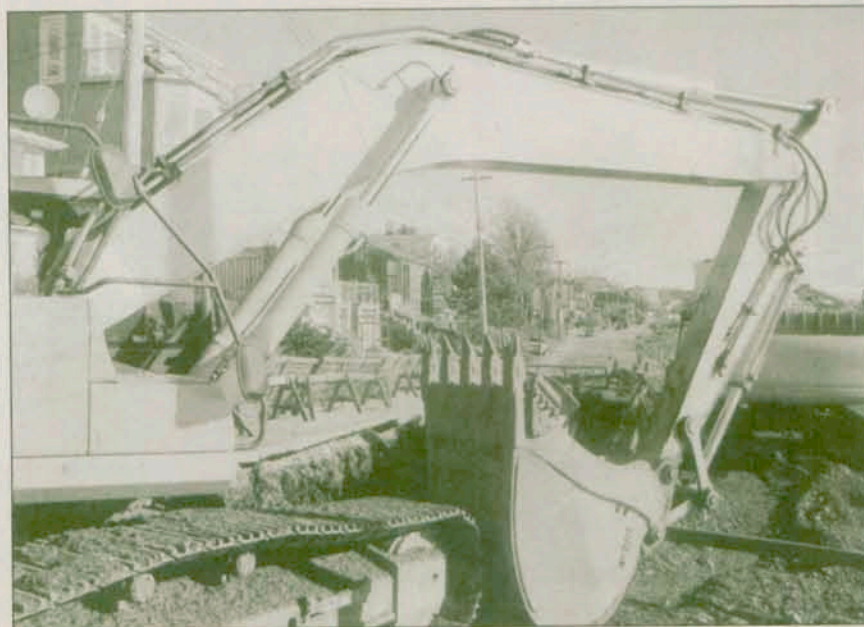
"You have to keep an open mind when it comes to the environment," says Wellwood. "There's thousands of different ways to reduce waste. We shouldn't be scared to try anything."

Ken Thomas, contracts manager for the Municipal Group of Companies in Bedford stated: "In recognizing the environmental impact of consuming new refined petroleum-based fossil fuels, our company was one of the first asphalt producing plants in HRM to convert to the use of waste oil as a primary fuel of our asphalt burner."

Waste oil usage is a process where additional benefits can be derived through reuse as opposed to past practices of shipping to other points in the country to be disposed of.

"Over the last 10 years our waste oil usage has replaced 60 per cent of the need for use of fossil based fuels," Thomas said.

TRAX, a lead contractor for Dartmouth Crossing's 200-acre retail development, has gained significant insight



The Shore Drive Road in Dartmouth received some upgrades as a result of work being done on the Harbour Solutions Project.

into how to improve current practices to achieve higher levels of sustainability. "Expanding upon successful experiences in order to promote environmental stewardship is key to greener initiatives," said TRAX Construction president, Paul Behner.

"Our team moved millions of tonnes of natural resources and dealt with millions of litres of storm water non-stop for two years and we have identified areas where current practices may come up short in terms of the environment. The time is right to demonstrate a different way of doing things, hence 'The Greener Dig' project."

The goal of The Greener Dig is to lead the construction industry to a "Waste-Less" culture, based on Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) and in alignment with the goals of Halifax Regional Municipality — re-use, reduce, recycle — to achieve more sustainable built environments. As work is underway on a rocky site and vegetation and soil layers have been removed, this material may be reprocessed into beneficial soils and additional undercutting may be undertaken on the blasted rock surface.

The reprocessed material could then be used to build up the top layers into a more substantial nutrient-rich growing medium on top of the rock fill.

Lafarge is another local contractor committed to greener solutions. The company has a detailed environmental policy and works with environmental groups like Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) to conserve and restore wildlife habitat.

Lafarge's cement plant in Brookfield recently partnered with DUC for the creation of three wetland areas. The

20-year conservation agreement signed with DUC protects over 38 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat, which will be conserved for waterfowl and other wildlife.

"We're leaders in environmental protection," says Lafarge's Gary Rudolph. "As part of our environmental policy, for every acre that we disturb, we rehabilitate 1.2 acres. Our environmental best practices comply with and go far above and beyond legislated requirements."

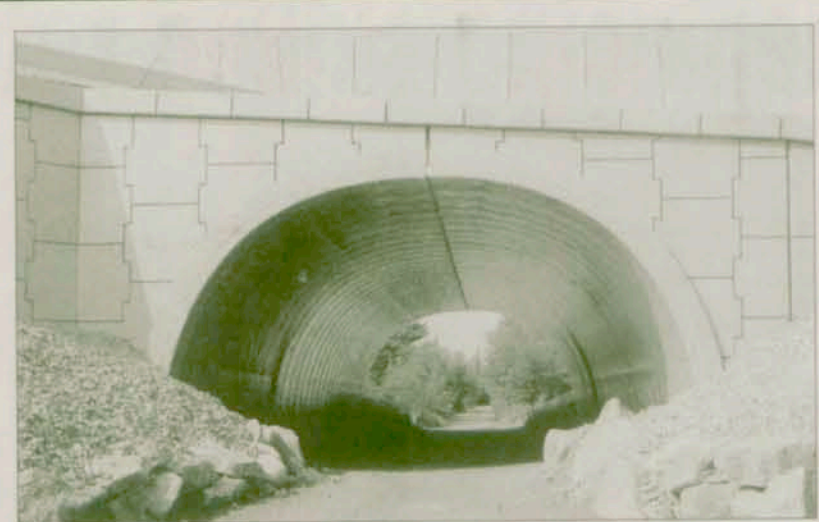
Rudolph says the company's environmental stewardship encompasses employees training in a wide range of areas, including courses on erosion and sediment control.

