What’s a highway person doing on a train?

A Newsmagazine for the Employees of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways
Suggestion Program Sports New Look

As a result of a directive from Treasury Board, the provincial government's Employee Suggestion Program has undergone some structural changes, which took effect April 1.

Most awards will now be paid by the ministries which adopt the related suggestion. The only awards paid by the Employee Suggestion Program are for suggestions that produce government-wide benefits.

Another important change divides the program into two categories of suggestions: those within and those outside of the suggester's general area of responsibility.

If you make a suggestion that falls within your general area of responsibility, but is not a specific job expectation, requirement or the result of an assignment, you will be eligible for an award of up to $15,000. Employees at 100 per cent of management level 5 or higher levels, are ineligible.

If your suggestion falls outside of your general area of responsibility, you will be eligible for an award of up to $25,000. Employees at 100 per cent of management level 6 or higher levels, are ineligible.

The program remains open to regular and auxiliary employees.

Deadline for next Road Runner: August 20, 1993.
IT'S YOUR SERVE

Reviving a Relic

"Well, I've always been quite mechanical," says Michael Inkin, an employee at the paving lab in Prince George. Michael used his skills to fabricate a degradation machine from an old sieve shaker, saving thousands of dollars. "You can't buy the machines anymore. The old machine was irreparable, and if you don't have the machine, you don't do the test."

The degradation machine breaks down aggregate to ten different sizes, if the incorrect size of material is used for a particular application, then the end product the road is inferior.

"It's certainly appreciated," he said of the "200%" award. "But for me, the bottom line is how well did it work in the field? I'd like to build the same for all crews."

Time on Our Side

A training session on a "Mac" spawned an inspiration which then turned into a great time-saver. And that's why Kelly Johnson was nominated for the 200% Club. "I feel great," said Kelly. "I was taken by surprise."

Part of the job Kelly performs with Geotech and Materials in Central North East Region involves writing out the same information many times for soil and gravel testing. It's tedious and time-consuming. "You get to the point where you think there's got to be a better way," said Kent Anderson, Kelly's supervisor. "And Kelly came up with a better way."

Kelly was involved with training on a "Mac" and while using his new found knowledge, he designed a sheet whereby most of the information could be computerized and only the specifics of a particular test needed to be entered. It turned out to be a big time-saver for many people. And it's something that anyone throughout the ministry who does the same sieve analysis tests can use.

"Over the next 20 years, it'll save a lot of hours," said Kent. "It's hard to measure the cost saving, but it will be huge."

"Can Do" Person

"Heather never says 'can't do it.' She's very diligent and I have complete confidence in the work she does," said Michael Goodhewson from the Transportation Planning Division's information transfer section. He was one of several people who nominated Heather Stojanovic for membership in the 200% Club. "She's very eager, hard working and often makes a project even better than we expected it would be."

Michael Trickey, manager of the information resources section, said that Heather was recognized and nominated for a substantial amount of work she'd done that wasn't even part of her job description. "She puts in a lot of extra effort that she probably never gets recognition for. She has a great heart - it's so rare to find someone like this, someone who never finds her limits. She's an ideal model employee - it's sort of embarrassing working with her sometimes because it seems you're the one who's never doing enough."
Team Member Gets Deserved Praise

"This belongs to the E.D. team," was Suzanne Evans' only comment on being nominated for membership in the 200% Club. However, Jennifer Cavette, regional systems co-ordinator at the Kootenay Region, has more to say... lots more!

"Suzanne was involved in the development of an expenditure distribution system in the region. It wasn't part of her regular job description. The environment was really new to her; the problem was not well defined and a lot of diplomatic work was required between branches.

Suzanne undertook the task marvelously well. She worked well within the team, and the team did a good job, but Suzanne was the kingpin and the whole project coming together was due to her efforts," said Jennifer. "She sure made my life easier," she added.

The Crew With the "No Problem" Attitude

"It was a dark and stormy night. No, this isn't the introduction to a cheap mystery novel. These were the conditions that Ron Scott's centreline crew found themselves working in late last fall.

Ron and his crew were on the way home for a well-deserved rest at the end of a long season painting lines in the north country. At the last moment they were asked if they wouldn't mind painting a few lines while they passed through Williams Lake.

What the crew didn't know was that the lines they were supposed to paint were for pavement that was still to be laid.

Ron and the crew's "no problem" attitude tackled the unexpected project and when the light ran out at the end of the day... no problem. A portable searchlight was rigged up and towed in front of the paint truck.

A "Motivating" Story

When a manager is recognized by his staff as being exceptional, it is something worth mentioning. Michael Trickey, manager of information resources is the first manager to be nominated by his staff to the 200% Club.

All Mike's staff echo the feelings expressed by his nominators Dave McDonald and Russ McDonald: "He is a motivator and an effective listener. He has brought the unit together to be a cohesive hard-working team and instilled confidence in all of us."

He also respects the goals and ambitions of his staff and works hard to help them be attained. Criticism is seen as the need for a new idea rather than a fault, they said.

Michael said, "I make it a point to ensure that each team member knows how well they are doing. Feedback is important in creating a confident working environment."

The centreline crew, including Ron Scott, Monte Shumaker, Bill Heather, Colin Hurley, Whitey Pape, Rick Darrison and Ralph Pape, were presented 200% Club rings and pins in April by the Central Cariboo District staff in Williams Lake.
200% Club Members

Teams:

Project Management Support Staff, South Coast Regional Office: Fernanda Badke, Diane Friend, Annette Koper and Elfi Marsch for setting up the ARC filing system for project managers, construction services and road and bridge project supervisors. The foursome also trained other staff who, in turn, helped other field staff implement the ARC system.

Development Approvals System Co-ordinators and Trainers: brought the system to life throughout the province. Their dedication, outstanding service and support in design, training and operations of DAS were recognized. Team members are: Jeff Moore, Lower Mainland; Lynn Teply, South Okanagan; Cindy Power, South Cariboo; Norm Fujino, Selkirk; Lorraine Clark, East Kootenay; Niels Edelmann, Port George; Dale Hillman, North Peace; Sherrie Applegate, Bulkley Nass; Jennifer Quinn, Skeena; and Claire Sollitt, Central Island.

Ron Scott’s Centreline Crew: Monte Shipmaker, Bill Heather, Colin Harvey. "Whiter Papier, Rick Davidson and Ralph Pape, were recognized for their "no problem" attitude by the Central Cariboo District staff. They delayed their trip home to do just one more job that the took them well into the night - no problem.

East Kootenay District: Don Diessing (25 years of dedicated service), Lorraine Clark and Olwen Righion give extra effort to provide the public with a professional and courteous service.

Ann Adams, Public Affairs and Leslie Freer, Major Projects HQ: instrumental in ensuring that up to 100 ministry employees were given the opportunity to socialize and ski at Mt. Washington three times a year - a real morale booster.

Norman Lees and Ken Watkis, Purchasing, HQ: cheerful and friendly; offer alternatives in purchasing and stationery needs which result in savings of time and money.

Individuals:

Joe Amyott, Thompson-Okanagan Region: works with service excellence in mind by embracing new ideas and change.

Judith Anderson, Finance and Administration Branch, HQ: works at a level that far exceeds the expected norms; continually brings forward ideas to assist in running more effectively.

