Melanie Perkins is telling transportation where to go... See Women in Tech
New Directions

By Dick Melville, Director of Public Affairs

Earl Warren, who was Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court up until his death in 1974, once said, "I always turn to the sports pages first, which records people's accomplishments. The front page has nothing but humanity's failures."

He may not have been entirely fair in his blanket condemnation, but his point is made. While we will not change the name of Road Runner to Sports Illustrated, it is the goal of those of us who put together this publication, to mirror the accomplishments of the ministry's people and of the ministry as a part of the Government of British Columbia.

We are committed to succeed and to that end the spirit of Chief Justice Warren may turn to us first.

I will take this one opportunity only to introduce myself to you through the Road Runner as the Director of Public Affairs for the ministry.

As a journalist I have served as a reporter with the Toronto Telegram, since closed down; night editor of the Ottawa Journal, since closed down; news editor of the street sales edition of the Vancouver Sun, surprisingly still operating.

Having a string of one still-operational newspaper behind me, I turned to public affairs, first as Director of Public Relations at B.C. Institute of Technology, then to the Ministry of Education as Director of Public Information, then to the central Government Information Services as a Public Affairs Counsel.

I am pleased to report that BCIT and all ministries are operational.

Enough about yesterday. What about today and tomorrow? For someone as devoted to communications in all senses of the word, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways represents the very best opportunities; there is a genuine commitment by management to communicate and there is a sincere desire on the part of those who comprise the ministry to receive that communication.

To serve both needs, the Public Affairs Branch is dedicated to find and explore all avenues to get information out and provide avenues to get information in.

Road Runner is just one of the ways. You will note in this issue that there articles devoted to serious issues of interest to the ministry as a whole, while at the same time providing the mirror of accomplishments.

We sincerely invite your participation in making Road Runner the publication you turn to first.

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Editor's Note

This edition of the Road Runner could not have been possible without MoTH staff contributors. It is you who bring the theme of this edition to life - "Transportation and Technology." (We called it this in recognition of the theme of National Transportation Week this year - June 7 to 13, 1992 - which is also "Transportation and Technology."

The Road Runner is a staff newspaper. We need your contributions and your input to make it work. Send us your comments and your ideas as well as your stories and pictures.

In this issue, you'll see a number of regular columns: On the Road, It's Your Serve, The Reflector, Spotlight and In The Field. We hope these will spur you to contribute. Deadline for contributions is May 15 for June publication.

We also have a theme picked out for the next issue: Working With Nature. This is to celebrate the creation of a new branch - Highway Environment Branch. If you or your branch, district or region have anything to contribute toward this theme, we'd love to hear from you.

Stories should be no more than 650 words in length and please send a couple of pictures per story so we have a choice.

For this issue, our thanks to staff members: Scott Atken, Jackie Baird, Lorne Bondaroff, Dan Bowen, Cynthia Feldmann, Tony Hubner, Ross Kletke, Michael Oliver, Georgina Ortiz, Kirby Rimer, David Robertson, Russ Spilsbury, Kathryn Stewart, Doug Tuck, Danny Vook, Marilyn Wargo and Geoff Warrington.

Thanks also to those who let us highlight them.

Special thanks to Tom Parkin, Public Information Officer, Vancouver Island Region for his support as well as his articles and photographs including the cover shot which contribute greatly to this issue.

On the cover:
Melanie Perkins, Transportation Programming Engineer, Region 6

Photo by Tom Parkin,
Public Information Officer, Region 6
Executive Retreat: Mapping the Road Ahead

German author Thomas Mann, in his book “The Magic Mountain,” written in 1924, said the following:

“Time has no division to mark its passage; there is never a thunderstorm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or a new year. Even when a new century begins, it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols.”

True though the words may be, time and what is accomplished in a given period of time, becomes the drummer to be followed in the setting of goals, objectives and priorities.

Fiscal years herald the annual beginnings and with it the need to know where we have been, where we are going and how we are going to get there.

About 120 managers spent two days in Richmond, January 29-30, wrestling with our road map.

Deputy Minister Vince Collins set the scene for the managers and two days of intense work followed, plus days of condensing the worksheet items into a focus for the future.

As we go to press, that work is going on and will be shared when fully prepared.

In this issue we present excerpts from the opening speech for the Executive Retreat from the Deputy Minister, setting the scene for the major task confronting the management team.

Working Toward a Better Workplace

Upon reflection over the past two years, I believe we can all take pride in a host of accomplishments.

With regard to our employees and the organization generally, I believe we have established a climate of stability and increased trust.

We have expanded our communications centrally and regionally, we have been through a comprehensive assessment of our organizational health, received very useful input from a broad cross-section of staff, and we have adopted most of their recommendations. We have begun to develop an active women’s program focused both at educating all members of the ministry to the issues women confront in the workplace and taking some preliminary steps toward providing greater opportunity to women for upward mobility. Finally, we are about to commence one of the most exciting management development programs I have seen in my 20 years, with the launch of the Excel Program.

Transportation Planning Uncertainties

As you undoubtedly heard, the Province is facing a deficit of some $2 billion in the current year and government’s approach will combat the debt through a combination of expenditure reductions and revenue measures.

The minister has already made it public that next year will see a reduction in highways spending as we are the largest single source of discretionary funding. Not only does this mean a reduced capital program for next year, but it also dulls any enthusiasm to invigorate the transportation plan and the Regional Transportation Planning Committees; all of whom advocate the expenditure of billions of dollars on new infrastructure.

In order for us to breathe new life into the transportation plan and the planning process, we must get a commitment to both an increased level of capital funding and the security of funding availability over multiple years. I am satisfied that this message has been made effectively with the minister and we preached the same gospel at our budget presentation to treasury board.

The Future of Privatized Road Maintenance

We must acknowledge that the future of privatized maintenance, longer term, is in doubt. The minister, as most will know, announced his intention to review its effectiveness. There is no evidence that a preconceived conclusion has been reached but the government did oppose it in principle while in opposition.

To date, we have been asked to submit questions that should be posed. I am also aware that the B.C. Roadbuilders and B.C. G. E. U. have been invited to submit questions to be included in the review.

It is my belief that only one of two outcomes are likely:
1. Either the cost is too high and/or the risks to public safety and the protection of the infrastructure are too great and consequently, government should take back the maintenance function at the end of the current contracts, or 

2. Private maintenance is generally effective providing specified improvements are put in place.

**Service Excellence**

I remain of the view that the fundamental principles of Service Excellence are so strongly behind the initiative to create a better workplace that we must press on with determination. 

As you know, we have chosen to take this current year to tell and sell the program throughout the ministry, and I must say that I’m impressed with the work that Ray Mau and Geoff Warrington have done to date.

Beyond the initial indoctrination, I’m going to turn to you for support. All the experiences elsewhere to date with this issue says that it must have commitment at the top and form part of every manager’s work program.

My impressions and feedback regarding the mood, attitude and morale of our staff, are at best mixed. The good news is that people feel better about the workplace than they did two to three years ago. The bad news is that it’s not by much.

The frustrating part is that I know many sincere efforts have been made to effect meaningful changes and improvements to the workplace, but I regret they are insufficient no matter how well-intended.

As managers, our number one job is to lead, motivate, coach and encourage, but too many of our staff are telling us that we’re coming up short. We’ll want to take time to explore this critical issue further.

**Women’s Equality Issues**

Through initiatives such as Opportunities 90s and restricted competitions for positions such as Area Manager Trainees, we have taken proactive steps to prepare some women for new and better career paths. We have also set off the predictable backlash effect.

While I regret that some of our male staff feel threatened by this movement, and while we must concede that there will be fewer promotional opportunities for men as a result, I offer no apologies for my unabashed support of the women’s equality program. It is bad enough that women are significantly under-represented in professional, technical and managerial positions throughout government: it is worse still that this ministry ranks dead last.

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**News Item**

Deputy, three ADMs and Executive Administrative Coordinator hit high note at Richmond management retreat (but not all together).
Open Government and Public Consultation

We should note that this administration has staked its reputation on being open government. Implicit in this is the requirement to consult the public on issues that affect them.

As much of our work has direct bearing upon citizens throughout the province, we'll need to reassess when and who we consult with the public and how we react to complaints and criticisms.

Preparing to Confront the Challenges Before Us

I'd like to close with a comment on the likely financial picture for next year and the opportunity that can be ours during a period of fiscal retrenchment.