The company also uses many environmentally-friendly construction practices and technologies, including reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP). With this process a paving train consisting of a mill, re-blender, and paving machine recycles an existing road and uses it, plus new materials, to make a new one.

The RAP method can build a new road using up to 20 per cent recycled material. The process saves on new asphalt cement and also reduces the costs of trucking material to the construction site.

Rudolph says Lafarge is also actively involved in the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association's efforts to liaison with government to develop environmental guidelines and regulations for the industry.

"Our company and other members of the Road Builders Association are committed to doing the right thing for the environment, for everyone's benefit," he says. "We believe it's the right thing to do."



This overpass was constructed as part of the Highway 103 twinning.

Just the facts...

Who we are

- Founded in 1947, NSRBA represents contractors working in Nova Scotia who are engaged in road, bridge, heavy, marine, sewer and water main construction.
- The interests of suppliers to the industry are met through associate membership.
- NSRBA is the only organization representing the road-building sector in N.S.
- Our 140 member companies directly employ approximately 7,500 individuals annually.
- Our work impacts significantly on the service and supply industry.
- We are distinct from the construction industry; we have unique working conditions and needs.

- Employees are highly valued.
- They expect, wish and are often required to work long hours.
- They are often away from home for extended periods.
- They originate from both rural and urban communities; from every county, town and village in the province.
- Their payroll and benefits substantially exceed minimum standards.

- Spin-offs of road building
 - Approximately 7,500 persons, directly earning an estimated \$375 million in wages, are employed annually by the sector; these numbers will grow as funding increases.
 - Economic benefits accrue to communities and families across N.S.
 - Goods and services required by contractors are purchased locally wherever possible, assisting small businesses province wide; a typical paving job brings increased revenues to the local motel.
 - Improves sustainability of Nova Scotia's rural communities and businesses.

- Industry realities
 - Our sector is highly competitive.
 - The industry is seasonal. Early tender calls are critical to timely tender completion.
 - Safety is a top priority for the industry.

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- ORDINARY MEMBERS:**
- Aburden Paving Limited
 - Ava Construction Limited
 - Basin Contracting Limited
 - Chapman Bros. Construction Ltd.
 - Cambridge Paving & Contracting Ltd.
 - Dexter Construction Co. Ltd.
 - Industrial Cold Milling
 - Lafarge Construction Materials
 - Modern Enterprises Ltd.
 - Municipal Ready-Mix Ltd.
 - Nova Construction Co. Ltd.
 - Ocean Contractors Ltd.
 - Ocean Paving Limited
 - S.W. Weeks Construction Ltd.
- ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:**
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 - GE Canada Equipment Financing GP
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The road-building industry in Nova Scotia employs 7,500 people and pays an estimated \$375 million in wages annually. Its payroll and benefits far exceed minimum standards. Hourly rates for many road building jobs range from \$13 to \$22 per hour. Workers prepare an overpass, above, on Lady Hammond Drive in North End Halifax recently for concrete resurfacing.

Road-building careers offer good money, challenging work

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

WHILE CAREERS in road building are incredibly diverse, they have at least two things in common: good money and challenging work.

The road-building industry employs people from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, from engineers and architects to IT specialists, communications people, surveyors, project managers, heavy equipment operators and safety managers, to name just a few.

Although many road building jobs require you to work outside, and are appealing for that reason, the industry offers a vast range of employment opportunities. Options include laboratory analysis and testing, environmental

analysis, civil design, project management, inspection of construction projects, and technical writing for consultants, construction companies and other contractors.

The industry employs 7,500 people and pays an estimated \$375 million in wages annually. Its payroll and benefits far exceed minimum standards. Hourly rates for many road building jobs range from \$13 to \$22 per hour.

"It's a hands-on industry," says executive director of the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA), Barry Hunter. "It's well suited for results-oriented people who like to do things and do them right. It offers lots of opportunity for decision making—it's very rewarding work."

"In this industry you have to work as a team. You can't expect to do it all yourself and get everything done on your own. You have to cooperate and work with many different people."

BARRY HUNTER
NSRBA Executive Director

Hunter says team work is critical in the road building industry, as many projects involve the cooperation of

various trades people and rely on the expertise of specialists in many different engineering, architectural, and technical fields.

"In this industry you have to work as a team," he says. "You can't expect to do it all yourself and get everything done on your own. You have to cooperate and work with many different people."

Hunter says a project like Dartmouth Crossing, the \$280-million commercial real estate development in Dartmouth, employed hundreds of people from the road-building industry in its first phase of construction. He says the job employed over 50 NSRBA member companies,

who were involved in everything from land clearing, to sewer work, to parking lot construction.

Road building will offer lots of employment opportunities in the years ahead and plenty of reason to stay here to work in Nova Scotia, says Hunter. He points out that many of the industry's workers here are nearing retirement and the province is putting more money into repairing infrastructure.

"Road building is a good career choice," says Hunter. "There's lots of work on the horizon and plenty of opportunity for advancement with companies right here in Nova Scotia."

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The 500-acre Dartmouth Crossing site will devote 200 acres to retail and feature a mix of large- and medium-box stores as well as shops, boutiques, and services, with 20 restaurants, two hotels, and a 12-screen movie theatre. The development will also include 100,000 square feet of office space. Excavators, above, work on parking lots in Dartmouth Crossing.