Sandra Armstead, Financial Systems, HQ: for solving impossible problems, being a terrific supervisor, keeping her staff informed, listening to and supporting them and willing to "go to bat" for them.

Jim Arnusch, Kootenay Boundary District: delayed his holidays and went out of his way to complete the Sappers Bridge at Firston in good time.

Linda Barlott, Personnel Services Branch, HQ: Linda is an asset to the entire branch. She keeps us on track with her knowledge of protocol, and cheerfully and willingly assists with writing and formatting executive correspondence and reports.
Keith Beaulac, Siksika District. When we were moving to the new office, Keith was available anytime, in and out of office hours to help us - he anticipates what we need and does it, without being asked.

Gail Burrows, Personnel Services Branch, HQ: gave excellent advice in regard to paperwork which really helped speed things up in personnel ... plus, always cheerful.

Richard Hadley, HQ: over the last 12 years, provided constant and faithful research service to the Properties Branch (now with Aboriginal Issues Project); conducts immense research tasks within minimal time and cheerfully.

Susan Harrison, Central/North East Region: During her six-month secondment to the staff development officer position in Personnel Services, Susan developed a training process which the region will implement during 1993.

Michael Inkin, Prince George, regional pavement design centre: fabricated degradation machines from unused parts (old sieve shakers) saving at least $10,000 for the ministry.

Kelly Johnson, Central/North East Region: developed new sieve analysis sheet, plus improved lab paperwork to increase productivity.

Denise Kutzley, Central Cariboo District: always willing to take on new tasks and strives to provide the best service to both the public and staff.

Candice Little, Lakes District: promotes a positive attitude amongst her staff while refusing to accept less than excellent service.

Jean Luriecki, East Kootenay District: courteous, pleasant and helpful to both the public and other staff while performing under a heavy work load due to shortage of staff and year end work.

Lane MacDonald, North Island District: over and above his job, Lane has many times offered to help others, fellow employees and development approvals customers. Once, he assisted a customer who was having a heart attack and drove him to the hospital.

Martin Madelung, North Island District: regardless of work load, Martin is always willing to come to our rescue when we call help.

Cathy Melinka, Central/North East Region: carried own work load as well as doing work of another team when both members are absent; always willing to lend a hand.

Kate Miller, Maintenance Branch, HQ: willing to go anywhere on short notice to “teach” Hired Equipment Tracking System users.

Jack O’Brian, East Kootenay District: provides dedication and knowledge, having 30 years of distinguished service with the ministry.

Dennis Pretty, East Kootenay District: 27 years of loyal, dedicated service to the ministry and the public.

Art Prodeahl, Kootenay Boundary District: his initiative provided a recreational camp for mentally and physically challenged children easier and more dependable access (Sappers Bridge at Fruitvale).

Sue Rennie, Finance and Administrative Branch, HQ: delivers outstanding FMIS hotline support; provides “on the spot” refresher courses with a pleasant attitude.

Heather Smoljanovic, Planning Services Branch, HQ: recorded and indexed over 2500 individual traffic studies that had never before been properly catalogued.

Heather Syfchuck, Kootenays Region: goes out of her way for input in service excellence team; organizes Bonspiel, retirement parties, social functions, etc.

Leah Glick-Stal, Highway Safety Branch, HQ: nominated for her efforts to help build staff morale in organizing fun, team events such as the highway safety halloween challenge.
Suggestion Awards

Russ Raine, senior chemical lab scientist in the Geotechnical and Materials Engineering Branch, HQ came up with the idea of using returnable drums with plastic linings for their traffic paint. It cleans up contractor and highways yards throughout the province and contributes to the environment through recycling.

Wendy Isherwood, claims unit, Construction Engineering Branch did it again. Last winter, Wendy won herself $650 for designing a more efficient file retrieval system for her section. Now she's been awarded $550 more, for two separate suggestions: codon coded forms for ease in processing cheques to the appropriate bank account and an improved quarterly contractor pay back.

Joan Howard, also of the claims unit, Construction Engineering Branch was awarded $2000 for creating a tracking system for easy retrieval of filed information. Benefits are in staff time saved as well as the fact that staff will be less likely to overlook and, therefore, fail to use, information collected to address issues.

Ron Wiebe, Public Information Officer, Central North East Region was recognized for his "service excellent" suggestion to mail flyers to residents in areas affected by a traffic change or closure due to highway construction.

Sue Hills, now with Bridge Engineering Branch, HQ was awarded $500 for getting rid of a "we've always done it process" that she discovered the ministry could do without. Part of Sue's responsibilities when she worked in the claims unit in Construction Engineering Branch was to type form letter No. 7 and attach it to a damage repair cheque. She questioned the need for the form letter and, when told it was because "we need them," proceeded to create a package without form letter No. 7 which was enthusiastically approved.

Tom Wight, Vancouver Island Region, is keeping the region office 'caffeinated' up, as keeper of the coffee fund.

Susan Hartley, Finance and Administration, Central Cariboo District was rewarded for her 'service excellent' idea to install a motion detector to alert staff during the lunch hour and coffee breaks of the arrival of customers.
Your Fan Mail

Kind and Efficient

(The following letter was written to the minister, the Honourable Art Chouhoud, and)

I would like to thank you and your kind and efficient staff who listened attentively to my flooding problems and contacted, on my behalf, Mr. Greg Galpin.

Mr. Galpin responded immediately, surveyed the situation and returned the next morning with the Shawnigan Lake highways crew who made safe, expedient and professional repairs. They corrected the flooding problems to the mutual benefit of all concerned and, I might add, saved me thousands of dollars in water damage.

Michael Reithbaurd, Shawnigan Lake

Professionalism

A Courtenay woman whose bed and breakfast sign kept getting removed from her “private” property wrote to the minister’s office about it and was impressed by the fast response. She wrote to the minister...

I received a call from Sandra Houston (minister’s assistant) of your office advising receipt of my letter. She listened to my story and stated your office would have someone get in touch.

Mr. Mike Proudfoot (DHM North Island) contacted me a short time later and we have since resolved the issue. My sincere thanks to this gentleman for his efforts and professionalism in getting the matter looked after. Once your office and Mr. Proudfoot got involved, everything fell nicely into place.

Vincent S. Webb, Heatherwood House Bed and Breakfast, Courtenay

“First Responder”

I would like to commend your employee, Steve Reid (a member of Vancouver Island Region survey crew) for his action on May 1st of this year. While hiking near Sacred Falls he came upon another hiker that had suffered head and possibly neck injuries due to a falling rock.

During the approximately 45 minutes that it took the Fire Department personnel to arrive at the scene, Steve cared for the injured man using excellent “First Responder” techniques. After our arrival, Steve apprised us of the situation, then he helped to carry the victim to the aircraft.

I would also like to thank you for allowing him to attend the class on “Industrial Response.” On this day, his training was invaluable.

Roger de Hoy, Colquitt, Nanaimo Fire Dept.

Excellent Job

I wish to thank Bel Maintenance for the excellent job over the winter in snow removal and salting our highways, thus contributing to our safe driving. I speak not only for myself, but for a number of others whom I have spoken – some new to the area. One friend, who has returned to Kelso after several years absence, commented on how much better the job is being done under Bel Maintenance.

You have also done a great job at keeping up repairs to damaged roads, which is no small task considering the beating they take from the constant traffic of heavy logging trucks and double trailers loaded with plywood.

Congratulations and many thanks.