As mentioned earlier, it can be no secret, based on the public comments by the Premier, the Minister of Finance and indeed our own minister, next year will be very difficult financially. The financial shortfalls will place strains upon us and must cause us to focus our limited resources to those projects or initiatives that will have the maximum paybacks.

This period too will have its opportunities. Financial cuts will of course mean lighter workloads which, considering the amount of overtime consumed, and concerns for burn-out, this period should provide a welcome respite from the pressure.

It should also be a time for us to take stock of progress that can be made in rectifying problems put on the backburner for too long. Whether that's a getting a project reporting system that finally meets everyone's needs without duplication, or spending more time in employee development, the point is that we should capitalize on the opportunity for improvements of all kinds during this brief breathing space.

We all know that the slowdown of next year will only be a deferral of the public demand for transportation improvements and that it won't be long before the pace will quicken again.

Let's make the most of this time to do a thorough job of testing our internal strengths and weaknesses so that we're ready to confront the challenges that undoubtedly lay before us.

Strategic Goals

Following are the six goals identified during the Executive Retreat. Strategies for each of these goals are now being formulated. These will appear in the next edition of the Road Runner.

- Administrative Reform
  The ministry is committed to maximizing its ability to deliver service by minimizing our administrative process.

- Transportation Planning
  The ministry will strive to secure the government's commitment to a long-term provincial transportation plan that is based upon significant community/regional input and, as a consequence, has broad-based public support. To ensure effective implementation, the plan will be accompanied by a secure multi-year funding commitment.

- Management of Analytical and Information Systems
  In order to more effectively plan, budget and deliver core programs, the ministry must develop and/or enhance its management of analytical and information systems.

- Communications
  The ministry is committed to the principle that all employees must have access to information necessary to perform their jobs efficiently. In addition, all employees will be provided with regular updates concerning both ministry initiatives and affairs affecting their management unit.

- Service Excellence
  The ministry is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the delivery of quality services to all our customers. In doing so, the ministry will ensure that customer needs are clearly identified and that ministry programs and priorities are aligned to meet customer expectations.

- Human Resources
  The ministry will strive to achieve a well-trained, motivated workforce that is reflective of society in gender and cultural diversity. Organizationally, the ministry's structure and human resources will remain flexible to respond to variations in work program arising from government policy and/or economic fluctuations.

Bridge Inspection

Minister Art Charbonneau and his M.A. Sandra Houston inspecting a walkway along a railroad bridge that joins Castlegar and Robin. The citizens are concerned that the walkway is dangerous at night as it is unlit and does not offer access to wheelchairs.
**PERSONNEL CONNECTIONS**

**Opportunities 90s**

For the third year, the ministry invites administrative support staff to try on a technical job for size.

Interested employees should submit their letter of application to their Regional Manager Personnel Services or headquarters Personnel Advisor by April 15, 1992. Mark your letter of application, Opportunities 90s.

- **1.** Base classification
- **2.** Seniority date
- **3.** Employment location
- **4.** Why are you interested?
- **5.** What are your career objectives?
- **6.** How do you feel the experience will benefit you and the ministry?
- **7.** And an indication whether it would be difficult or easy for you to relocate (this will not affect selection)

Possible areas of work are bridge crews, construction crews, design and surveys, development approvals, survey crews, geotechnical and materials, paving crews, planning, property services and traffic.

Your Women's Programs Committee representative or personnel office have a brochure that tells you all you need to know about this program.

Here's what participants have to say about the program.

**Survey computation never occurred to me before. Now I want to make it my career.**

Denise Willment, Region 1

**Participation in the program has served as a starting point in determining the career path I want to follow, as well as the technical knowledge and skills I require. A wonderful opportunity for everyone!**

Cindy Trowbridge, Region 3

**It was a great opportunity to show my artistic ability in the workplace. I never knew being a graphic technician could be so fun!**

Leslie Freer, headquarters

**Highways Tech Education**

The ministry is trying to make it easier for you to keep up with technology through programs such as the Transportation Systems (Highways) Technology - a correspondence program offered through BCIT for MoTH employees.

The ministry also hopes this program will open doors for those interested in a career in technology with the ministry, our Opportunities 90s participants for example, who may not be able to take time off to go back to school.

You can actually earn credits toward an Intermediate, Certificate of Technology, a Certificate of Technology or a Diploma of Technology, if you choose.

For added incentive, if course registration is approved by your work unit manager and you complete that course within 12 months, the ministry will pay your fees.

BCIT has a guide book on the Transportation Systems (Highways) Technology program content and registration procedures. For more information, contact Wally Quarry, Personnel Services Branch in Victoria, 387-7811.

**Building People Bridges**

"After a three year lapse, we've revived and re-modelled the Effective Management Program (EMP) to better meet our management goals - to build people bridges," says ADM of Administrative Services, Gordon Hogg.

"Technology can only take us so far. It is people who make the difference. We need to develop our human resources as well as our technical resources. For that we need middle and line managers that are good coaches," Gordon adds.

Designed as a four-day workshop with a one-day follow-up and progress review, the EMP has received high ratings from those who attended the four programs last fall through one or two technical people, schooled in 'chalk-and-talk' teaching methods may hanker after more formal input.

Steve Nettterton, Print Shop Manager at headquarters, says he is now more aware of what his responsibilities are as a leader. He has started structured monthly meetings to enhance communications with staff.

Don Johnson in Highway Engineering at headquarters says that he liked the hints he got on managing change.

The content of EMP is leadership, motivation, problem-solving, decision-making, team-building and managing change.

The thrust is to have participants make an action plan and put it into practice.

Most participants found their staff receptive, their peers interested and their bosses supportive of their learning experience.

But some say they would like to see such training start higher in the ministry, so that top managers could be more in tune with the philosophy and the potential of the program.

Others feel a lack of scope or time to practice new found knowledge and skills. Back at the workday treadmill, a few had to postpone their action plans, although aware that delay can be fatal.

Melva Gordon, South Okanagan District says that she learned a lot about what leadership means and is now delegating more responsibilities but adds that it's hard to delegate and to apply the techniques learned when you're short staffed.
Mentorship! Me? Why?

Do you have someone you can go to for advice and support; someone who provides an environment for you to ask questions and make mistakes without being embarrassed?

If so, you may already have a mentor.

Mentoring/protege arrangements are considered beneficial to the organization as well as to both parties involved.

The organization benefits from better trained employees who are capable of taking positions further up the career ladder.

Employees benefit from a successful role model who can act as a teacher to develop confidence and talent as well as a protector.

The mentor benefits through increased productivity from the protege, recognition as a human resource developer, and by gaining a new enthusiasm for their own career.

To tap these benefits, many organizations promote formal mentoring programs where mentors and proteges are matched based on certain criteria and work together for a period of six months to a year.

Your Women's Programs Committee (WPC) is considering the establishment of a mentoring program aimed at our administrative section.

A questionnaire circulated last year showed there is a general misunderstanding of what mentoring is and what each participant's involvement would be.

An information package and a second questionnaire will be circulated in the near future to determine interest and commitment to such a program.

If you have any questions, please contact your Region WPC representative, or Kathryn Stewart at the South Okanagan District office in Penticton, 492-1300.

Getting FITT for the Future

The new Futures in Transportation Technology program (FITT), is an awareness program intended to help young people see the importance of mathematics and sciences in their careers. (And hopefully create a pool of qualified technical people that we can draw from.)

FITT was inspired by a projected shortage of engineers and technologists, and will focus on high school and university students around the province.

Employees of the ministry will visit schools to offer a personal view of the engineering and support professions. They will discuss their work, their course of study, the challenges they faced and the rewards they now enjoy.

FITT classes will tour work sites to witness activities in progress and meet people in the range of occupations represented on typical projects.

Opportunities will also be offered to students to 'shadow' an engineer or technologist on the job. The FITT program will be piloted in the Terrace and Greater Victoria School Districts this spring. We'll keep you updated as this exciting initiative progresses.

For further information, or if you are interested in participating in the school visits, contact Virginia Clark, Personnel Services Branch at 387-7801.

Celebrating 25 and 35 Years of Service

"I was pleased to join ministry employees and their spouses last December, to celebrate their 25 and 35-year anniversaries with the ministry," says our Minister, Art Charbonneau.

"Their dedication is appreciated and goes a long way to making our ministry a community - a place people want to work and feel responsibility toward improving. Thank you.

Congratulations to the 56 employees who celebrated their 25 and 35 years of service with us!
You Can Excel Too

"We value our human resources. That's why we created Excel," says Deputy Minister Vince Collins.