Dartmouth Crossing project entering phase two

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

SMART PLANNING MIGHT be the best way to describe Dartmouth Crossing, the \$280-million commercial real estate development currently under construction in Dartmouth.

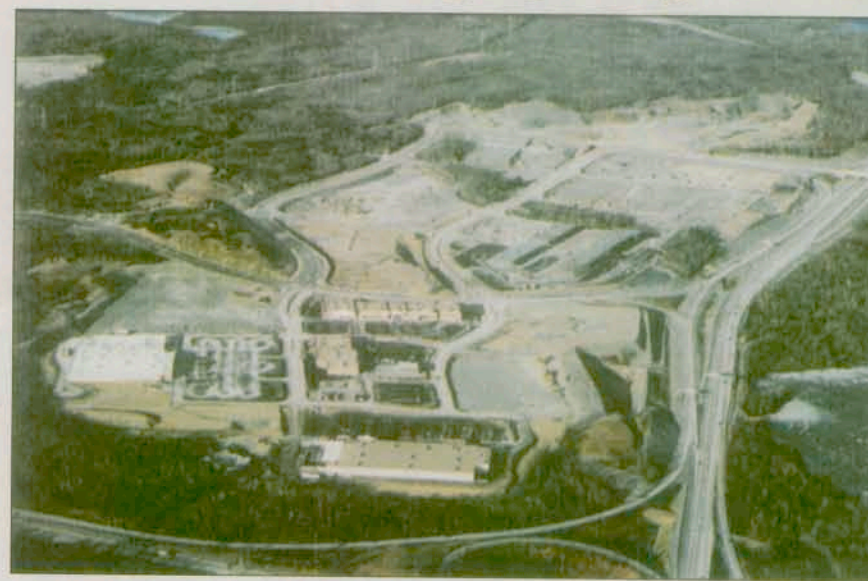
Located north of the Highway 118-Highway 111 interchange, road access is one of the many aspects of the project well thought out in advance. The North American Development Group project benefits from a well-designed and newly-constructed interchange at Highway 118 and Wright Avenue which cost \$18 million and took two years to complete.

Dartmouth Crossing is the largest retail construction project east of Calgary. Twice the size of Bayers Lake, when completed it will feature over two million square feet of retail space and employ 15,000 people.

The project is now entering its second phase of construction and is expected to take another eight years to finish.

The 500-acre site will devote 200 acres to retail and feature a mix of large and medium box stores as well as shops, boutiques, and services, with 20 restaurants, two hotels, and a 12-screen movie theatre.

The development will also include 100,000 square feet of office space.



Contributed

Dartmouth Crossing is the largest retail construction project east of Calgary. Twice the size of Bayers Lake, when completed it will feature over two million square feet of retail space and employ 15,000 people.

Nine stores are now open at Dartmouth Crossing, including Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Golf Town, and 80 more retailers will set up shop before the end of the year.

"It's a fourth-generation open air shopping experience," says John Fleming, vice president of Ocean Contract-

ors Ltd. "It's Bayers Lake with a twist—bigger and better, and much more intelligently designed."

Ocean Contractors, which is constructing the majority of the roads and parking lots, is one of over 50 Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA) companies helping to build

Dartmouth Crossing. Other major contractors include NSRBA members ACL Construction Limited, Trax Construction Limited and Black & McDonald. Fleming says traffic flow in and out of the site will run smoothly, due to the inclusion of many access points, and parking will be much more user friendly than other major retail developments in the area.

The project features a unique design, he says, with box stores in a ring on the outside and smaller retailers and services in the middle. "It's not at all like a typical retail park," he says. "It's pedestrian friendly and made for people to walk through. The idea is to create a town atmosphere or small-market feel. It's going to be quite different than anything we've seen around here."

The shops at Dartmouth Crossing will feature boutique retail with a strong focus on fashion in a neighbourhood setting. Streetscapes will incorporate restaurants, public washroom facilities, transit, street furniture, plantings and other lifestyle amenities. The storefronts will feature a brick design, reminiscent of the 1920s.

Minimizing the development's environmental impact was another major part of the planning. A quarry and asphalt plant existed

over much of the area and the plant had to be moved and the site re-mediated.

The developers also took great care not to disturb the water areas on site, Grassy Brook and Frenchmen's Lake, and relocated osprey nests, re-mediated brown field sites, and created easy and safe access to Shubie Park.

The development is a major supporter of the G. Fraser Conrail Pedestrian Bridge in Shubie Park. The bridge is now a registered part of the Trans Canada Trail and will eventually be part of the linked trail system starting from the harbour and winding through Dartmouth along the lakes and into Fall River.

Also, Dartmouth Crossing is the first retail centre in HRM to use clean, efficient natural gas for heating.

"The developers have spent a lot of time, effort, and money to reduce the environmental footprint," says Ocean Contractors' John Fleming.

"Our company has been in business for 33 years and this is the most significant project we've ever seen. Something of this size has many challenges, but there's been a real team work approach that's worked really well."



Bonnie Bobryk Photography

The Dartmouth Crossing project is now entering its second phase of construction and is expected to take another eight years to finish. Traffic flow in and out of the site will run smoothly, due to the inclusion of many access points, and parking will be much more user friendly than other major retail developments in the area.

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Replacing skilled retirees key challenge for industry

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

AN AGING WORKFORCE and strong demand for industry services, like road building, is increasing the need for training infrastructure in the province, says the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS).

Executive director, Carol MacCulloch, says the construction industry is cooperating on a number of initiatives to improve training capacity and deal with anticipated labour shortages in the years ahead. She says the key challenge facing the industry right now is replacing the many skilled labourers who are now retiring.