Margaret Dallys, Kelso

Employee Receives Commendation

Scott Secord, from the Freedom of Information Branch, HQ, got the surprise and thrill of a lifetime when he was presented with the Commemorative Medal and certificate for the 125th Anniversary of Canadian Confederation at a ceremony in Ottawa at the end of May. The presentation was made by a representative of His Excellency The Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, Governor General of Canada.

The certificate reads, “in recognition of significant contribution to communities, country and to Canada.”

Scott sits on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA), the National Yardi Committee which helps hard of hearing children, provides advocacy and support to children learning how to cope with hearing loss, and has been an advocate on behalf of hard of hearing children to the Board of Directors of the Kids Help Phoneline.
Making Peace with the EMR

A personal perspective by Lorraine Legant, Administrative Manager, Professional Services, South Coast Region

In the beginning, when EMR was in its “birthing” concept, we wondered from what seed this grew. Also, the mystery was resolved, a steering committee was formed to investigate a better way for the children of MoTH to report how they were spending their “allowances.”

When the genius of EMR came down to teach the children and their leaders, the children became restless, argumentative and concerned – hue did rise in South Coast Region – one not seen since “privatization.”

But, as in all things, we began to understand what was required of us: the leaders of the children calmed their anxieties. We were told that this new report was a way of telling the “palace” on a monthly basis what we had spent (Work in Date) and what we had promised to spend (Obligations) from our regional allowance.

If not all was spent, we then had some “fun” money left over (Flexible Funds). We all cried out, “We are not giving our “fun” money back to the “palace.” The leaders again soothed our tears and explained our “fun” money could be used in the future (Planned Future Expenditure).

As the children became more comfortable with planning their allowances, they began to understand they could share part of their money if it was not all spent, as well as borrow from their “colt erblades” cost more than what they had planned (Surplus/ Deficit).

Many meetings, many meetings were held by the leaders, discussing “fun” money, sharing and borrowing. The “palace” was becoming happier because they began trusting that the allowances they allocated were being spent well. Our leaders were more satisfied because the “palace” was allowing them to do their jobs and the children were fairly content because they knew better how to plan their allowances – to get better “toys” for better quality, which would then last longer.

The South Coast Region seems relatively at peace and EMR has become an intimate part of our daily lives.

Policy Review Project:

Creating “User-Friendly” Manuals

by T. P. A. Perrier, MRA

Service excellence, administrative reform, decentralization, privatization and other ministry initiatives have resulted in the requirement for all members of the ministry to have both eyes open when interacting with their clients.

The question became, how was the ministry to enable the decision makers at all levels to have the required authority to do their job with business efficiency, yet ensure consistency in how decisions were being carried out in one of British Columbia’s largest ministries?

The answer gave rise to the creation of the Policy Review Project.

Oliver King, a 36-year veteran of the ministry, accepted the mandate of the three assistant deputy ministers to review, inventory and analyze the myriad of existing ministry policy, regulations, circulars, bulletins and other “quasi” policy.

Given the variety of initiatives, it is important that consistent policy be readily available in an easy to use format, to provide a guide for decision makers by marking off areas in which they can use their discretion.

One call that rules also serve as guides but they allow no discretion in their application. Indeed, rules and procedures, by their very nature, are designed to repress thinking; we should only use them when we do not want ministry staff to use their discretion.

The project’s team is diverse and talented. It represents a strong cross section of ministry staff contributing to the workshop group, project review committee, writing team, project team and, of course, the steering committee.

In addition, several outside consultants have been retained to provide input into the process.

This policy initiative will result in standard, up-to-date and consistent manuals that are anticipated eventually to be produced as an on-line information system, with linked references, maintained and readily available throughout the ministry. This will result in our ministry occupying the pole position in our ability to provide the best service possible to our clients and to guide us into the “value-for-money, 21st-century” environment.
All Around Health

Wellness on Display in South Coast

As part of their commitment to wellness, South Coast Region has established a Health Promotion Information Centre. Initiated by Jim Lawrence, South Coast Region's Personnel Manager and wellness committee member, and Mona Sharpe, regional personnel officer, the centre recognized the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

In keeping with the broad scope of wellness, the topics range from physical fitness, personal well-being and health issues to work-related information such as Superannuation, Salary Deferral Program and the Employee Assistance Program.

"The centre has been available to employees since April 1," says Mona Sharpe. "The popular topics have been replenished twice. We are always on the search for information that would be of interest to the people at South Coast to help promote a healthy lifestyle."

Thanks to Jim and Mona for helping the people of South Coast with their all around health awareness.

They Got Shot, You Can Too

Last October, for the second year, South Coast Region administered the annual flu vaccination for those most at risk from flu.

Why are we telling you this now, eight months later? Because it's time to start thinking about next flu season. To help you decide if you should or shouldn't "get shot" read on.

Flu '92 vaccinations were given to 35 South Coast employees and to look at the effectiveness of this program, a control group of 35 randomly picked employees was used for comparison.

Three times as many of the control group contracted the flu than the group which had the flu shot. That works out to 168 extra hours of illness.

The vaccine will give you about 70 to 90 per cent protection against true influenza. It won't, however, protect you from the common cold or any other viruses that have symptoms similar to influenza.

The most effective time to take the vaccine is either September or October. If you are susceptible to the flu, have diabetes, kidney, heart or lung disease, cancer, anemia, immunodeficiency or immunosuppression, you should contact your Government Employee Health Services about the fall vaccinations.

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<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
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<td># who caught influenza</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of group total</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of work lost</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>255.5</td>
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Smoking Cessation Reimbursement Program

Once again our ministry is a leader.

We have just developed a program to assist those smokers wanting to quit. If they take a course/program and actually quit smoking, the ministry will reimburse up to $100.

For more information, contact your office manager, personnel advisor or Personnel Services Branch.
Equity Barriers

Last issue, we brought you staff comments collected during the Equity Awareness Seminars presented last fall/winter. Here's a few more.

What barriers exist to the success of “equity” in the ministry? Staff said: White males being discriminated against, perceptions that the best qualified applicant for a position is not getting the job because of the employment equity mandate.

Solutions suggested by staff:
- Remove restricted competitions; stress emphasis on training and promoting existing employees, control immigration.
- Ministry position: The ministry does not support discriminatory hiring practices. ALL HIRING IS DONE ON THE BASIS OF MERIT. It is vital to the success of this ministry and not open to compromise.

As to restricted competitions, in 1991 six area manager trainee positions were specifically directed toward “qualified” women. This was done with the full approval of the Council of Human Rights. In the past, only men applied for these types of positions. In pulling a number of women applicants, it was found they never thought to apply before. They assumed they 1) would not stand a chance and 2) would not “thrive” in the environment within which these jobs existed. It is the responsibility of us all to create a work environment that is open and supportive of diversity. In directing six trainee positions toward women, we did just that. In the end, five qualified women were hired.

Training and development of existing employees is a high priority. It’s important to our success that we have a skilled and knowledgeable workforce from whom we can cultivate and promote our future managers. However, there are also skilled and knowledgeable candidates in the labor pool. The knowledge and training our existing employees possess will always give them the edge.

Barrier: Reassigning a person to a higher position without having a competition, ensuring the person selected for a position is the most qualified - no discrimination, no favouritism.