"It gives staff the opportunity for career development and helps us identify leaders from among our staff, the kind of leaders we want. That is, people who can provide a supportive environment for our employees.

Excel is a mentoring/career development program for individuals interested in management. It includes a personalized program of courses and work experience that can make participants eligible for career advancement.

Sounds interesting? Well, you can Excel too. But first you have to be nominated. How?

Getting Nominated is Just the Beginning

The next time you go through an employee appraisal ask your supervisor about it because nominees are recommended through appraisal interviews during career-development discussions.

All nominees attend an awareness session followed by a confidential assessment of their potential including a personal profile analysis, potential assessment report and a counselling session regarding assessment results.

Not all nominees go onto the education and work experience programs. That depends on a team consensus between nominees, their supervisors and a second level manager.

Nominees Speak Out About Excel

We cornered four Excel nominees at an awareness session held at the Dunsmuir Lodge on Vancouver Island, February 4th, to ask them what they thought about Excel. Here's what they said.

Melanie Perkins, Transportation Programming Engineer, Vancouver Island Office: Excel is good for everybody because it helps participants develop their potential while it teaches them to be aware of other employee's needs. Being aware of each others needs will make us more able to be sensitive to our clients' needs.

Doug Kirk, District Highways Manager, Nicola District: I've attended other management development courses and can say that Excel is a major step in the right direction. It encourages fairness and equity because it's not just for a given type of individual, it's for everybody.

Ten years ago you wouldn't have seen anything like this. It reflects the commitment of our ministry's upper management to work with staff and to develop human resources.

Sam Jo-Ann Brand, Policy Branch, Victoria: The ministry used to focus on technology excellence. Now we're trying to assist our technical managers to become good human resources managers.

I never knew before how much work had gone into the program or that it was all developed internally by our upper managers. It isn't a bought package; it's just for us.

Kirk Rockerbie, Policy Analyst, Victoria: It's a sign of the times and that this organization is ready and willing to change. Every once in a while, it's good to look inward so we can develop outward.

If we've got you interested and you want to know more, call your personnel office or Russ Spilsbury in Personnel Services at 387-7799.
From No-Tech to Hi-Tech...
...By Design

By Lorne Boudreoff, Design Technician, Kootenays Region

The Design and Construction Section is one area of the ministry that has changed dramatically with the aid of technology.

Jugglers No More

Not too long ago, on a survey project, the instrument person (surveyor) would have to locate an object through the transit telescope, read the horizontal and vertical angles, hold the measuring tape to get the distance, and record all information manually in a book—all at the same time.

You had to be a juggler. Today, all the instrument person has to do is locate a target through the telescope and technology does the rest.

A beam is shot out from the instrument (much like your TV remote control) to the reflective target which is placed on or over a point. On the beams reflection back to the instrument, the horizontal angle, vertical angle and distance are measured and this information is stored on a data collector (a small hand-held computer).

This all takes place in a matter of seconds. An entire survey now takes much less time and is much more accurate than in days gone by.

What happens next?

Into Another Dimension

The information stored in the data collector is downloaded to the field computer and a “Digital Terrain Model” (DTM), or a three dimensional model of the project is created.

Office personnel then review and check the DTM for accuracy before passing this information on to the design department.

When the design department gets the DTM, a designer is able to study the feasibility of any alignment chosen within a model.

The model can be turned in all directions to be viewed from any location—from above, from below, or from any side. This allows the design staff to analyze and explore, as many horizontal and vertical alignments, as necessary to get the most out of the taxpayers’ money.

The designer will eventually be able to drive down the road to check sight distances, ditches, landscaping, general aesthetics, etc.—all via the computer.

Driving the Road by Computer

This drive can also be projected onto colour monitors at open house meetings. This way, the public can see what the completed road will look like once it’s built, making the ministry’s proposals much easier to show and explain. A major change from the days of the pencil draftsperson.

Today’s draftsperson needs to be familiar not only with the ministry’s design standards, but also skilled in the use of AutoCAD (Computer Assisted Drafting), DOS (Disk Operating System), and various other computer software packages.

We can now proudly say, we are part of the computer age.
It’s Your Serve

It’s Your Serve will be a regular column in the Road Runner to recognize employees who make the difference: improving service to customers, making your job easier to do, performing beyond the call of duty or making work a pleasure every day.

If you and two other employees want to nominate someone (or a team of people) like this, send a note outlining why this person or group should be recognized and send it to your Service Excellence, Project Manager at headquarters, Ray Mau. (Phone: 356-6048)

Electrical District Brings Efficiencies to Light

Wayne Keiser, Electrical District Manager and his staff implemented a couple of bright ideas that saved thousands of dollars.

“Shift electricians suggested their hours of work be moved back two hours,” said Wayne Scott, Trade Principal Supervisor. “So they travel to and from work before peak hours of travel. This allows us full coverage during rush hours to handle unexpected situations.”

“And there is reduced overtime because rush hours fall within the shift, not at the beginning or end when emergencies often occur.”

“During weekdays, this schedule also allows us to have one electrician available to cover emergencies while another does scheduled repairs,” said Wayne.

There’s more. District staff were bursting at the seams in their Rosedale yard trailer. They suggested moving to the Hope sub district office instead of into a brand new building in Rosedale. This saved BCUC the cost of a $250,000 building and provided the three electricians easier access to their job sites.

Simple suggestions … big savings.

Congratulations.

Sue Hartley, Front & Centre

During lunchtime, office staff is at its lowest number. Sometimes, customers come into the office without staff knowing they are there.

Central Cariboo District Finance Clerk, Sue Hartley thought of installing a small motion detector, bought at a local electronic shop.

Now, when customers enter the Central Cariboo District office, they set off a melodious chime. Staff members can still work at their own desks and are alerted the minute a customer walks through the door.

OMT, Tracy Cooper, wants other district offices to know how they solved this problem in Williams Lake. Great idea, Sue.

Finding What You Need When You Need It

When Julie Duncan began as Kootenays Region receptionist, she felt she’d never learn everything she needed to do the job well. So, at the suggestion of Alana Grill, she started to fill a rolodex with commonly asked questions.

She then went the extra step and researched the answers herself to ensure she had a source name and phone number along with the information.

Next, Julie cross-referenced keywords so other staff members would find the system easy to use. When she became records clerk, she left the rolodex behind.

The next receptionist, Janis Ekman, continues adding to the system and enjoying the benefits.

“I started as receptionist just as Julie was leaving. I found it very easy to slide into her job because of the information index,” said Janis.

“I recommend this for every receptionist,” added Janis. “It’s not difficult. Just get the rolodex and you’re halfway there.”

A Full-Service Office

By Dan Bowen, North Island District

You never know when it’ll happen. When our district development technician Lane MacDonald took his Industrial First Aid ticket, he thought he was preparing to help fellow employees. In Courtenay’s North Island office.

Last October, secretary Linda Pedersen came to him looking for Aspirin, which had been requested by an elderly developer at the front counter. The man was experiencing pain in his shoulder and arm, and feeling unwell.

“I refused because I didn’t know why they were necessary,” said Lane.

“I went out and checked his pulse. The guy was sitting down by now, and showing classic signs of cardio-vascular attack.”

Lane and I took the man and his wife to the emergency ward of the hospital at Comox. Three days later, the patient’s wife phoned to express her gratitude, and to inform staff that her husband had been released from care in better health.

Congratulations to Lane for his good judgement and service excellence in this potentially-critical situation.
Take the Transportation Challenge

Motorcycle 0.7%
Cycle 6.5%
Joint Transit 3.2%
Transit System 32.6%
Car Pool 16.8%
Private Vehicles 26.2%
Walk 14.0%

We're asking the public to help solve the problems of congestion and air pollution by parking their car and car-pooling, busing it, bicycling or walking to work,” says Dan Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister of Highway Operations.

“I'm pleased to see that many of our own people are practicing what we preach.”

Dan is talking about a recent informal survey taken of headquarters employees by his staff: John Marriott, District Highways Manager, in training and Fred Hughes, Acting Manager, Finance and Administration, Operations.

The results show only twenty-seven percent of headquarters staff drive their private vehicles to work (see pie graph).

“We've decided to take up the transportation challenge at headquarters, to see if we can get this number lower,” says Dan. “I challenge regions and districts to get involved.

“I recognize that many districts and some region offices don't have a congestion problem, but air pollution should be everyone's concern.”

Headquarters is initiating a program to identify ways to get employees to consider alternate transportation.