Thirty thousand people work in Nova Scotia's construction labour force and four to five per cent of them are retiring every year, without being replaced. Many of these workers are highly skilled tradesmen, superintendents, and foremen who've honed their skills over decades of work.

"We're anticipating shortages of people who can operate and repair machinery, heavy equipment and trucks," says MacCulloch. "Companies are recognizing the challenges and doing something about it now."

Demand for construction services is strong in Nova Scotia and across the country, says MacCulloch, as governments are addressing infrastructure deficits and investing in major public projects, like roads, sewers, and water treatment facilities. She says the uptick in construction is resulting from shifting population trends, urbanization, and the upgrading of environmental and water quality standards.

Innovative practices and new equipment, techniques and products are playing a major role in responding to the labour shortages, says MacCulloch. A key trend, she says, is that contractors are improving efficiency and spending more time planning and phasing projects.

"Our goal is to minimize the down time associated with the seasonal cycles that can affect the industry," she says. "Younger people coming into the industry don't want the seasonal type of work the industry has been known for in the past—they want to work steadily throughout the year. We recognize this and we're trying to provide greater stability of employment and reduce seasonal layoffs."

Finding a way to support people so they can complete their training and achieve journeyman status is another challenge facing the industry. The increased demand for labour and the lack



Todd Gills Photo

A road worker prepares a portion of an overpass for concrete resurfacing on Lady Hammond Drive in Halifax recently.

of training resources has created a situation where many people are getting work before completing their trade qualifications.

"The challenge," says MacCulloch, "does not seem to be attracting people to the trades and the industry—it's having adequate resources in the apprenticeship system, seats at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), and the strategies to support trades people in the full journey through their qualifications."

The industry and NSCC are working together to find solutions to the various labour-related issues. The Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS) has partnered with NSCC and the apprenticeship division to look at the school's capacity and infrastructure and address the industry's requirements for new entrants.

"We're working with NSCC to support their phase two project for trades and technologies, to explore new models of program delivery for the trades, and to expand the youth apprenticeship program to provide summer work experiences for young people interested in construction careers," says MacCulloch. "Traditionally the onus has been on the individual to hit the streets after graduation to look for a job. We're trying to find a better way to connect employers and workers together."

MacCulloch says CANS is also increasing its continuing education capacity to help people already working in the industry upgrade and expand their knowledge.

"Our association has partnered with the workplace education program to help promote people through the industry more effectively than we have in the past," she says. "In the last two years, over 800 people have participated in our continuing education programs."

CANS has teamed with the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association and other interest groups to develop a labour market forecasting system to identify labour shortages in time to address them before they happen. The national Construction Sector Council program can predict employment trends and major project developments in the next 10 years and determine future training needs.

"The forecast will allow groups that train construction trades people, like NSCC, to make investment decisions," says MacCulloch. "It will help them make linkages with the business community and set up programs needed to train workers for the job opportunities ahead."

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Obeying work-site speed limits, signs saves lives

Fines will soon be doubled for speeding through construction zones in Nova Scotia

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

HOW WOULD YOU like it if someone came to your workplace and threatened your life?

If you work in road construction, that's basically what happens when drivers speed through highway construction zones and fail to obey the traffic safety signs. This kind of driving behaviour endangers the road workers, the driver, and surrounding traffic.

Sergeant Jeff Wells, with RCMP Halifax Metro Traffic Services, says the risks are severe. He points out that in Nova Scotia unsafe driving in highway construction zones has caused a death and many injuries and resulted in countless near misses.

"It's not only about slowing down," says Wells. "It's also about paying attention to the stop signs and obeying the signals of the person directing traffic. Drivers have to remember that there's a person behind that sign and there's people at work behind those cones. The speed limits and the signs are in place for everyone's benefit, to keep everyone safe."

Wells says a driver could be responsible for any death or injury as a result of negligence or criminal actions resulting in death or injury. He points out that there are fines under the Motor Vehicle Act that would apply for failing to stop at a construction zone stop sign, and, coming very shortly, there will be double fines for speeding through a construction zone.

In an effort to get drivers to respect the workplace of highway workers, by obeying the signs, directions, and posted speed limits, the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works runs an annual ad campaign every June to remind drivers about safety. The initiative consists of TV, radio, and newspaper ads.

On its Web site, the department also advises motorists about active construction zones using traffic advisories, and will soon be expanding the Cone Zone feature on its Web site to provide more graphical information about provincial construction zones.

The RCMP is also taking steps to improve safety. The force designates July as construction zone safety month and increases its presence, works with the transportation department on construction zone safety issues, and conducts educational efforts through radio ads.

Sergeant Wells says the key message is very simple. "Drivers must remember to respect the construction zone as a workplace," he says. "They should respect the safety of the people working there and respect the signal person who directs the traffic."

"Most importantly," he says, "you have to slow down while approaching, driving through, and exiting a construction zone. While passing through you've got to concentrate on your driving, not get distracted, and be prepared to stop for whatever reason. Be patient, it's only a short inconvenience."



Sergeant Jeff Wells, with RCMP Halifax Metro Traffic Services, said that in Nova Scotia unsafe driving in highway construction zones has caused a death and many injuries and resulted in countless near misses.

Summer safe-driving tips

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

Buckle up

The number one safety precaution you can take is to make sure everyone in your vehicle is properly buckled up (including children's car seats).

Rest

Summer vacations often mean long stretches of time behind the wheel but smart drivers don't give in to the temptation to push on when they're tired.

Even a momentary blank out by a driver could prove fatal. Rest stops are important. If you're tired, pull over. Arriving a little late is better than not arriving.