Solutions suggested by staff: All positions should be posted and be open to review by those who do not get the position; management must follow the rules and not go around them; follow the Charter of Rights, don’t let the manager chair selection panels.

Ministry position: These points are often raised. However, it is important that managers are involved in the selection process. They are the ones knowledgeable about the position. The people who are the chairpersons of the selection panels are required to abide by the Public Services Act and Regulations. All candidates have the right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with the reason why they were not successful.

We’ll leave you with some words of wisdom from staff about how to make employment equity work:

"We need to change the attitude (perceived or real) that people in the public service are a group unto themselves."

"Take time we are evolving..."

"Involving the grass roots employees in the process..."
AIDS in the Workplace

This is excerpted from a brochure produced by the Canadian AIDS Society. We will present the second part of the brochure next issue. Topics covered will include, "How should I act?" and "Why do some people treat people with AIDS badly?"

AIDS can affect anyone. Today, people with AIDS are living longer and working longer.

What is AIDS anyway?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is believed to be caused by a virus called HIV. HIV damages the body’s immune system — the part of the body that fights disease. People with HIV infection are usually healthy for several years before the virus becomes very active. Once HIV begins to weaken the immune system, signs of illness appear. When the immune system is severely damaged, a person has trouble fighting off a number of diseases. This most difficult and life-threatening stage of HIV infection is called AIDS.

If they’ve got AIDS, what are they doing at work?

People with HIV often look and feel healthy. And keeping their lives full and active may help them to stay healthy. A job and the support of family, friends and co-workers are as important as the drugs they take for treatment.

But aren’t they putting me in danger?

No. Ordinary workplace activities do not put you at risk of getting AIDS. HIV has been shown to be transmitted in very specific ways:

- through unprotected sexual intercourse, both vaginal and anal
- by sharing injection needles and syringes
- from a woman with HIV infection to her unborn baby
- through HIV-infected blood transfusions or blood products received prior to 1986.

HIV cannot be spread through touching, sneezing, sharing coffee cups, using the same toilet or eating food prepared by someone infected. So you are not at any danger of getting HIV from an infected co-worker.

How can I get more information?

For more information about HIV and AIDS, contact your community AIDS organization, your community health centre should be able to help you locate it. You may also call or write the Canadian AIDS Society, 701-100 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Canada K1P 5H7. (613) 230-3580.

STO Review Completed

The committee set up to review scientific technical officer (STO) positions in the ministry has completed its task and all affected employees have been advised of the results.

In addition to the personal responses, 75 copies of the complete report have been published and distributed throughout the regions, districts and HQ branches.

The 91-page report not only outlined the results of each position review, but also contained a section of recommendations aimed at resolving a number of issues identified during the review process. The responsibility for addressing these issues has been assigned to various people who are to report back to Miles Webster when their task is completed.

The committee wishes to express its thanks to all who participated in this process. It was clear from the presentations made by staff during the review that this ministry has a proud, dedicated workforce and the committee was pleased to be a part of this process.

Meet the Webster Commission: the nickname for the STO Review Committee (see page 21 left to right: Wayne Bodrake, Highway Engineering Branch, HQ; Daniel Lamsdell and Bruce Welsh, Personnel Services Branch, HQ; Miles Webster, Central North East Region, Professional Services; Richard Dow, Planning Services Branch, HQ; and Steve Goodes, Geotech and Materials Laboratory, HQ.)
EITs for 1993

The Engineer-in-Training (EIT) Program is designed to attract graduate engineering students to the ministry, provide them with extensive supervised work experience and potentially retain them as professional engineers.

The new Engineer-in-Training are:

Tim Meszaros - Tim, a geological engineering student, achieved first class grades in his course work at UBC. Our North West Region will enjoy the added benefit of an Engineer-in-Training who possesses valuable, practical work experience. He was employed by Hardy BMT Limited, working in Kamloops and Prince George and spent four months as an engineering aide with our geological and materials lab in Kamloops. Tim will work under the mentorship of Frank Maximchuk on a variety of capital and rehabilitation projects.

Allison Bergman - Allison, a Civil Engineering student at UBC, has maintained a first class grade average at the Universities of Victoria, Manitoba and British Columbia. She completed her electives in water quality, environmental hydraulics and hydrology which will serve her and the ministry well in her first assignment with the Highway Environment Branch. Allison will work under the direction of Mike Kent.

Patricia Wong - Patricia brings an impressive educational record to the ministry, along with a particular interest in structural engineering. She is looking forward to taking on her first EIT assignment in Nelson where she will work under the mentorship of Dan Gould on capital and rehabilitation projects.

While in the EIT Program, the trainees complete a series of assignments under the mentorship of a professional engineer. Each assignment lasts approximately one year to ensure that trainees attain a thorough understanding of the engineering concepts and applications involved. At the end of the program, trainees are eligible to compete for regular positions.

Thanks to Marilyn Wargo, Personnel Advisor, HR for assistance with this article.

Human Resource Management: Performance Planning Appraisal

by Barry Wilton, Director, Personnel Services Branch

The last Deputy Minister’s Update made reference to some changes and new emphasis on our Performance Planning and Appraisal process. Outlined below is further comment and plans for implementing these changes.

No Exception Policy on the Appraisal Process

It is up to all of us to follow through on the no exception policy. Personnel Services is available to provide any training that is required. We will also be monitoring the completion of appraisals. Anyone requiring training or assistance should contact their local personnel office.

Ensuring All Supervisors are Assessed on Their Management Practices

Performance objectives for supervisors on their management skills should reflect their level of responsibility and any local issues that need to be addressed. Typically, we expect that they would include staff training and development, communications, involvement of staff in planning and organizing work, change management, etc.

Introduction of the Concept of Staff Rating Their Managers

The issue of team appraisals and staff rating managers is one which will require careful development.

During 93/94, we will be dealing with this project using input from employees and managers, surveying other organizations who have implemented this technique and, ultimately, he in a position to test prior some approaches to this technique by April 1994.
DM Speaks Out On Speak Out '92

Dr. Kerryn Crofton of Crofton Training Inc., Victoria, asks Deputy Minister Vince Collins questions staff would like to ask. She based some of her questions on staff input from focus group sessions she facilitated in October as part of the ministry's Speak Out '92 program.

The objective of Speak Out '92 was to allow senior managers to involve staff in the process of adapting to the many changes the ministry is undergoing.

"We are not alone," said Vince. "Other jurisdictions are going through the same exercise. The biggest change is the nature of the workforce today. People are more highly educated than ever before. Also, we have a social ethic that people will no longer tolerate simply doing a job and being told what to do. No more than they accept what's going on in the universe around us."

KERRY: IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET BACK TO STAFF ABOUT SPEAK OUT '92. WHY?

VINCE: We received 1500 responses to the questionnaire and turned away crowds at forum sessions. I felt that because people gave so freely it would have been inadequate to simply say: "Here's what you told us." It was incumbent upon us, as senior managers, to find out what we would do about it.

Other events caused us to take a little bit longer than I had wanted. The Korbin Commission was one. This commission was created to look at the range of relationships within the public service to identify how to adapt to the same "challenge of change" facing this ministry. I thought we should wait and see where we were in relation to the larger audience before setting out our course. And then there were budget issues.

We tried to come through with a set of initiatives to respond to what people saw as being most consequential to them. First and foremost, some appropriate way to allow everybody in the ministry to have a role. From our point of view, that is "performance plans."