What are you doing?
Spotlight will be a regular feature of the Road Runner to introduce you to some of your fellow employees and their lifestyles. If you want to put your district, region or branch in the Spotlight, let us know.

LOCATION
On the B.C./Alberta border, just south of mid-way point.
McBride is approximately 170 kilometres northwest of Jasper on Highway 16.

By day, Oli Schiefelbein gets into his ministry truck and heads out on the highway as a Roads Area Manager, Robson District. Some nights and almost every winter weekend, though, he's back out on the road, logging roads this time, on his snowmobile.

"We enjoy the snow," says Oli, "that's why we live up here in McBride. Both my wife, Sharron, and I have our own snowmobiles. We trailer our sleds to the base of the mountain, then take logging roads to reach the alpine and shovel off from there."

Oli says advancing technology has created exceptional sled performance over the last few years. Mountain riding is a variation of the normal sport, nicknamed "extreme" snowmobiling. It's fast becoming popular from Utah through to Alaska.

How fast does Oli's snowmobile go? Oli says, on flat hard pack it can hit over 150 km/hr and there are sleds out there that will go faster.

Our snowmobile expert has been with the ministry on and off since 1970. "I quit once but came back in 1976 to the same position as equipment operator and road foreman," he explains. "In 1980 I became a maintenance management co-ordinator and in 1988 a roads/bridges area manager."

Mike Frazier, Area Manager; Dennis Rejman, Area Manager Roads; and Oli Schiefelbein, Area Manager, Roads

You've Got to Love the Winters

Oli tells us that he usually snowmobiles with four or five others on a regular basis.

"We call ourselves the 'Good Boys Club, Welcome.' Our trips take us through the Rockies and the Cariboo mountain range, plus we venture toward the Pacific when we have the time."

Oli has also done some guiding in this sport, just for the fun of it, he adds.
Robson District After Hours

Winter and curling just go hand in hand to many of the Robson district staff.

"It's our major winter activity here in McBride," says Barb Henry, Administration Officer. Office staff curl on three different teams, making the competition more challenging.

"We all participate in the mixed league – two men, two women on each team and we really get our exercise," said Barb. "It's a fun league, although we compete on the ice, we still manage to talk to each other the next day."

As winter ends and spring begins, staff exchange their brooms for baseball bats. By the way, they are all on the same slow pitch team, so they can really root for one another.

Barb Henry, Administration Officer
Heather Callaghan, District Clerk
Kevin Higgins, DHM and Shannon Westlund, OA
Judy Phillips, District Clerk
Sandi Lee, A District Tech, Jon Kilburn, Engineering Aid,
Rico Vizzara, Engineering Aid, Kelly Grohs, Operations Assistant,
and Hans Remmelg, Engineering Assistant.
Women in Tech

Once upon a time, the technical field was for men only. No, it wasn't a law or an exclusive club. It's just that women never saw themselves as engineers and roadbuilders.

The story is different today. More and more women are discovering the challenge of a career in transportation technology.

We'd like to introduce you to some of our women in tech who are paving the way for other women in British Columbia.

Melanie Perkins,
Transportation Programming Engineer, Region 6

I have grown into the realization that I always wanted to be an engineer. It's in the blood.

I never met my grandfather, but I was told stories on my mother's knee about his experiences as an engineer. About how he met my grandmother in South Africa while building a railroad (through her father's property) and how he built a coal port.

Transportation engineering used to be more mechanical – not anymore. We work with the public more than ever, and it is they who direct transportation development.

That means that today's transportation engineers need to be sensitive to public need and design transportation systems with people in mind (i.e. systems that are people-friendly as opposed to just vehicle-friendly).

Studies show that, on average, women go into engineering because they want to help society. Women are society's nurturers. This will also help in B.C.'s adjustment to the new era of globalization and harmonization.

At MoTH, I hope to contribute in a positive way to a future vision of the transport system in British Columbia that includes consideration of demand management and the continued support of a balanced multimodal solution to transportation problems.

Sandi Lee, Rehabilitation Engineer, Region 4

(Acting District Tech too with Robson District for a few months)

I've always loved the maths and sciences, so I looked for a career that let me apply these. Engineering let me use both plus gave me the best opportunities.

I have no regrets. I've been with the ministry for three years, since I graduated from the University of British Columbia. I've been at this job (Rehabilitation Engineer) since September.

I travel around a lot in this job and find I enjoy getting out and seeing things get done and talking to the people who are actually doing it.

The ministry offers a lot of opportunity in the technical fields. Women should take these opportunities to learn more, and ask a lot of questions of everyone.

Excel

This is a type of mentoring program that develops leadership aspirations. It helps individuals with leadership.

Excel opens more doors to join the management team.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STATS

"Our ministry goal is to have a staff who represents our population with balanced utilization of women and men at all levels and in all areas," says Deputy Minister Vince Collins.

Looking at a statistical graph of our workforce profile, it seems we've a long way to go. But statistics don't tell the whole story.

Last year our Women's Programs Committee (WPC) devoted their efforts to provide a feeder system for qualified people as well as a support system that invites women to venture into, quite literally for some, unknown territory.

The results of their work are encouraging. (You should know that all the following except one are equity programs, that means women and men benefit.)

Opportunities 90s

In 1991, this program let over 30 administrative support staff try out a technical job without having to make a two to five-year commitment to education or training.

Women still receive less exposure to technical fields while growing up and many are not aware of the fun and challenging opportunities available in the technical field.

Opportunities 90s helps open a door for women, leading to awareness and opportunity in the technical fields.

where the Great Wall of China comes down to the sea – the port is still booming today.

It was a much better childhood story than Cinderella and the other fairytales most girls are told, and more exciting.

But if anyone thinks that being an engineer is all a bed of roses, they would be wrong. There are, however, more pluses than minuses. I would say that transportation engineering is a wonderful career for women, especially today.
I chose to work for the ministry because it offers interesting engineering work and the opportunity of living in small communities having excellent outdoor recreational environments. Terrace is particularly good for anybody interested in the outdoors. Last year, I went sea kayaking in the Queen Charlottes, skied across the Cambria Icefield near Stewart and canoed down the Dease River. This summer, I'm canoeing on the Stikine River, sea kayaking in Glacier Bay and working.

I recommend this career to anyone who enjoys finding practical solutions to design or maintenance problems.

Jane Waters, Coordinator  
Roadside Development Programs, Headquarters

My training is in landscape architecture. It's not as recognized as a technological field as engineering, but it is a field which involves skills in landscape design and knowledge of climate, soils, topography and plants, among other things.

My background is a mix of sciences and arts. I've always had an interest in geography through travel, gardens and plants. When I put these together, I ended up studying landscape architecture. It's always been important to me to better the living environment around us.

In the ministry, I review landscape design plans for highway projects and roadside development programs, native plant and bioengineering studies, and, recently, research on scenic byways. I work in the Environmental Branch developing policy and guidelines to better our highway landscapes.

The job gives me a sense that I'm contributing not just chugging away at my desk.

Ultimately, I hope that people driving down the road will benefit from better looking highways.
Hi-Tech Avalanche Tamers

Photos by Doug Tuck, Howe Sound District

Some people think adventure-seeking heli-skiers are the only ones who risk being caught in an avalanche.

Actually, anyone who drives B.C.'s high mountain passes would take the same risk if it weren't for our hi-tech Snow Avalanche Program (S.A.P.) and the day and night vigilance of our S.A.P. staff or 'snowflakes' as industry professionals call themselves.

In the Office

Scott Aitken, District Avalanche Technician, and Doug Tuck, Avalanche Assistant are our 'snowflakes' in the Duffey Lake and Bridge River areas of the Howe Sound District (and a little into the South Cariboo District too).

Every morning, Scott and Doug receive technical weather forecasts and other information exchanges through electronic mail and FAX.

"Remote Avalanche Weather Stations (RAWS) are my eyes in the storm when I'm not up on the mountains," says Scott.

Using this information and field observations, Scott prepares and sends an Avalanche Hazard Report via electronic mail and FAX to district, region, headquarters and road maintenance contractor staff.

Changes in the levels of hazard are reported immediately through the regional radio room as observed in the field.

On the Slopes

Not all Scott and Doug's work can be done within the safe confines of four walls through the aid of microchips.

"We have to get right up where the avalanches start using snowmobiles and mountaineering skills one day or a helicopter the next," says Scott.

"We observe the snowpack for layering, temperature, density, hardness and crystal form and judge the bonding between the layers. Our highest study site is at 2400m elevation (just under 8000 feet)."