Prepare

Before leaving on any long trip it's a good idea to tune up your vehicle. Check your tires and lights and carry a flashlight, flares and first-aid kit. Have a map handy and make sure

you know your route.

Adjust

A summer trip usually means a fully loaded vehicle or a trailer. This can increase the amount of time you need to stop or pass.

Leave extra distance between you and the vehicle ahead and make sure you have plenty of space before passing.

Concentrate

Make safe driving your number one priority. Let someone other than the driver handle the cell phone and, if the scenery is too beautiful for the driver to resist, pull over in a safe place and take a look.



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Potential gains as an international gateway include exponential growth in container traffic, increases in international air-passenger traffic and cargo handling, and a stronger cruise ship industry.

NSRBA stresses importance of Atlantic Gateway

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

MOST OF THE time, having the right skills, abilities, and natural talent will get you the job. Being in the right place at the right time doesn't hurt either.

Fortunately, for Atlantic Canada, its resume boasts all the above and the region is in a prime position to take advantage of a golden opportunity resulting from changing global shipping trends. The most significant opportunity is in the area of gateway container traffic, transported from India and Asia to North America via post-Panamax ships traveling through the Suez Canal.

The Halifax Harbour and the Strait of Canso are deep enough to accommodate fully laden post-Panamax container ships, which are much larger than the old style Panamax ships designed to fit through the Panama Canal. The new breed of container vessel is soon to be common to the world's shipping fleet. In the emerging post-Panamax era, Nova Scotia's deep, ice-free waters, easy access to North American markets, and excellent transportation links will give our province a competitive advantage over U.S. eastern ports.

David Oxner, director of the gateway initiative for the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works, says the province is strategically located at the north eastern tip of North America and is well positioned to enhance its role as a transportation gateway to the continent. He says Nova Scotia is a natural entry point for commodities from Europe and Asia through the Suez Canal. "With a modern port infrastructure and an excellent airport, Halifax is an international gateway to the world," says Oxner. "We have the third largest container port in Canada and Halifax Stan-

field International Airport is one of the fastest growing in the country. Halifax is also a major origin and destination point in Atlantic Canada for both rail and trucking."

With a capacity crisis occurring at west coast North American ports and the expected explosion of the Chinese and Indian economies in the years ahead, Oxner says, now is the time to further develop the Atlantic Gateway, for the benefit of the regional and national economies.

To capitalize on our unique position to accept and deliver goods coming from overseas, several local organizations and government agencies are now building on the work of the Halifax Gateway Council, founded in 2004 to develop an Atlantic Gateway Strategy. The idea is to more aggressively promote Atlantic Canada as the preferred eastern gateway in North America and develop its infrastructure to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Oxner says the Government of Nova Scotia is working with the transportation industry, stakeholders, and all levels of government to further develop the Atlantic Gateway. The strategy, he says, would be a tremendous boost to the regional economy. He says it would also help Canada remain competitive because it would give us a second door for Asian traffic, to add to our Pacific Gateway.

Barry Hunter, executive director of the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association, agrees. He says our air, sea, road, and rail transportation modes already employ nearly 27,000 people in Halifax, with a payroll topping \$1 billion and total economic impact of \$3.7 billion per year. "Nova Scotia must champion the Atlantic Gateway with both the private and public sectors to convince key decision makers of the significance of this

great opportunity. It is one of the 'biggest games in town' for Nova Scotia and the remainder of the region. But it must be demonstrated that our province is not in a situation where our resources to move this opportunity forward are not diluted and Nova Scotia, in particular, cannot have polarization of regions as we strive to gain momentum for this project in Ottawa and gain their support. Other ports on the East Coast will capitalize if a deliberate, unified regional approach is not maintained and understood from our friends in Ottawa." Hunter says progress has already been

made in getting federal government support. It needs to continue. He points out that improvements will be needed to the highway systems within the province and also within New Brunswick and Quebec. A priority, he says, is the twinning of Highway 104 to the Canso Causeway, upgrades to the 104 interchange in Truro, and improved traffic corridors. "Our potential

gains as an international gateway include exponential growth in container traffic, increases in international air passenger traffic and cargo handling, and a stronger cruise ship industry. We have the potential to be the preferred North American gateway for global trade."