We are going to put in place a no exception policy - every manager must meet with each staff member once a year - and a monitoring process, so we know this is happening.

This is the basis for a dialogue between two people - the two most important people - about what expectations are. A good part of what people have been telling us is that communication is not there with the people who are most important to the job. Unless we change things right where people live, each and every day of the week, it won't matter what Vince Collins or anybody else says.

KERRY: WHAT'S YOUR SENSE OF WHAT PEOPLE WERE SAYING TO YOU THROUGH SPEAK OUT '92?

VINCE: First of all, it's that question of "listen to me." It's upwards communications. "I want somebody to listen to my views and evaluate them on their merits." It's lateral, between colleagues and branches. And it's down: "What's the boss saying that I need to know."

But, it's other things too. People say: "Get the bureaucratic routine out of the way. Give me the authority. I need to do the job."

Also, those who are in the clerical ranks, typical women, have particular stresses placed on them. We need to pay a lot of attention to this.

KERRY: WHAT ABOUT ALL THE MINISTRY'S INITIATIVES? MANAGERS SEEM TO SEE THESE AS BEING "EXTRA."

VINCE: Feedback from staff gave us a good sense that the initiatives we had seen as facilitating people working more effectively with each other had been seen by some as sideline issues rather than mainstream.

I acknowledge that by treating them as special initiatives we gave them a different status than we intended. But these initiatives, such as service excellence, I see these as mainstream issues.

I say to any manager: "If you're not paying attention to these kinds of things, then you've only got luck on your side because you've got a sufficiently committed workforce to do the job despite the work environment."

KERRY: BUT MANAGERS SAY THEY ARE ALREADY PRESSURED; THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME.

VINCE: There will always be a disproportionate relationship between the range of issues to be dealt with and the amount of time and resources to do it. What behoves us as managers is to sort our priorities. "What is the most
important thing to do?" and "How does that match with the resources?" And then go to the people who are in a position to respond and to direct and say: "Here's my sense of what the priorities are. Here's the resources you have given me. Here's the things I think I can do. Either redirect me to ones you think are more important or give me more resources."

KERRY: WHAT ABOUT WHEN EXECUTIVE ASKS THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE JUST DO IT, SHOULDN'T THIS BE A TWO-WAY SHIFT?

VINE: This situation may occur. That isn't to say I subscribe to it or that it's a culture I would want to see. But I would be prepared to wager that some managers use the pressure of the job as excuses to not do some of the things with which they don't feel comfortable.

KERRY: CAN WE BE SPECIFIC TO MANAGERS ABOUT HOW TO CREATE A CLIMATE WHERE EVERY EMPLOYEE CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION?

VINE: First, they should ensure they themselves know what they want to accomplish within their areas. I don't think you can provide meaningful direction unless you yourself are very secure and comfortable about the direction you want your staff and you to collectively take.

KERRY: WHAT ABOUT SETTING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS, DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR THE SECTION?

VINE: MANAGERS WHO ARE PERFORMING IN THE VERY BEST OF THE SENSE OF WHAT I WOULD CALL A "NEW CULTURE" ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP THAT PLAN WITH THE INPUT OF THEIR PEOPLE. PEOPLE WANT TO BE INVOLVED. IF THE AURA DOES NOT INVITE THIS, NO MATTER HOW CLEAR YOUR DIRECTION, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET A WHOLE LOT OF SUPPORT.

There's no one perfect way of doing things. Every manager has their own personal style - bless them that they do - and some can become very effective with those styles. But those who are successful have one thing in common: sincere interest and care for individuals as human beings. It's simple basic respect.

KERRY: ARE YOU SAYING IT'S ALL MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY? ISN'T IT EVERYBODY'S?

VINE: It always comes back to the individual. Any person who feels that they have a contribution to make has the ability to go talk with the manager who's not communicating.

Let's get back to some of the initiatives we plan in response to the two surveys last year.

Every manager is going to have some form yet to be determined, of performance evaluation by the work group. I recognize employees and managers may be threatened by this but I feel we can find a way to make it less threatening.

I don't think I can decree all will be well in the workplace but I do think that we can collectively begin to create that culture. That's what the "Employee Rights Statement" is all about. We want to develop it jointly with representatives from throughout the ministry. This statement will say, you have the right to state your mind without fear of reprisal. We'll find some ways of ensuring this.

KERRY: WHAT ABOUT THE FORUM PROCESS? IT SEEMED TO WORK WELL FOR YOU. WILL YOU CONTINUE THE PROCESS?

VINE: The Korbin Commission forum discussed establishing committees in each ministry modelled after union-management committees that structure B.C. government employee union contracts. It would include staff representatives from BCGEU, management, different work units of the ministry and have a good gender balance.

It would be a distinct advantage if management, government and union agencies endorsed this as the way of doing business.

If that doesn't evolve, I may bring a cross section of people from the ministry together myself. That day I spent with 25 people from around the province provided very valuable feedback. I want to ensure that I'm in touch with what's going on out there.

KERRY: WHAT'S GOING TO BE, FROM YOUR VIEWPOINT, THE ONE "SYSTEM" THAT WILL HELP RESOLVE THE ISSUES FACING THE MINISTRY?

VINE: Just as I mentioned that there's not one management style that is right there is no one prescribed way to do things appropriately. First we have to give the general direction of the nature of the workplace that we want to have. And then we need to provide the "tools" or the "tool kit" - to help us get there.

I've asked Personnel Services Branch to develop that "tool kit" - complimentary programs such as how to run an effective meeting. I don't want to have policies such as how and when to hold meetings. That's yet another replication of top-down management, of telling everybody how to do their business.

Rather I'd like to have a set of tools that managers and their employees can use to find their own ways.
PERSONNEL CONNECTION

Joint Committee Meeting Highlights

The BCGEU/Ministry Joint Committee that was formed to address current ministry issues had their second meeting May 5, 1993. The following highlights some of their discussions:

Review of Privatized Road and Bridge Maintenance Services: The committee was advised that it is the minister, not the ministry that will be doing the review. It is expected that it will take place in the next few months. The review will likely look at cost, efficiency and treatment of employees.

Wellness Committee: The role of the Wellness and the Health and Safety Committees was discussed. It was agreed that the two groups have some common goals, but the legislative and contractual requirements surrounding Health and Safety Committees require that they operate independent of the wellness initiative.

Ministry Vehicle Use Policy: The committee was advised of some issues of concern in the application of the current policy. It was agreed that some investigation would take place prior to the next meeting and would be on the agenda for further review.

Employee Rights Statement: The committee reviewed the concept raised in the last Deputy Minister's Update. The committee will be discussing this further at the next meeting.

"Surplus" Staff: A status report on the 15 people originally identified as "surplus" was given to the committee. To date, six placements have been made.

Committee Composition: As a follow up on an item discussed at the Whistler Forum on Renewal of the Public Service, the committee discussed the concept of enlarging the representation to include membership from the Professional Employees' Association and B.C. Government Managers' Association. The BCGEU members agreed to discuss this further with their executive.

Sub-Committee on Training: There was discussion on the formation of a sub-committee on training. The BCGEU members will be bringing forward a proposal in the near future.

Telecommuting: The committee was advised of the ministry's intent to establish a pilot project in the Victoria and Vancouver areas. The ministry has formed a project committee under the leadership of Don MacNab, Highway Engineering, HQ.