Taming the Avalanche

When the snow is judged unstable, meaning it just may start moving anytime, that's when Scott and Doug really jump into action, with the help of our road maintenance contractor's staff.

"First the road is closed and the area swept," says Scott. "Visibility permitting, we prepare high explosives and board a helicopter to take us to the avalanche 'start zones' where we place and detonate the explosives to start an avalanche."

"If avalanche conditions permit, our maintenance contractors close up and reopen the highway."

"Heli-bombing is just one way to tame an avalanche. The "avalancher" - a giant gun that shoots a gas-propelled explosive - is used in the Revelstoke Pass, Bear Pass and Revelstoke areas."

Along the Coquihalla, S.A.P. staff use a recoilless rifle with a five-kilometre range and the first two avalanche control ropes in North America, to carry explosive packages up to preset targets.

"After learning what the staff do, it's hard to call them snowflakes. They do depend on the weather but their job demands the physical ability to travel in mountainous terrain under extreme conditions."

"It takes skill, training, experience and a lot of nerve. But Scott says he enjoys the challenge of taming avalanches."

"Besides," he jokes, "Snow melts."
Protecting Yourself

Our ministry has designed a hi-tech Snow Avalanche Program (S.A.P.) to protect you when you’re driving through mountain passes in B.C.

Part of the program involves avalanche safety training sessions in the early winter for district staff given by our very own ‘snow flakes’ (S.A.P. staff).

But you should still know how to look out for yourself:

1. To start with, never go on a trip in the winter without blankets, water and some non-perishable, high-energy food (just in case); and don’t forget to call our road report line to find out what type of weather you may be driving into.

2. Be aware of the possibility of road closures. When traveling through avalanche areas, allow extra time to reach your destination.

3. Observe the sign “Avalanche Area – Do Not Stop.”

4. Drive carefully in avalanche areas. Avalanches may reach the highway without warning.

5. Obey road closures. They usually mean the avalanche hazard is high and avalanche control work by explosives may be carried out at any time.

6. If an avalanche blocks the highway, remain in your vehicle with seat belts on and await assistance. It is safer to find a car in snow than it is a person. Try to drive to a safe area if possible. Do not attempt to drive through small avalanches.

The Reflector

A Look at Technology of Yesteryear

The Reflector will be a regular column of the Roadrunner. If you have any historical stories, trivia or pictures you’d like to share with your fellow employees, let the Road Runner editor know.

We rummaged through some of our old annual reports to get the scoope on the latest technologies of yesteryear. We hope you enjoy these as much as us.

From 1930. Island Highway - Malahat Drive at scenic view. Spraying bituminous flush-coat on primed surface.

"Substantial widening and improvement were executed on the Island Highway, both on the Malahat section and between Courtenay and Campbell River," commented our annual report.

From 1926. This is a gas shovel loading a truck in the Fort George District. "One of the 18 shovels owned and operated by the Department", proudly declared our annual report.
A Tiny Human Touch Goes a Long, Long Way

By Tom Peters, a business management writer

We reprinted this article from Inside Guide because we thought you'd enjoy it and its message as much as we did.

Miss Manners I'm not. But I still say, "Send your thank-you notes. Now!"

I'm always surprised at how few thank-you notes I get. (I know, I know, there's an obvious explanation!) Several weeks ago, for example, I interrupted a tense writing schedule and flew from Vermont to California to do a seminar for a CEO to whom I owed a favour.

Hey, I was paid a fortune for my efforts. I'm hardly complaining. Well, actually I am.

But all I really want is a thank-you note, just a couple of lines scrawled on a card - or a fish wrapper for all I care - saying, "Tom, I know you busted your butt to do this. It worked out okay. Thanks, Harry."

By contrast, a fellow who attended a speech I gave about three weeks ago just dropped me a line: "Nice job! Thought you might enjoy the attached." The attached was an article clipped from his local paper, about a small company that had dramatically sped up delivery of its products - a topic I'd gotten worked up about during my speech.

You know what? I've reread his scribble a couple of times, and I'll probably put it in my save box. "Nice job!" No big deal? Well, it is to me.

We wildly underestimate the power of the tiniest personal touch. And of all personal touches, I find the short, handwritten "nice job" note to have the highest impact. (It even seems to beat a phone call - something about the tangibility of paper.)

A former boss (who's gone on to a highly successful career) religiously took about 15 minutes at the end of each day, at 5:30 or 6:30 p.m., to compose a half-dozen quick notes to people who'd given him time during the day, or who'd made a provocative remark at some meeting. I remember his saying that he was dumbfounded by the number of recipients who subsequently thanked him for thanking them.

I wouldn't bet the farm on the scientific validity of what I'm about to say. But I think there's a strong correlation between the little thank-you notes I get and the business, fortune and fame of those who send them.

That is, the busier, richer and more famous they are, the more likely I am to get a note.

There are other twists. One pen pal scrawls brief handwritten responses on the backs of letters I send him. I love it, and have copied his habit. Again, it's hard to overestimate the number of people who have commented - favourably - on the personalization of the message.

Ellen Langer, a social psychologist, begins her book, "Mindfulness," this way:

"At a nursing home, elderly residents were each given a choice of houseplants to care for and were asked to make a number of decisions about their daily routines. A year and a half later, not only were these people more cheerful, active and alert than a similar group in the same institution who were not given these responsibilities, but more than half of them were still alive. In fact, fewer than half as many of the decision-making, plant-minding residents had died as had those in the other group."

We wildly underestimate the power of the tiniest personal touch. And of all personal touches, I find the short, handwritten "nice job" note to have the highest impact. (It even seems to beat a phone call - something about the tangibility of paper.)

I am, however, telling you that fee-plus-note is more - a lot more - than fee-without-note.

It puzzles me that so few get it. Maybe they just don't care. Perhaps an entire column on the seemingly mundane topic of thank-you notes will get your attention.

Try my old boss's end-of-the-day ritual for one month. I'll be amazed if you aren't amazed by the result.

Thanks for your attention.

Second Round "KO"

The second round of three-year maintenance contracts was a widely publicized bout. Now that it's over and the contract winners have been declared, we can look back with humor at the whole exercise thanks to the long hours of hard work by Earl Lund, our Chief Highway Engineer; Bill Bedford, Director of Highway Maintenance and his staff, and many others in the districts, regions and at headquarters.

"This experiment, with its startling results, began over 10 years of research into the powerful effects of what my colleagues and I came to call mindfulness, and of its counterpart, the equally powerful but destructive state of mindlessness."

What does that have to do with a thank-you note? Everything. Langer offers a touching, dramatic tribute to the power of personal engagement - in this case, watering saves lives!

The handwritten thank-you is a modest act of engagement. It won't likely save lives, but it just might boost your odds of becoming rich, famous and adored. (Not to mention making you feel a lot better about yourself.)

Now look, I'm not implying that I would have given up my handsome seminar fee in return for a scrawled paragraph from that CEO. I am, however, telling you that fee-plus-note is more - a lot more - than fee-without-note.

A former boss (who's gone on to a highly successful career) religiously took about 15 minutes at the end of each day, at 5:30 or 6:30 p.m., to compose a half-dozen quick notes to people who'd given him time during the day, or who'd made a provocative remark at some meeting. I remember his saying that he was dumbfounded by the number of recipients who subsequently thanked him for thanking them.

I wouldn't bet the farm on the scientific validity of what I'm about to say. But I think there's a strong correlation between the little thank-you notes I get and the business, fortune and fame of those who send them.
Few of us who work in MoTH offices recognize the sacrifices made by fellow employees who 'work the road'.

I realized this recently when visiting bridge inspection unit Andy Bush and Rees Davidson, who proudly showed off the ministry's new GM Autocar with its deck-mounted Snooper Mark IV.

What you may ask? The “Snooper” is the only one of its kind in B.C. so small wonder you haven't heard of it.

Andy and Rees were all over the province with it in 1991, and attracted a lot of attention.

It's a truck body and bed with an articulated arm designed to go down and under bridges.

Andy can wiggle the arm through amazing contortions. It can extend and sweep an area of 632 square metres, yet folds tightly on the truck bed — sort of like those old wooden carpenter rules which would multiply-fold over themselves on brass hinges, yet fit in a pocket.

Andy and Rees were on centreline crews for over 10 years, and came to this work after a two-week training course from the manufacturer.

While they operate the complex machine, they're not responsible for bridge inspections.

When I caught up with them in mid-October, they were looking under twin-steel spans over the Chemainus River on Vancouver Island with area manager of bridges, South Island, Brent Scott and bridge inspector, Victoria Highway Maintenance, Rick Henson (formerly with MoTH).