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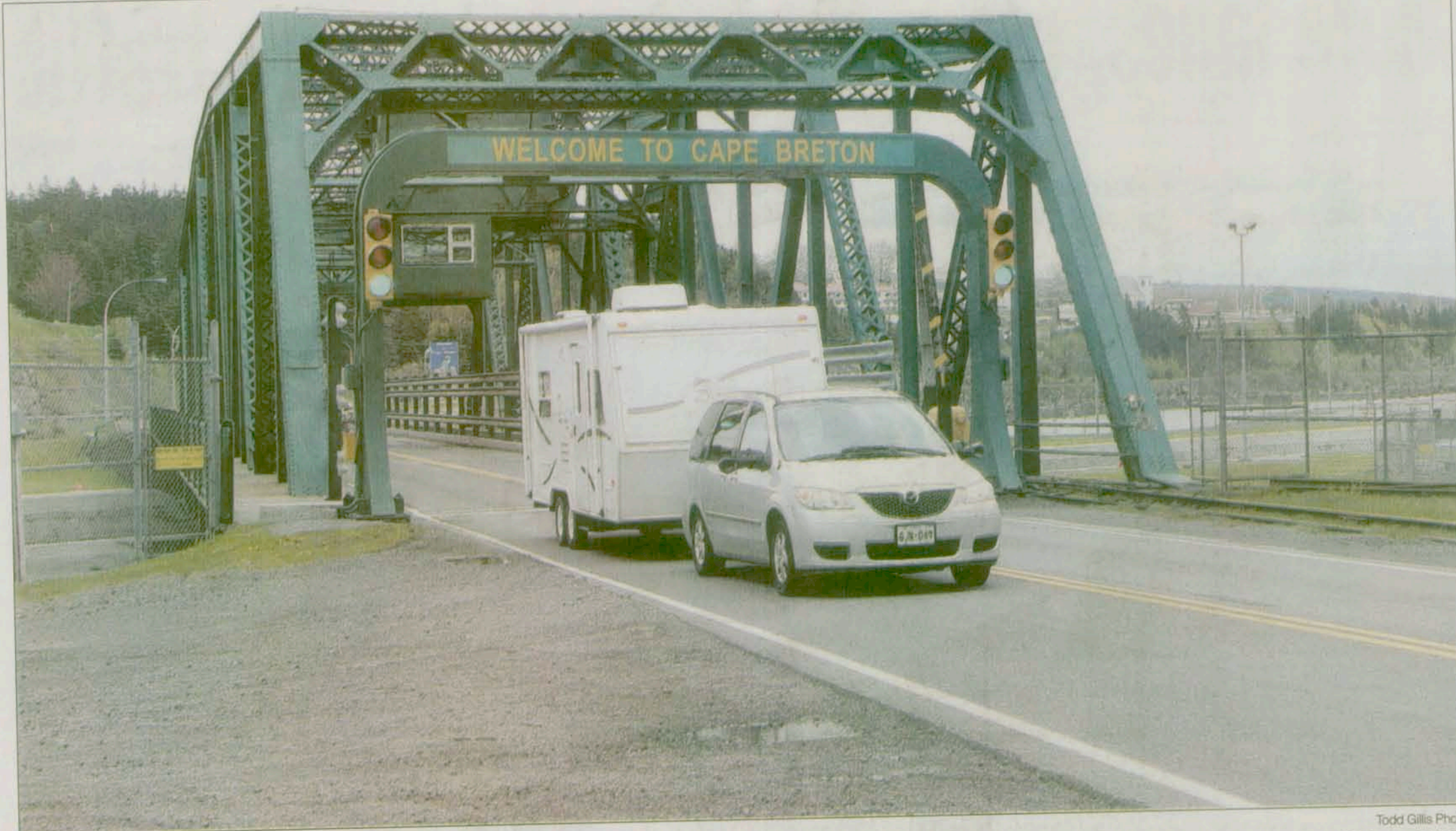
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Todd Galla Photo

Cape Breton boasts many of Nova Scotia's most famous seaside tourism attractions along its gorgeous scenic routes. But no matter how spectacular the Cabot Trail is, if visitors driving on it think it's rundown, they're probably not going to come back.

Good roads crucial to Cape Breton tourism

Public starting to notice difference on Cape Breton Island roads

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

ROAD BUILDING IN Nova Scotia is a key part of practically every sector of the economy.

Our highways and byways are the links that tie our communities together and allow us to conduct business and generate economic growth.

Of all the province's economic sectors, it is perhaps tourism that is most directly impacted by the condition of our roads.

This is especially true in Cape Breton, which boasts many of Nova Scotia's most famous seaside tourism attractions along its gorgeous scenic routes. But, no matter how spectacular the Cabot Trail is, if visitors driving on it think it's rundown, they're probably not going to come back.

"Cape Breton is a huge part of the province's tourism product," says Sandra MacDonald, general manager of the Destination Cape Breton Association. "We've had a lot of roadwork done in the last two years and it's very encouraging. There's still more that needs to be done, though. It's important for tourism and for Cape Breton that we have a good infrastructure in place."

MacDonald says an 11 kilometre section of the Cabot Trail still needs work, as does the highway to Louisbourg and several other main routes that carry much of the visitor traffic on the island.

She says the poor condition of these roads is starting to impact tourism businesses and is particularly hard on visiting recreational vehicle traffic, which is finding it hard to navigate all the bumps in road.

Carl Baillie, with Municipal Ready-Mix Limited in Sydney, says the provincial transportation department has been increasing its budget for highway repairs for the last several years and this year completed a number of projects in Cape Breton.

He says work on the Coxheath Interchange on Highway 125, which cost \$12 million over three years, wrapped up this year, as did an \$11 million project to repair route 4, Kings Road into Sydney. And, this summer, he says, work will begin on twinning the final section of highway 125 between North Sydney and Sydney River. He says other projects slated for upcoming work include sections of the highway to Louisbourg, Route 4 from Port Hawkesburg to Sydney, and Trunk 19 in Inverness.

"We've had a lot of roadwork done in the last two years and it's very encouraging. There's still more that needs to be done, though. It's important for tourism and for Cape Breton that we have a good infrastructure in place."

SANDRA MACDONALD
Destination Cape Breton
Association

"I think the upgrades will help tourism here," says Baillie. "If you're more comfortable when you're driving you can enjoy the scenery more. If visitors are happy they'll spend more money here, they'll go home and tell their friends about us, and they'll want to come back."

Baillie says the roadwork will also improve highway safety. He points out that even a two-foot widening of a highway, such as the work slated for Route 4, can reduce the accident rate by as much as 25 per cent.

A new federal infrastructure program, the Equal Per Jurisdiction Funding Program, is also good news for Cape Breton, says Baillie, as it will help the province pay for much needed upgrades to the island's tourism routes.

