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Welcome

The end of August is fast approaching and soon the summer of 2013 will be history. One of the positive aspects of living in Canada is the seasonal changes we experience four times each year. Each change comes with anticipation and anxiety for what is ahead. And so it is for the Fall of 2013. The ability to combine the collective efforts of all CSCE members and in particular those who have offered their voluntary time in positions of leadership to do something of significance for the Society and for Canadians is the basis of my anticipation and anxiety for this first seasonal change during my time as President.

Anticipation of things to come

For the month of August there are few formal activities to report. CSCE's Fall program is in its planning phase. Divisions and committees are preparing for conferences and workshops in their respective discipline areas. While students are getting ready for classes, youth leaders are preparing for events like the concrete canoe competition and the more recent Capstone competition. Regions and Sections are planning their dinner meetings, lectures and workshops.

CSCE's 2012 - 2013 National Lecture Tour featured the results of Canada's first Infrastructure Report Card. Dr. Guy Felio, project manager of this historic document, toured the country delivering the Report Card story. Two additional lectures are planned for this Fall to complete this NLT program. Nick Larson, current Chair of CSCE's Infrastructure Renewal Committee and an active participant in the development of the first Report Card, will be completing these last two NLT meetings. I am looking forward to joining Nick at these meetings in the London and Hamilton / Niagara Sections to offer a perspective on the relevance of the Report Card.

There are a number of initiatives being addressed by the Board as a result of decisions taken at the last meeting in June. One item in particular relates to the need to update our By-laws in order to keep them in line with current “not-for-profit” legislation. Additional operational review items are also on the Board’s agenda that could have implications for our By-laws.

In looking ahead we intend to focus the business of the board in the development of a detailed implementation strategy to guide the CSCE in meeting its Vision 2020 goals and objectives. If you followed my last e-letter (July 2013), you will have noted my concluding comment that we have a big job in front of us. The basis of this statement is founded in a broader mission for CSCE and for civil engineering at large in terms of global sustainability with infrastructure as our platform. CSCE’s ability to influence this goal lies in its ability to achieve success with Vision 2020.

Vision 2020: A connection with the past

The articulation of a broader vision for infrastructure is not something that just emerged in the past 2-3 years. In 2003 CSCE was project manager for the Civil Infrastructure Systems Technology Road Map (CIS-TRM) project. As many as 200 participants from across Canada were involved representing national and regional organizations, governmental agencies (Federal, Provincial and Municipal), universities, research and think-tank institutes and private companies. The result was a consensus documentation of 10 objectives for civil infrastructure systems that should be the focus of the following 10 years of activity. Ten (10) specific recommendations were agreed upon as an implementation process to achieve the objectives. I would suggest this initiative was the formal start of CSCE’s engagement as a leader in the national infrastructure file and the beginning of understanding the nature of a broader vision.

Here is a most interesting fact! The first of the 10 objectives in the CIS-TRM, written in 2003, was stated as follows:

Objective #1 Asset Inventory and Condition *- To develop a reliable and accessible inventory of Canada’s infrastructure, including location, condition and valuation, that supports integrated asset management.*

Canadian municipalities, owners and operators currently have tools such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). They will be encouraged during the next decade to develop an integrated infrastructure inventory that supports the planning of interventions and investments in CIS and assists all levels of government in planning policies and programs.

In 2008, five (5) years later, the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) introduced their Statement of Recommended Practice titled Assessment of Tangible Capital Assets. Who knew that the first objective of the Technology Road Map would be addressed by our national accounting agency? Two (2) years following the adoption of the PSAB recommended practice, we achieved the significant and challenging task of creating a national inventory and valuation of all assets owned

by Canadian municipalities. The value of achieving this objective has already begun to reap benefits in terms of advancing operational practices within municipal organizations by adopting long term financial plans based on life-cycle principles.

What about the other nine (9) objectives? We may have started to address some but not in a nationally coordinated process. What about the other elements of a national infrastructure framework, as suggested in the TRM. In addition to ***technology and innovations***, addressed in the TRM, this includes issues of ***policy and standards*** (i.e. procurement methods, performance specifications, and fiscal framework), ***legislative framework*** (i.e. legislation, regulations) and ***resources*** (i.e. including human, financial, natural and material resources).

The TRM was completed in 2003 and was intended to be a guiding document for a period of 10 years. Those 10 years are now done. Is it time to update the TRM and its objectives? Should an update of the TRM address the other elements of an infrastructure framework?

We continue to need to work towards a coordinated consensus for a national infrastructure action plan!

We have a big job in front of us! A seasonal change for infrastructure is around the corner!

Did you know?

In this segment of my e-letter I need to make a correction. While I received many comments from the July e-letter (Thank you all!) one comment from a good friend – Alistair Mackenzie – reminded me of an important correction. I had noted that the Legget lecture credited the first President of ICE, Thomas Telford with penning the first definition of civil engineering. In fact, the Legget lecture correctly identified Thomas Tredgold as the original author of the definition of civil engineering. Alistair went on to advise that the ICE updated the definition to strengthen the concept of sustainability. The updated definition adopted in 2007 is noted as follows:

Civil Engineering is a vital art, working with the great sources of power in nature for the wealth and well-being of the whole of society. Its essential feature is the exercise of imagination to engineer the products and processes, and to develop the people needed to create and maintain a sustainable natural and built environment. It requires a broad understanding of scientific principles, a knowledge of materials and the art of analysis and synthesis. It also requires research, team working, leadership and business skills. A civil engineer is one who practices all or part of this art.

Thank you, Alistair, for the correction and update. Thank you all for responding to my July e-letter. As always I appreciate any and all feedback.

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