Camp Conditions: The language in the collective agreement will be reviewed in conjunction with the ministry's practice of supplying accommodation in camps.

Thanks for Being There

The following is a letter to all staff from a ministry employee: Ann Taylor, who was involved in an accident that changed her life.

I cannot say enough times or loud enough how grateful I am to everyone at the ministry for the kind words and levels of understanding that have been sent to me this past year and a half. After a tragedy like this, it has been a wonderful feeling to have the ministry behind me, helping out, making everything as easy as possible.

An accident is a very difficult thing for anyone to go through, but the death of a very important person as a passenger makes it even more difficult.

Bill Roberson, Health and Safety Officer did everything within his power to try to help, encourage and support me. I feel the ministry is very lucky to have such a person handling rehab personnel.

The few times I visited my "old friends" down at personnel, I was made to feel encouraged, supported and cared about.

People in my District Office (South Island) did so much again to encourage and support me that it will always be some of the good memories and feelings of the past year and a half. I have to believe what goes around, comes around. So watch out ministry of highways employees, you're all in for a big dose of good tidings.

I've started a new job and a new life over here in Chilliwack, and Tera and I have a new house to rent on Cultus Lake. All is well for us. A fresh start is what seems best for us both and it is such a good feeling to have taken a new office in the Fraser Valley District Office and to work with people that are so nice - I feel very lucky.

It is no wonder that people say, once you're with highways you'll never leave and if you do, you'll usually come back. People and attitude are what make a difference and highways has the best of both.

Thanks again for everything and I'm sure I'll be keeping in touch with all of you.
Geotech Drilling, Not Boring
by Jim Murdock, field work technician, Geotechnical and Materials Field Operations

Geotechnical drilling services are provided through the Geotechnical and Materials Branch Field Operations in Burnaby (which is actually a part of the geotech and materials at HQ). Due to the interesting nature of the work, there is little employee turnover - the majority of staff have been around longer than 12 years, which translates into a very well trained and capable crew.

Working out of doors and in the natural environment definitely has its advantages, and the variety… from drilling for natural gas storage pockets in the Fraser Valley, to boring our way through the lava beds of the Nass Valley, to drilling through the steps of the Parliament Buildings in Victoria to reroute television cables in anticipation of an official visit from “the Queen.”

Under the supervision of Wayne Soglo, three qualified field crews totalling nine people travel B.C. offering geotechnical expertise and advice to regions and district.

The ministry drilling section has been around since the mid-fifties and operates a modern array of equipment including a new portable off-shore drilling barge capable of both fresh and salt water operation, a fleet of four drill trucks that can be dispatched to anywhere in the province at a moment’s notice, a tracked drilling vehicle for off-road projects and an “Aardvark” drill mounted on a cat. The latter is a unique piece of equipment, being the only one in Western Canada. (The aardvark is used to drill and install horizontal drain pipe to drain off water in unstable slopes.)

Inaccessible sites are usually accessed by helicopter, so the section also has a variety of drills suitable for fly-in operations.

Among the many functions crews perform are to obtain soil samples and bedrock core samples, install a variety of in-ground instrumentation including piezometers, slope indicators, well-monitoring instruments; and conduct water packer tests. Crews also train in soil sampling techniques and soil log completion.

Field crew members are Brian Girard, Mike Cadeau, Chuck Sleasman, Rolf Mat, Dave Morgan, Hannu Rauha-

Dace Morgan and Hannu Rauhaanen ‘aardvarking’

Dave Roberts (left) and Brian Girard at work in the Lower Mainland.

nen, Dave Roberts, Don Shillingford and Brian Phillips. Contaminated site investigations and drilling contract administration is done by two field work technicians - Mike Smallwood and Jim Murdock.

Patrick Mayne and John Sumpter control all inventory in the warehouse. Documents along with office duties are efficiently handled by Kelly Daigleault, Jackie Chambers and Lynda Jones (the office manager). Al Brown oversees drilling operations as well as seismic-resistivity and rockwork sections. Regional auger drill crews enhance geotechnical operations and are located in Prince George, Kamloops, Nelson, Burnaby and Terrace.
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In recognition of the “International Year of the Indigenous Peoples,” we’re putting the Aboriginal Issues Project Office in the Spotlight. Thanks to Nichola Wade, research officer.

In the past seven months, a number of new faces have turned up at Aboriginal Issues Project (AIP). Most were already MoTH employees. We were brought together by Mary Koyl, the project’s director, to increase awareness of aboriginal issues throughout the ministry and to lead the ministry in developing a strategy and policy framework that ensures present and future access to public rights-of-way throughout the province.

Over the two-year life of the project we will be undertaking a number of initiatives. These include: ministry representation on the Nisga’a Land Claim negotiations; assistance to region staff with specific negotiations for rights-of-way; cross-cultural training for ministry staff; Aboriginal Issues Management Status Reports (AIMS); and liaison on aboriginal issues with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Don Winchess, manager, aboriginal issues, is working on negotiations and cross-cultural training programs.

Terry Vanderbracht, the AIP’s secretary, has a handle on everything that is going on. A true organizer, she keeps us in line.

Joanne Fralic works part time, offering a helping hand and a ready smile.

Marci Fedoruk and Shelley Barnham provide the project with valuable Freedom of Information support under Barb Tier.

Mary Koyl, caught between meetings and a “hard place” is the project director and aboriginal guru.

Rich Hadley, research officer, aka “Digger,” spends his time researching old ministry records and other sources to facilitate negotiations.

John Balogh, research officer and former journalist, is doing his best to make sense of bureaucracy.
Cultural Awareness Sessions

These sessions are being encouraged around the province in recognition of the "International Year of the Indigenous Peoples." Following are comments from Tracy Cooper, DHM for Central Cariboo District who initiated one for his staff.

A native cultural awareness session was held in Williams Lake, January 7, 1993 and all staff were invited to attend.

In Central Cariboo District, with three distinct nations and nineteen different bands, a significant percentage of its customers are people of aboriginal ancestry. We recognized that cultural differences could inadvertently result in communication breakdowns, leading to misunderstandings and less than the best service to these clients.

It was with some trepidation that I approached the subject of putting on a native cultural awareness session with my co-workers.

Prior to arranging for the seminar, we discussed what I saw as the benefits of putting on such a session and was pleasantly surprised when I did not get a negative staff reaction.

Karen Jeff volunteered to contact Joan Gentles, the native education co-ordinator for School District #27, to explore the possibility of putting on this course. Mrs. Gentles had given courses of a similar nature to the RCMP and Social Services.

The course opened with Joan Gentles and Shirley Grassbush not introducing themselves but having us spend five minutes getting to know the person to the left or right and introducing them ourselves.

We then went through a discussion exercise in which people were to write down everything we thought about aboriginal people both good and bad. A lot of common stereotyping emerged and we then had a chance to discuss why each of us felt the way we did by the use of aboriginal hand puppets.

The session proceeded with a discussion of the cultural differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal culture and how this affects communication between us. Of particular interest was the quiet time in which aboriginal people frequently take to ponder responses before answering and how this makes most white people uncomfortable.

Everyone agreed it was a draining but very worthwhile experience. I would recommend it highly to those districts who have aboriginal peoples as a significant percentage of their customers.

