

The Voice of Public Works

BY DARWIN DURNIE



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The Canadian public works profession and industry have been hard at work for the past year promoting increased investment and funding necessary to create public works infrastructure projects that establish a healthy and sustainable quality of life in our communities.

During the past year, the Canadian Public Works Association (CPWA) has focused on the roll-out of the federal Economic Action Plan and its infrastructure stimulus package. It was a busy year as we provided input on the application process, monitored implementation, and responded to events. Early in the process, CPWA made a strong case to the government on the need to simplify the application process for the stimulus funding through reduction of both the red and green tape associated with the usual way of doing business. CPWA was also proactive in alerting our membership to the need to efficiently use the funding, matching requirements and the timetable for spending funds. We reminded government that it is our members who make the applications, specify and tender the projects, and make the projects work.

CPWA's main priorities at the federal level are to stress the importance of the nation's infrastructure to strengthen economic competitiveness, sustainability and public safety. We do so by partnering with others to build strategic relationships. As part of this effort, CPWA representatives serve on the advisory committee that is setting priorities for the Municipal Infrastructure Solutions Program. Led by the Canadian Standards Association, and with funding assistance by Infrastructure Canada, this program has already delivered an array of training and information for municipalities on topics, such as sustainable stormwater practices, emer-

gency management, and business continuity for critical municipal infrastructure. We also partner with other organizations such as the Canadian Construction Association, Canadian Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Engineers Canada, and others as our interests align. Working with other organizations plays an important role in increasing public awareness of public works projects and objectives.

Early last fall, CPWA immediate past president W. Gary Losier, P.Eng., of Quispamsis, NB, spoke before the House of Commons Standing Committee on finance as part of the pre-budget hearing process, and delivered a message on the critical role that infrastructure plays in our ongoing progress and vitality as a nation. As we go forward, CPWA will continue to make recommendations for setting priorities in the government's new budget, and to remind the government of the long term economic and productivity costs of an ongoing infrastructure deficit. This is of utmost importance for CPWA's private and public members as we advocate for public works.

Also important are current and future priorities regarding sustainability and the environment. Last year, CPWA met with the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy in Ottawa to discuss mutual interests, and we plan to pursue further partnerships with their board, which is appointed by the Minister of the Environment. And, CPWA provided Environment Canada with a summary of members' concerns regarding their newly released wastewater regulations proposals, and coordinated remarks with the CWWA, which monitored the regulations closely. CPWA will continue to seek further partnerships in this regard.

Another growing priority is raising awareness for emergency management in public works. Last year, the board adopted a position statement on the role of public works during a pandemic. In June 2010, CPWA met with Public Safety Canada and the House Standing Committee on Public Safety to reinforce public works' role as a first responder in emergency management. The meetings were successful and we plan to play a key role in the government implementation of a more coordinated Federal Emergency Response Plan.

CPWA has worked on several projects that raise the public awareness for public works throughout the nation, such as National Public Works Week activities. Throughout Canada, the provinces and municipalities declared May 16-22, 2010 as National Public Works Week and held educational events, tours, and equipment displays to increase public awareness. As part of the campaign, there was a focus on public works as a career of choice. And on Parliament Hill, CPWA continued an annual awareness program by sponsoring the June "Picnic on Parliament Hill," co-hosted with Engineers Canada.

We need our members, future members and our association in general to remember that we have the information and the knowledge to inform all on public works issues, and that we must speak up at the council table, to our provincial governments, and to our federal colleagues and government — in short, we have to continue to be — "The Voice of Public Works." **CB**

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