Despite the built-in safety mechanisms, and WCB regulations, Andy and Rees had to devise their own safety procedures.

"We found that two people talking in the bucket sometimes confused Rees. He might overhear an inspector talking and think it was me giving him instructions on the radio headphones," said Andy.

"If Rees moved the truck in such a situation, it could cause an accident."

The procedures they devised were simple P's and Q's. Remember mom telling you about the 'magic word'? "Please" and "thank-you" are how these super snooper code their conversation for safe movements.

Does that mean these smooth operators (with a reputation for practical jokes) are becoming nice guys?

Rees said, "We've made a lot of new friends this year and enjoyed our time in the northern regions. People were very hospitable."

"But I miss my old crew. They're a fun bunch. And it's tough being away from my wife and newborn. I've been home to East Delta for only two 10-day breaks since April."

Having accomplished hundreds of inspections from spring through fall, Andy and Rees are now enjoying a more relaxed pace doing winter inspection in the Lower Mainland. They get home in the evenings; their family life resumes.

I salute crews like Andy and Rees; their sacrifice and dedication make our bridges safe and our ministry a good place to work.

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**Talk It Up Feedback**

*By Geoff Warrington, Service Excellence*

In the past several months, Ray and I, with the support of Barb Pascolin, have made several visits to districts, regions and headquarters branches, to make employees aware of what Service Excellence is and to hear their feedback.

By now you should know that Service Excellence is nothing new — you've been providing excellent service. It's just that now we want to build a structure that will combine the strengths of different levels in the organization to increase productivity and quality, to continuously improve our service to ourselves and our customers.

What type of feedback comments did we get?

What you said is that we need to:

- Improve communications through better sharing of information and more effective dialogue between districts, regions, branches and the executive.
- Let people know what is expected of them (clarification of staff roles) and how to manage change.
- Provide the tools needed to utilize training that is offered.
- Increase visibility and communication as well as support from executive for implementing team suggestions and recommendations and support from regions for districts as well.
- Encourage staff meetings at all levels and the formation of teams to promote ways to improve work environment and, hopefully, get rid of some red tape.
- Create a common vision, long-term goals and a commitment from everyone at every level to fulfill that vision.
- Give instant recognition when employees are doing things right.
- Develop managers that are leaders and coaches who invite feedback and empower staff as part of the team and decision-making.

*Thanks for giving us your thoughts. Thanks to Barb too. She just finished her secondment with the Service Excellence team and we are going to miss her.*

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*SERVICE EXCELLENCE UPDATE*
The Alchemy of Asphalt New Pavement from Old

By Danny Voylein, Operations Branch, Kootenays Region Office

Since the early 1900s, equipment used in the paving industry has undergone alterations and modifications. But the Hot-In-Place (HIP) recycling process has been titled the major technological advancement in renewing old roads.

Why? Because we can pave more roads for less while recycling and protecting our resources.

In the Beginning

Basically, HIP heats, removes and relays existing pavement. Early models in the 1930s used direct flame to heat and soften the pavement. By 1950, large refractory burners were developed. But, charring of the asphalt caused premature aging and the flames caused great clouds of smoky emissions.

Indirect flame and infrared heaters were later developed to decrease emissions and minimize the asphalt charring.

Another problem with earlier designs was the part that loosened the heated material, which fractured the existing aggregate and resulted in an undesirable mix. To minimize this problem, carbide tipped teeth (scarifier rakes) were manufactured to replace the planers.

The Ministry Gets HIP

In 1984, the Ministry recognized that this process was adequately developed and would result in a satisfactory product.

Then, in 1987, a B.C. firm developed a two-stage machine that heated the asphalt in two layers. This allowed the asphalt to be lifted to a greater depth.

Ministry staff worked with this firm to get the new and improved "train" on the road.

This new "train" consists of four separate pieces of equipment: a pre-heater, two heater-miller units and the hot R.A.P. (recycled asphalt pavement) processing unit.

This process allows production of approximately two kilometres of roadway per day and prevents the asphalt surface from burning.

B.C. Sets the Standards

A ministry study revealed that a rejuvenating agent, Cyclogen L, was the best to use as an additive to prolong the life of the recycled asphalt.

Further research projects are currently under way in B.C. to examine various characteristics of HIP recycled asphalt. The purpose is to define performance by providing engineering and mixture data to assess the economic and structural viability in comparison to and as an alternative to other resurfacing methods.

Innovative design improvement ideas from the manufacturing companies of B.C. also continue. They are setting a new standard for the industry that is recognized around the world.

Today, HIP asphalt recycling is a significant part of our pavement rehabilitation process and not just because it makes new pavement from old.
It's HIP Working for the Environment

Growing concerns about the environment and depleting materials resources dictates that recycling technology is the wave of the future.

In August of 1991, the ministry hosted a Hot-in-Place Recycling Conference at the Delta Pacific Resort and Conference Centre.

Sponsors, panelists, delegates and visitors included people from B.C. and from all around the world.

This truly is evidence of international sharing that could lead to advancements in technology that will benefit us all including our environment.

Tom Parkin, Public Information Officer with Region 6 interviews Mike Bishop.

TP: So Mike, tell me something about yourself. Are you really HIP?

MB: That's just a goofy title you made up to catch the reader's interest. I'm really manager of paving for Vancouver Island, and HIP stands for hot-in-place asphalt recycling. When I was working in the Cariboo, paving branch was among the first in B.C. to try this technique.

HIP asphalt recycling is a technology by which we heat the highway, grind off the top 5 cm, mix in rejuvenating agents and a bit of new asphalt, and then pack it back down — all in one pass.

It has tremendous advantages: saves millions of dollars — even saves natural resources. You might say blacktopping has gone green.

TP: Are people supposed to believe that?

MB: It's true! Last year, HIP recycling saved over five million dollars in materials on Vancouver Island. That's 6.8 per cent of the regional budget.

Everybody knows these are difficult times. Deputy Minister Vince Collins has to justify before Treasury Board every dollar he requests on our behalf.

Our long-term plan on the Island is to resurface all our paved roads within the next 20 years. If I were attempting to keep this schedule by conventional paving methods, we'd fall behind two per cent of the distance every year. HIP recycling saves megabucks, keeps me ahead of schedule, and makes the taxpayer happy.

TP: So you endorse this revolution in highway rehabilitation?

MB: Yes. If we can do the job, despite a modest budget reduction, we keep goods, services and tourists moving freely. Good roads give businesses competitive advantage, so our effort makes no small contribution toward B.C.'s economic well-being.

TP: Gee Mike, you should be in public relations.

MB: Naw. As a two-year old in my backyard, I watched Euclid building the Hope-Princeton Highway. I've had a 44-year career in construction.

TP: Tell me more about the resources you said were conserved.

MB: The crushed gravel used in asphalt is in finite supply. It's already becoming short around Victoria.

HIP recycling conserves gravel for the future. Last year, for example, using HIP instead of conventional pavement overlay saved us 165,445 tonnes of the stuff.

There are energy savings too — approximately 20 per cent from lowered fuel costs for crushing, drying and hauling gravel, heating asphalt at a plant, etc. So we're conserving petroleum resources at the same time.

The biggest energy saving is the asphalt cement which can be used for other purposes. Last year we saved 8,652 tonnes of asphalt cement on this Island. About 9,600,000 litres of heating oil could be refined from that — enough to warm 3,200 average-size homes for a year, equivalent to a city the size of Campbell River.

TP: Hey, you could be a spokesman for the conservation movement.

MB: I suppose you're going to say I'm HIP after all.
IN THE FIELD

REGION 1

Geotech Stranded in South Coast

A spate of slides has kept the HQ geotech team from Burnaby exceptionally busy in the South Coast since December: at American Creek, north of Hope; Laidlaw Bluffs, west of Hope; Britannia on the Sea-To-Sky Highway; Ferrabee Tunnel, north of Hope; and Oldium Bluffs on Highway 7 between Ruby Creek and Hug.

Auto Show 1992

Region 1 represented the ministry "Highway and Environment" works at the Pacific International Auto Show at B.C. Place Stadium in Vancouver, January 17-26, 1992 - thanks again to all our staff volunteers. They're fast becoming goodwill ambassadors for the ministry.

B.C. Tel, B.C. Cellular, Cantel and Rogers Cable TV joined us to give visitors personal instructions on how to use our road report phone network.

South Coast Opens Cassiar Connector!