Young aboriginal dancers at a Cultural Awareness Session held on Vancouver Island.
BC 21 and You

A new multi-year plan to improve the economy in every corner of the province was unveiled in late March by Premier Mike Harcourt and the bill that supports it, Bill 3, was passed in the House in May. It’s called “BC 21 – Building our Future,” and it focuses the government’s limited resources for investment both in people and facilities. Targeting these two areas means the people and the regions who need the immediate benefits the most will receive them first.

B.C. Transportation Financing Authority

There are four key components to this strategy; but the one that most directly affects the Ministry of Transportation and Highways is the establishment of the B.C. Transportation Financing Authority. Transportation and Highways Minister Art Charbonneau will chair the board of directors of this authority.

The three other components are: accelerating public investment in building the facilities needed to support vital services in health care, education and justice; focusing Crown Corporation capital investments to ensure they deliver maximum long-term economic benefits; and allocating $100 million in new monies for regional diversification, equity and training priorities.

The Transportation Financing Authority will allow much-needed transportation projects to be completed sooner than they otherwise would be.

Projects undertaken by the authority will be self-financing through dedicated revenues, including the new one cent per litre tax (effective September 1993) and $1.50 levy on each rental vehicle that were announced in the budget in March. In addition, tolls for new projects will be considered where they are appropriate. Joint ventures with private capital and union pension capital are also being investigated.

Effects on MoTH

“I do not see the Transportation Financing Authority replacing the ministry in terms of the design and delivery of product,” said our Minister Art Charbonneau an speaking to Bill 3 in the legislature.

Furthermore, I see that we are adding some planning capacity here which up to this time, to my knowledge, has not existed. We have not had planning that brings together all the Crowns related to transportation and the agencies outside of the provincial government.

“I did not mean to state that there was no long-term planning. There has been good long-term planning (within the ministry). I’m suggesting the kind of overarching, integrated planning between rail, airport authority, ferries and highways.”

As to what process will be used and who will be responsible to decide what projects go forward, Charbonneau said:

“We have transportation priorities that have been determined by regional transportation committees. Various studies that have been done for the ministry will all be brought into the mix. The various Crowns have their own plans that are being gathered together. Plans of other organizations, such as the airport authority, are being brought together. There will be a collating of this information and an updating of it to reflect current conditions and expected population trends based on current studies.”

Projects which will be given priority by the Transportation Financing Authority will be announced soon, said Charbonneau.

The Dumbest Rule

Gordon Hogg, ADM of Administrative Services wanted to show that executive meant business when they said they wanted to streamline administrative processes. So, he introduced the “dumbest rule” program. Here’s how it works.

Staff forward a letter to his office that outlines what they think is the “dumbest rule” of the administrative process. But, it’s not just a complaint program. Staff should also provide suggestions on cost-effective or time-saving alternatives.

Here is an example

Out-of-Provience Exemption

An employee pointed out that those who travel via Highways 97 and 97 sometimes have to stay overnight in Watson Lake - geographically, there is no alternative.

In some cases, the employee does not know beforehand that he will have to seek overnight accommodation in Watson Lake. The reactive emphasis means more work for employees and expense payments are held up.

As a result of this letter, the Deputy Minister has approved blanket exemption in order to forego out-of-province travel requests for Watson Lake. Individuals required to stay overnight in Watson Lake will not have to provide an out-of-province approval form, either in advance or in arrears.

If you know a way to improve or simplify work procedures, forward your ideas to the “dumbest rule” program, to the attention of Gordon S. Hogg, Assistant Deputy Minister of Administrative Services.
A Day in the Work life . . .

Provincial CommCentre

Neither snow, rain, sleet, hail nor dark of night will keep them from their assigned duties. In fact, it’s these elements combined with rock slides, avalanches, motor vehicle accidents and more that keep the people very busy at the Provincial Communications Centre in Burnaby.

There are five ministry radio rooms located across British Columbia: Burnaby, Kamloops, Nelson, Prince George and Terrace. Although each plays a significant role in providing safe and efficient movement of people, the Provincial Communications Centre in Burnaby is the cornerstone. Although each radio room has many duties, the CommCentre is highly motivated by the Road Report Program and its ability to advise motorists of road information as conditions change.

Cathy Gataké

“because it’s never the same. Every day is different and there’s such a diversification of jobs.”

The CommCentre is more than a group of individuals scattered throughout the province, passing along information on local road conditions. It’s a network of communications specialists working to keep all roads and highways in the province safe and accessible for the travelling public.

Thanks to Sue Lampman from the CommCentre in Burnaby for assistance with this article.

Trio of International Prizes

The ministry’s CommCentre has been honoured with three awards in the world’s first Travel Information System Message Writing Contest. The ministry was the only winner outside the U.S.

The CommCentre won first place for “Overall Effective Delivery,” second place for “Creative Writing,” and a third place award for “Interpretive Description.” The winning messages were radio ads for a speed-painting campaign produced with ICBC.
Landscape Awards

The roadside development section of the Highway Environment Branch have come up winners – not once, but twice!

Earlier this year, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects recognized the branch with a regional honor award for “outstanding achievement” and a national merit award for “a high degree of professional accomplishment” for their “Manual of Aesthetic Design Practice” published in October, 1991. This manual was created to assist ministry staff and highway design consultants to integrate an aesthetic design process into highway planning and design.

The manual is widely used throughout the province as a set of guidelines for incorporating scenic resources, landscape character, better grading and revegetation practices. It is also used when considering roadside safety rest areas in all highway development and rehabilitation projects.

In addition, the manual has been requested from departments of transport all over Canada, the United States, and as far away as Columbia, South America.

The second honor, the “Landscape Service Award”, was received in March from the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects for the effort the ministry has made to make provincial highway corridors more scenic. This is the first time the award has ever been presented.

During the presentation, a member of the awards committee said, “Through the efforts of such individuals as Mr. Al Plantiden (manager, roadside development, Highways Environment Branch), the Ministry of Transportation and Highways is taking a broader view of its mandate, attending to the manner in which the highway is planned with and integrated into the landscape and surrounding communities, and attending to the world of aesthetics, landscape is, after all, an experience of motion.”

Thanks to June Wares, co-ordinator, roadside development for providing material and photos for the story.

Enviro News and Views

Greener than Green

The ministry is “green” now, but we want to be “greener.” That’s why the Highways Environment Branch is creating the “Environmental Management System.”

The system is designed to improve environmental management by enabling staff to address environmental/socioeconomic issues in a proactive way. Key elements include identifying the role and responsibilities of Highway Environment Branch, defining outcomes to be achieved, creating a “green plan” – steps to bring ministry operations into alignment with policy targets, an internal awareness program, including training and a public awareness program.

As part of this system, a number of tools are currently being developed to help everyone understand and address many of the environmental challenges in transportation: a Socioeconomic Procedures Manual, Environmental Procedures Manual and a new Referral Process Document.

The “system” development is a long-term process. The first step was a questionnaire that was randomly sent out to staff in April. Its mandate was to find out what staff expect from the Highway Environment Branch.

The results show that staff want greater clarity as to expected standards as well as improved communication and co-operation, both within the ministry, and with external agencies and the public. There is a need for information and training on environmental impacts and mitigation methods.

The hope is that through the “Environmental Management System” staff have clearer goals and shared visions about the issues and can individually and collectively translate them into reality for the people and for the environment of British Columbia.
Three Valley Gap Slide

The Easter long weekend brought more than bunnies and chocolates to Geotech crews in the Kootenays Region.