The program will provide Nova Scotia with \$25 million for road work each year for the next seven years. In previous cost-sharing agreements with Ottawa, tourism route upgrades were not eligible for cost-sharing dollars, but they will be eligible under this new program. "The province realizes that tourism is very important and that our roads are a vital part of it," says Baillie.



Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage

The Cabot Trail in Cape Breton offers some of the most spectacular scenery in the world.

"They've been putting money into action in the last few years and the public is starting to notice a difference on the roads. It's definitely appreciated."

Clearing a better path for the future

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

THERE'S AN EXPRESSION: a new broom sweeps clean. While Barry Hunter, the new executive director of the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (NSRBA), was not brought in to make any wide sweeping changes to the 60-year-old organization, he is clearing a better path for the road building industry's future.

With a background in the energy sector and many years' experience in communications and negotiation, Hunter is the right person at the right time. He is the association's first-ever executive director, a new position created recently to help the industry deal with its current challenges.

As road building faces anticipated labour shortages and government budget deficits for infrastructure maintenance, the NSRBA point man will be tasked with communicating with governments, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to keep the industry strong and healthy in the years ahead.

"As the dynamic of the industry changes and becomes more complex, the association sees the need to do more communications work and liaison with other interest groups," says Hunter. "We want to be more proactive in meeting our challenges and have the ability to deal one-on-one with stakeholders to make sure our mutual interests are addressed."

The NSRBA currently sits on committees with government looking for ways to improve standards, technology, and safety. Hunter says the association is also striving to develop relationships with N.S. Caucuses and MLAs to work on issues of mutual interest.

The association's main focus right now, says Hunter, is to maintain its positive working relationship with the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works and secure a sustained, long-term funding commitment for roadwork. Our business plan needs to be more deliberate with measurable goals to ensure consistency in the organization of our association's resources.

Although the department has been increasing its budget for highway repairs for the last several years, he says, there is a \$3.4 billion infrastructure deficit. The pace of funding has not reflected the rapid deterioration in our highway systems due to age in combination with increased traffic volumes.

"We still have quite a ways to go to close the funding gap," says Hunter. "We're working with transportation to optimize the funding for roadwork and ensure that the money that is allocated is well spent. We have a common goal to develop the best and safest highway system for the motoring public."

"The dollars identified by government to get our roads to an acceptable standard is \$400 million/year for 10 years. In 2006, our provincial highway budget was \$200 million, and in 2007 it is estimated at \$165 million. The province cannot 'go it alone' with our small tax base... we need the support of federal government cost-sharing arrangements for highway construction."

In the last six years, \$803 million was sent from Nova Scotia to the federal government in the form of excise tax for gasoline. This is the tax we pay every time we fill up our car at the local gas station—the 10 cents/litre of gas, or \$5 for a \$50 fill up. In the same period, the federal government granted Nova Scotia \$31 million for cost-sharing highway construction agreements. This situation involving the amount of money Nova Scotia collects and transfers to the federal government, and then receives in return, needs to be addressed. The NSRBA hopes to assist the N.S. Department of Transportation and Public Works in actively pursuing new cost-sharing agreements with Ottawa.

"Our other key challenge is that we're losing our labour force to Western Canada," he says. "We're currently working with Nova Scotia Community College and at the high-school level to develop better training programs and to show students what our industry here has to offer."



Photos: Bonnie Bobyk Photography

Road workers add fresh asphalt to a section of Dartmouth Crossing recently. The mammoth project has entered phase two of its development.

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Congratulations to the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association for another year of successful representation of a vital sector of the Nova Scotia construction industry. As an association member, TRAX Construction Ltd. is pleased to again support the association's annual feature publication.

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At TRAX, we believe road building is about more than tonnes of asphalt and gravel imposed by giant dump trucks and heavy machinery. Road building is also about creating and maintaining transportation networks that drive our economy and link our neighbourhoods. It's about providing employment in our communities, assisting our valued workers to meet their career goals while also ensuring a safe and caring workplace. TRAX is a proud recipient of the Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association's Founder Award in 2007 for the demonstration and promotion of safe work practices.

Many members of NSRBA are proud to support greener approaches to construction projects. With significant technological advancements in construction machinery, the road building sector can access improved efficiencies and provide greener initiatives that recognize a global movement towards a more sustainable environment. TRAX Construction is an eco-friendly road builder that is embracing new technologies to provide evolutionary erosion and sedimentation control. We are also implementing beneficial industry practices that promote the most efficient use of non-renewable natural resources on our construction sites. At TRAX, we've called our new initiative The Greener Dig.

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Schools partner with industry to meet labour needs

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

TRAINING FOR WORK in the road-building industry is serious business, as intense and complex as a university education.

Take a job like heavy duty mechanic, for example. Vital to the industry, heavy duty mechanics have to do 8,000 hours of training in the classroom and on the job before they get their license.

Because of the length of time it takes to train people, and in response to an aging work force and growing demand for construction services like road building, the industry is planning ahead for its future.

Training institutions are creating innovative new programs and partnering with industry to meet the labour needs of tomorrow.

Thirty thousand people work in the province's construction industry and four to five per cent are retiring every year, without being replaced.

In many cases the retirees are the industry's best and most skilled: trades people, superintendents, and foremen who've worked for decades in key supervisory roles.

Heading off anticipated labour shortages is a key challenge, say industry experts, like Carol MacCulloch of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS).

"With the strong demand for construction services," says MacCulloch, "companies are looking for new methods and equipment to be more productive, but they must be able to supervise and control the work they undertake to ensure safety and successful completion of the project, including its financial success. The ability to manage and supervise the work is a key area of focus."