More than 20,000 Greater Vancouver residents attended the opening of the Cassiar Connector January 11, 1992 (below).

A special thanks to South Coast staff who volunteered to meet and greet our visitors and answer their many questions.

Welcome to Joe Jensen

Thanks to Barry Wilton

Region 1 extends a hearty welcome to our new Regional Director (RD), Joe Jensen, who joined us in January after more than three years as RD in the Central/North East Region. We also thank Barry Wilton, Director, Personnel Services at HQ, for filling in as RD since Dave Cunliffe left us in October.

Excom Comes to Region 1

We were pleased to welcome the Executive Committee, January 14th. More than 100 of our staff attended a reception where our Deputy Minister, Vince paid special tribute to our new road report system and one of our 25-year veterans Glyn Briscoe, Regional Development Approvals Technician. Vince also spoke on Service Excellence, our Women's Committee Program, employee wellness and our Organizational Health Inventory.

Emergency Docking Facility Completed

The new emergency mooring facility at Porteau Cove Park, south of Squamish, is ready for service.

Now, if a rock slide or other emergency closes the Sea-To-Sky Highway for 48 hours or longer, a 360-car ferry will provide a temporary transportation link between Porteau Cove and Horseshoe Bay or Darrell Bay.

Plus, we enhanced the park and recreational facilities as part of the project. Our thanks to the South Coast Ministry of Environment, Parks Branch for their assistance.

REGION 2

Inet 2000 Tours Districts

Linda Christensen from Region 1 introduced our new INET 2000 road information system to our region and district office staff as well as maintenance road foremen, local RCMP and Ambulance Services.

A six-minute video introduced the new system and then Linda dazzled us all with an overview of how the information we feed the radio room gets out to thousands of British Columbians all within a few minutes.

She stressed the need for accurate and timely information from our field managers.

Our thanks to Linda and to the managers and foremen who took the time to hear what she had to say.

Welcome Geoff Freer and Warren Horsnell

Region 2 has undergone more than a few cosmetic changes in its districts.

We welcome two new District Highways Managers: Geoff Freer, who has taken over the South Okanagan crew and Warren Horsnell who is now proudly leading the 100 Mile clan.

A third new face will soon enter the picture in the North Okanagan District (Vernon) to step in since Harvey Popoff has retired. For now, we congratulate Steve Husband who is temporarily filling Harvey's shoes.

Doug, are you and Larry next?

To the Pickets -

To the Pickets We Go

Region 2 staff manned the phone lines 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., January 20 - 24 and our area managers worked around the clock, during the week-long labour dispute between Emcon Maintenance Services Ltd. and their maintenance employees.

The Coquihalla from Hope to Merritt was closed for a couple of days and a few travel advisories were issued on the Trans-Canada Highway, but all in all things were under control.

Our thanks to all the staff in Region 2 who helped in the battle.
REGION 3

"Bowl-A-Rama"

By day, they are the meek, mild mannered employees of the Kootenays Regional Office, but by night they become "The Creatures of the Bowl-A-Rama."

Region 3 hosted its first annual Halloween Bowl-a-Rama. Eighty employees and their spouses and friends, dressed their silliest and came together for a lot of socializing with a little bowling thrown in.

Occupational Health, the Kootenays Way

Our region formed a social committee in September of last year to encourage employees and their families to get to know one another outside working hours. The objective is to improve communications among staff.

So far, there has been a Family Picnic, a Christmas Party and a "Bowl-A-Rama" and we've a whole slate of events planned in the coming year.

Visitors to our region are encouraged to come and join us and see how much fun we are in the Kootenays.

Reduction in Road Salt Usage

A study of road de-icing agents and practises has been in progress for the past two years in response to criticisms about the effect of salt on human health, the environment, structures and vehicles.

Tony Bodnarchuk, regional roadside development supervisor for the Kootenays, has completed a literature review and gathered information from road maintenance organizations throughout North America.

As a result of this study, the ministry is undertaking separate trials employing calcium chloride and magnesium chloride as a pre-wetting agent on salt and sand.

Reductions in salt usage from 25 to 40 per cent are apparently achievable employing the pre-wetting methods.

Tony's in-house paper - "Salt and Other De-Icers/Anti-icers" - is available upon request.

REGION 4

Embarking on the Road to Improvement

The Ministry of Transportation and Highways is serious about taking strides toward improvement. In a series of group focus sessions, the research firm of Canadian Facts is helping us to find out what people know about our business and their perceptions of how well we're doing and how we can improve.

Two such sessions were held on February 4th in Prince George: one with ten local, general road users and another with commercial users. Each session was videotaped and transmitted to a group of MTOH staff watching from a separate room.

Discussions were surprisingly lively and open. To the MTOH audience eavesdropping, the findings were enlightening. Much of the conversation centered on the negative impressions but there were quite a few positive comments as well.

These focus group sessions may have come your way too, coupled with a telephone survey. Certain patterns are sure to develop.

Our task will be to search and discover ways to transform these negatives into positives.

It may take a while to erase some of the public's preconceived notions, but Region 4 is ready and anxious to take on the challenge.

Congratulations Wayne Carr on your promotion from Regional Manager Finance and Administration to Region 4's new Regional Director.
REGION 5

Ready, Aim . . . Avalanche???!

The arrival of ammunition to the Bear Pass marks one of the last steps in a long process for setting up “the gun” in the Bulkley Nass District.

Work began on a gun tower to house a 105mm recoilless rifle in the summer. Meanwhile, the local avalanche crew housed out of Stewart were put through a rigorous safety and operation training program.

With the arrival of the ammo almost six months later, the crew is now ready to aim and fire.

To Tony Moore, our local avalanche technician, this gun means his job is more interesting, effective and challenging. The gun has a firing range of 8000 metres. Tony and his crew expect to fire 100 rounds a year and bring down many hazardous snow deposits.

“Using this gun will not decrease the likelihood of avalanches,” says Tony. “But it will aid in increasing the safety factor at Windy Point and reducing the length of road closures.”

The gun will also enable avalanche technicians to accomplish avalanche control work during storms and at night when helicopters cannot fly.

This new addition to our avalanche arsenal is an effective ‘weapon’ against the threat of winter.

Loading the ammunition

REGION 6

New Region Office

December 2nd, 1991, Region 6 celebrated the opening of their new office at 6475 Metal Drive in Nanaimo. The space and the place are much improved. Staff housed in three different locations are now working under the same roof.

An open house will be held in the spring for out-of-town staff and for the public so Region 6 can show off their facilities and their work.

BCBG is currently searching for new quarters for Region 6 geotechnical people.

Wellness in Action

Another successful Employee Wellness Open House was held January 21 at the Vancouver Island Region Office.

Eighty employees participated and appreciated helpful hints from Caryl Harper, Ministry of Health Fitness Co-ordinator. Library resource books and hand out material on health issues as well as Canadian Springs Water and of course — HEALTHY MUNCHIES!
AT HEADQUARTERS

Those Who Made Marks

Our Chief Highway Engineer, Earl Lund, was one of 17 people recognized by the editors of Engineering News-Record (ENR) for serving the best interests of the construction industry in North America last year.

Earl was recognized for the success of the privatized road and bridge contract process, the first of its kind for a provincial or state government. (By the way, he's the only public servant in the list of 17.)

Earl received a plaque as well as mention in the ENR and was invited to attend an award dinner at the Plaza Hotel in New York City.

Congratulations Earl. We join ENR in recognizing your contributions.

Community Service Champion

Heather Drake, of the Correspondence Unit, received an award from the Mayor of Vernon in October of last year for her community service. Heather's hometown is Vernon. It's also where she started her career with the ministry. Congratulations Heather. We're glad to have you on our team.

Fun on the Slopes

Ministry staff and their friends and families enjoyed the fun of skiing without the cost (Only $50 for bus, lift, lessons and rentals, or $42 for bus, lift and lessons.) Our thanks to Leslie Freer (Major Projects) and Ann Adams (Public Affairs) who set up three trips to Mount Washington this year.

"It was a lot of work," said Ann, "but worth it. It was fun for everyone."

"Unfortunately, because of some last minute changes, we had to cancel one trip. But now that more people know about the ski trips, I'm sure we'll have three full trips next year," said Leslie. "See you on the slopes."

Thank You Brown Bag Lunch Participants

Our Brown Bag presentations were fun and informative, and a great way to let us get to know each other. The last one was held March 4th in headquarters printing shop where Steve Netherton and his crew revealed the secrets of the print shop.

The presentations may be over, but the idea isn't shelved. We'll use this type of forum to communicate when needed. It provides an opportunity for exchange of information.

We thank all staff who participated for their humour and their support. Thanks to Ann Adams (Public Affairs) too, for her work in setting up the presentations.

Valentine for Jim

Jim Richards (left) keeps our headquarters building looking good and makes us all feel good too. He always has a smile and a hello, even when we put fingerprints on the brass doorknobs he's just polished. That's why we sent him this valentine with our thanks.

Home Sick

A farmer sitting on his porch noticed a highway-department truck pull over on the road's shoulder. A man got out, dug a sizable hole in the ditch and got back in the vehicle.

A few minutes later, the other occupant of the truck got out filled up the hole, tamped the dirt and got back in the truck.

Then they drove forward on the shoulder about 20 metres and repeated the process — digging, filling, driving, filling, driving.

After a half dozen repetitions, the farmer squatted over to the workers.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"We're on a highway beautification project," the driver said.

"And the guy who plants the trees is home sick today,"

Submitted by David Robertson
Building Services, Headquarters
From Laughter's the Best Medicine, Reader's Digest

New Age Criminal

A Seattle man was pulled over and fined while driving in a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) with just himself and three life-size dummies. We're talking about stuffed dummies not three dumb people. What will they think of next? True story!
One for the MoTH Book of Records

Submitted by Michael Oliver, Geotechnical Services of South Coast Region

The biggest rock slide on one of our provincial highway routes in 15 years (an estimated 6000 cubic meters in volume) occurred December 12th at 3:30 a.m. at Laidlaw Bluffs near Hope in Region 1. A westbound truck (Purolator Couriers) avoided the slide debris by veering to the right. The operator lost control of the vehicle and crashed down an embankment coming to rest within two metres of an eastbound moving CN train.

The highway was closed and traffic was detoured to Highway 7. Immediate stabilization work was required before the highway could be cleared.

At 6:00 a.m., three hours after the slide took place, staff from our provincial Rockwork Section (based out of Burnaby) were at the site. The driver sustained only minor injuries. No other injuries were reported.

The highway was opened seven days later. Two hour closures are expected at intervals as stabilization work continues.

Congratulations to Hardy Bartle and his Rockwork Section staff—John Shindel, Peter Neely, and Aristo Cozzens— for a job well done in evaluating and putting together a quick contract for major remedial rockwork.

And special thanks to our Fraser Valley area maintenance contract workers and to district staff too, for the hours of work they put in on this one under the guidance of project manager Dave Smith.

Have you ever imagined what transportation will be like in the year 2010? Or some of our procedures such as highway maintenance?

Maybe we’ll have heated wires in the roads. We won’t need to clear the snow. It will simply melt away.

Or, how about lasers for avalanche control. We would love to hear your ideas of what the transportation industry will be like in the year 2010.

(Make them humorous or serious, there are no rules.) We’ll print them in the next issue.

To get you started, here’s our Architectural Design Technician at headquarters, Tony Hubner’s idea of what the car will look like in the year 2010. (By the way, he says that he is taking orders for this vehicle right now.)

The car or automobile of the 20th century has become the “PTU” (Patrol) car. By 2010, this car will maintain the tide line of 1940. It has no use for the PTU (Patrol) after 1940. It is no longer a necessity.

Once communication was developed to the point where the automobile had moved into the home, the need for daily travel virtually disappeared. With computer-aided manufacturing technology becoming commonplace, the PTU has again become a one-of-a-kind, craft-produced leisure-time commodity.

Here are the Smiths taking delivery of their brand new PTU with all-terrain fuelled ‘PTU’.

*Personal Transportation Unit*
ON THE ROAD...

To Laughter

By Jackie Baird, Manager,
Payroll Operations, Victoria Office

My son, Corey Baird, is the publisher of "D.C." - Canada's Hair Salon Magazine. He was the chairman of the Canadian Hairstylist of the Year Awards - Hair '91 - held in Toronto last November.

The special guest of the event was Phyllis Diller and I was privileged to be there with her.

We flew from Vancouver to Toronto together and spent three days talking and laughing. She's one very lovable, talented lady. At seventy-four years of age - she is full of energy and looks fabulous. But that's because, she says (referring to her face lifts and tucks, etc.), "No two parts of my body are the same age."

She can make a joke of anything. I've plenty of pictures and one of her books to remember her by, but even without them, I'll never forget those three days.

By the way, Phyllis says she loves B.C.

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Phyllis (left) and Jackie (right) on the road.

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Planting a Seed for the Future

The writer of this letter is a local gardening columnist who is now helping our roadside development crew plant wildflowers in the Sooke area. Talk about working with the public.

Dear Bruce (Bruce Nixon, from headquarters seconded to Vancouver Island Region Landscape Technician position):

Many thanks for all the information about seeding wildflowers! By now, Jean Grant of the Sooke Garden Club will have contacted you and will carry on with the seeding arrangements with you. I'm passing on the application form to her and the seed company addresses. I'll hang onto the rest for my column.

I picked a nice yellow 'aster' on the way to Nanaimo and from your sheet I'm pretty sure it's tansy ragwort! (As if I needed any more weeds in my garden.)

I'll send you my wildflower column when I get through with dull stuff like vegetable storage! I talked to Al Planiden (Manager, Roadside Development, headquarters) who was most helpful about what's been planted along Sooke Road.

Sincerely,

Barbara Chernick

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Protecting our Most Valuable Resources

We enjoyed this and there's a dozen more where this came from. They were written by a grade three/four class of students after the ministry expedited the upgrading of roads in the South Island District near the Bench School.

From Jackie

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Your Fan Mail

On the Road will be a regular column in the Road Runner. If you've had an experience On The Road you'd like to share with your fellow employees, send it to the Road Runner editor.
Men in Motion

Story and photos by Tom Parkin, Public Information Officer, Vancouver Island Region

A Day in the Work Life will be a regular column in the Road Runner. If you would like to share your day or a fellow worker's, send it to the Road Runner editor.

It was a blazing day in July when I stopped on the Island Highway at Nanaimo to meet our cross-hatch crew: foreman Jack Vandenberg and his labourer Wallace Libby.

Jack threw a safety vest at me. "Here, wear this. Grab on, we've got to pick up these last cones; then we can go for lunch."

Jack drove as Wallace dangled above the road at 20 km/h scooping orange traffic cones from the road and stacking them on the truck.

At Chicken Jack's air-conditioned take-out, we talked about cross-hatch crews over cold soft drinks.

Just two cross-hatch crews serve all British Columbia. They're based out of Centreline Operations in Surrey - Jack takes southern areas, including the Vancouver Island and South Coast Regions.

Jack and Wallace will be on the road from early April to the end of October applying chevrons in gores and medians.

Pardon, you say? Simply put, Jack and Wallace paint white or yellow V-shaped bars on non-travelled pavement near traffic islands, left-turn slots, and on and off-ramps.

If you're interested in specifics, there's a whole Pavement Marking Standards Manual. But what interested me was the why, how, and the what of their jobs.

Jack and Wallace's marks communicate to drivers the direction of traffic, nearby hazards such as raised curbs, and movements vehicles must make to keep in line.

Their work helps prevent accidents, but puts them at risk themselves because they work amid moving traffic and often impatient drivers.

Close calls are routine, but drunks and inattentive drivers are Jack and Wallace's worst fear. Flashing arrow boards, reflective vests and flashing devices provide some protection but can't stop a moving vehicle.

These concerns faded in the bright sun as we emerged from Chicken Jack's after our short lunch. There was work to do. With only seven months of dry weather to spray down paint, Jack and Wallace work up to 12 hours a day to cover their territory.

Back on the highway, Wallace placed a pair of boards along either edges of the cross-hatching they were to renew while Jack blew away small stones and dust in the working area with compressed air, then uncoiled a paint gun from a hose reel.

Within moments Jack had outlined the perimeter of the hatch in yellow, then began to fill the space with broad strokes.

Wallace threw out a cone, then followed close behind with a separate gun sprinkling glass beads over the wet paint. As fine as beach sand, these rounded beads glisten in headlights at night, providing extra warning for motorists. Ironically, they're made of crushed liquor bottles.

At the end of the cross-hatching season, Jack and Wallace's steel-toed boots will be worn and the colour of duck's feet. Jack returns to his family in Abbotsford and Wallace migrates to local ski slopes for snowboarding.

Come this April, they'll be back to keep us all in our place, in line, on the road.

Thanks guys.