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) is one institution that's taking steps to create and deliver the training needed for the next generation of skilled labour.

In September, NSCC's School of Trades & Technology will introduce its brand new civil engineering technology program.

The two-year course, which includes a five-week on the job training and an optional co-operative education, will add to the college's other industry-related programs, which include heavy equipment operator and the Dexter Institute's heavy construction program.

"NSCC is always looking to industry for feedback on their future needs, through our 30 program advisory committees, which include over 500 industry



Lewis Dyou is one of the students in the Dexter Institute, the heavy construction program partnership developed by Nova Scotia Community College and Dexter Construction.

members," says NSCC curriculum consultant Lisa Boyle.

"When an emerging industry is identified we research and develop programs that meet the industry and economic needs of Nova Scotia. In 2007, our School of Trades & Technology will be delivering four new, full-time programs as well as many customized training programs across the province."

NSCC's civil engineering technology program will train people for the planning, designing, construction and maintenance of structures and public works, and altering geography to suit human needs.

Civil engineering technologists work on various aspects of built structures, including highways. The program will be nationally accredited by the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists at the technologist level.

Seeing the need to develop more local training infrastructure, in 2001 Dexter Construction partnered with NSCC to create the Dexter Institute, a two-year cooperative heavy construction program that trains people for careers in the road building and construction industry.

Course topics include heavy equipment theory and operation, surveying, drafting, geology, and project management. The program accepts 35 students per year and graduates receive a partial tuition reimbursement and are guaranteed employment with Dexter Construction.

"The program was designed to provide learners with a broad range of learning and experience in the civil construction industry," says NSCC's Lisa Boyle. "It includes classroom theory and practical on-the-job paid training provided by Dexter Construction. Graduates are hired in many areas of the company including foremen, surveyors, project managers, equipment operators, and safety managers."

The Dexter Institute also provides workshops and ongoing training for Dexter staff.

Boyle says other groups, like the Construction Association of Nova Scotia, are looking carefully at the Dexter model to develop their own programs. She says the Dexter Institute is also changing the role of both NSCC and the industry.

"Traditionally, students would come to the college and then go out and look for a job on their own," she says. "The co-operative model engages students with employers early on. It provides a seamless transition from the classroom to the workplace."



Road workers add new asphalt to a section of Summer Street in Halifax.

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More lanes, roads don't result in more traffic

By Ken Cashin
Special Features Writer

THE IMPORTANCE OF properly-maintained roads in Nova Scotia cannot be overstated.

Our highways and secondary roads are the physical links that join our communities together and enable us to conduct business and generate economic growth.

While few people would argue against keeping our travel ways in top shape, some might say that building new roads creates more vehicle traffic, and, therefore, increases fuel emissions and produces more greenhouse gas pollution.

Although the above argument seems to make perfect sense, a recent study by the Conference Board of Canada suggests otherwise.

In December, 2006 the not-for-profit research organization released a report entitled "Build It and Will They Drive?," conducted to identify the causes of "induced travel," which is the increment of new vehicle traffic on a particular roadway that would not have occurred without increasing the capacity of the road.

In other words, the research asked the question: when the capacity of a road or highway is increased, what causes additional traffic, if anything?

Surprisingly, the report concluded that there is no relationship between added road capacity and vehicle demand. Put simply, it found that there's no truth to the notion that more roads equals more cars driving on those roads.

Instead, the report found, other factors or "socioeconomic variables" contributed to the increased traffic, such as population density, the number of vehicles owned by households, population growth, and growth in income levels.

These variables proved to have much more to do with greater demands on our roads and highways than did the capacity of the road itself.

"Basically, what this means is that a person is not going to drive more just because there's more lanes of asphalt," says Jeff Morrison, of The Road & Infrastructure Program of Canada (TRIP Canada), the organization that initiated the study.

"Things like a person's income or how far they live outside the city," says Morrison, "have much more to do with their driving behaviour than does the size of the highway."

TRIP Canada represents the 10 provincial road building and heavy construction associations from across Canada and lobbies the federal government to invest in core municipal infrastructure and a national highway program.

Morrison says the Conference Board of Canada study was groundbreaking because its methodology was based on two never-before used sets of data: one, a series of socio-economic variables; and two, use of the Canadian Vehicle Survey, a new Statistics Canada measuring tool.

He says the report's findings shatter the prevailing myth that more highways equal more cars and more pollution.

And, he says, it suggests that building bigger highways actually reduces pollution because it relieves traffic congestion and the stop-and-go traffic that creates most of the greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles in the first place.

"The old stereotype is just not true," says Morrison. "Given that we know that greenhouse gas emissions are at their highest levels in stop-and-go traffic, the study makes a strong case that greater road and highway capacity can in fact help reduce greenhouse gas levels."

"This is an important conclusion for policy makers at all levels, particularly as Canadians demand action on reducing greenhouse gases while at the same time they're asking for safer, more reliable transportation. Added highway capacity would seem to achieve both goals."



The Conference Board of Canada study makes a strong case that greater road and highway capacity can in fact help reduce greenhouse gas levels.

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A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada concludes that building new roads does not create more vehicle traffic.

"Basically, what this means is that a person is not going to drive more just because there's more lanes of asphalt. Things like a person's income or how far they live outside the city have much more to do with their driving behaviour than does the size of the highway."

JEFF MORRISON
TRIP Canada



Building bigger highways actually reduces pollution, says the report, because it relieves traffic congestion and the stop-and-go traffic that creates most of the greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles in the first place.

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