At 12:40 a.m., Saturday, April 10, Peter Seelig, rockwork contract technician, was advised a rockslide at Three Valley Gap near Revelstoke had closed both lanes of Highway 1. Peter contacted Tor Belsham, rockscaler, at his home in Winfield and arranged for him to be on site by first light to carry out a reconnaissance inspection then report back. Tor’s report was filed at 7:00 a.m.

On the first day, the slide was assessed and a work plan and recommendations were prepared. Two large pieces of rock were still a danger to the highway and the travelling public. On Sunday they were removed with explosives. After that, it was a lot of hard work and long hours before the area could be stabilized, inspected and cleared.

Since there are no alternate routes and traffic was expected to be heavy toward the end of the long weekend, the “pressure was on.” The challenge for crews was to bring the site to a safe condition as soon as possible so the road could be cleared and opened to meet an announced opening.

One additional challenge: protect the resort across the road from the slide. It had sustained some damage during the slide. Measures were taken to prevent further harm during rock stabilization work.

Rod Anderson (far left) scaling the crest of overhang in preparation of setting column explosives.

Both Peter and Tor have been nominated individually for membership in the 200% Club for their quick response that weekend, along with a subsequent nomination for themselves and the entire rockwork and rockscaler crew who worked very hard to enable the area to be cleared and stabilized.

In addition to Peter and Tor, the following people were singled out for recognition: Dave Gerraghty, senior rockwork engineer, Steve Pollak, rockwork engineer, Jim Fulton, rockwork technician, and Rod Anderson, Neal Denis, Mike Greer, Jim Guinn, Larry Hendy, John Schindel and Chris Wouters of the rockscaling crew.

When asked how he felt about the 200% Club nomination, Tor said he was surprised. “To get woken up in the middle of the night and be asked to head out to a slide — that’s part of the job I’ve been hired to do — but it’s nice to be recognized,” he said.

Peter’s reaction was similar. “It’s nice to be recognized by other people. Attending to rockslides and such is just a routine part of our job. But once in a while, when somebody says, ‘hey you’ve done a good job,’ well, that’s nice to hear.”

The April 16 edition of the Revelstoke Times reports that Revelstoke city council “had warm words for the efforts of highway maintenance crews who kept traffic moving while cleaning up after the slide.”

Thanks to Jackie Chambers, David Gerraghty, Al Brown, Orlando Tson and Jim Fulton for assistance with this article.
IN THE FIELD

This section is presented by the Public Information Officers and their support staff. To learn more about what’s happening in the regions, each has their own unique newsletter. These are available through the ministry library or by calling your region public information office. (Headquarters has one, too.)

REGION 1

Jeans Day: Helping Children’s Hospital

South Coast Region staff wore jeans on Friday, May 28 to help raise funds for the British Columbia Children’s Hospital. Thanks to Donna Staff for organizing this year’s Jeans Day – 30 employees at the regional office took part and raised $150 for the Children’s Hospital.

Annual South Coast Golf Tournament

The region’s 7th annual golf tournament was held on Friday, June 4 at the Burnaby Mountain Golf Club. Seventy-two people, including visitors from Kamloops and Nanaimo, signed up for the tourney. The event was a great success. Our congratulations to the winners. Garry Dawson and Keith Tompkins (highway engineering) and Leanne Martell (project manager) did a superb job organizing this year’s golf tournament.

Region Boasts Double Win

“I used three hands, to signify a group welcoming a single hand, which represents the individual as well as water and sun for B.C.” That’s how Elfii Marsh describes her winning entry in the recent government-wide Corporate Orientation Logo Contest.

Elfii is a secretary with project management, South Coast Region. She won $100 for her efforts. Fourth place was claimed by a South Coast Region employee – Neil MacLeod of geo-tech field operations in Burnaby. His reaction was: “I’ve entered quite a few of these contests before and I can never seem to win them … runner-up forever!” Neil’s entry won him $25.

National Transportation Week

South Coast Region marked National Transportation Week, June 6-12, with a number of activities: the 3rd Annual NTW staff colouring contest, region sent a mailbag about NTW to all public libraries in the province and to selected Lower Mainland schools, region also participated in the annual NTW display program, this year at Brentwood Mall in Burnaby. Our display highlighted the 24-hour road report information system.

Rotary Club Kudos for the Ministry

The Rotary Club of South Vancouver has presented the ministry with a certificate of appreciation for its cooperation and support for the highly successful Rotary Heritage Forest project at the Cassiar Connector. Rotary has produced a video on this initiative, and is distributing the video to Rotarians around the world.

REGION 2

49-Year Veteran, “Red” Retires

Merrick (Red) Arnold first worked for the ministry in the early 1960s during summer vacation. He joined the staff full time in 1974 as a 17-year-old labourer on the Lytton road crew. Now that Red has reached “official” retirement age, the ministry has honored what was virtually his entire active working life spent in the service of the people of this province. Red’s wife, Marie, operates a small clothing store in Lytton and Red accompanies her to the store most of the time.

Red and Marie.

Zimmermann, Roasted and Retired

They came from all corners of the province to “roast” Hans Zimmermann, Thompson-Okanagan’s manager of construction. Hans has been with the ministry for 35 years. He began his career on the Squamish Highway as a roadman in 1956 and has worked in the Kootenays and South Coast as well as the Thompson-Okanagan. Hans got a fitting gift. He was presented a mountain bike from region staff, so he can really get “away from highways.”
Island Highway Comes To Kamloops

Hans Zimmermann has co-ordinated efforts to bring Kamloops to Vancouver Island. This region is preparing a submission to do some work on the Island Highway Project. The general scope is to design a four-lane divided freeway located between Union Bay and Courtenay. The proposal involves offering services of highway engineering, geotechnical and materials engineering and project management. Rod Schoof is the “Kamloops Island Highway” team leader.

South Cariboo Contract Seminar

May 11, South Cariboo District hosted a seminar for local contractors. B.C. Hydro, Whipple Road Maintenance, and Ministry of Forests co-sponsored the day-long event. Facilitator, Dan Dobson (roads area manager) said the seminar’s purpose was so contractors would learn how the agencies operate and about contract opportunities. Managers hope to see more competitive bids from a better informed contracting community. The event was a success thanks to district staff: Warren Homnell, DHM; Michelle Schilling, area manager trainer; Gord Smith and gang at HQ print shop; Betty Nicholson, Public Affairs, HQ and Betty McCaw, regional contract officer.

REGION 3

Errol Hicks Retires

After 25 years of service, Errol Hicks, regional manager operations has retired into his third career as a home handyman. Errol started work as a cowboy in the Okanagan area, and his first employer, rancher John Benedict, attended the retirement festivities, telling stories of he and Errol driving cattle down Douglas Lake Road and Highway 97. Over 125 staff from the ministry attended retirement festivities including a special version of the song “Lord It’s Hard To Be Humble” sung by “Leslie” (Sue Lakeman) with the DHMs, Monty Frederiksen and Barrie Pearce providing back up as chorus girls.

Christine McCandlish (right) explains Castlegar Bridge model to area residents.

West Kootenay Trade Fair

Taking the Castlegar Robert Bridge model, the electrical intersection model and the history of highways in the Kootenays display, staff attended the West Kootenay Trade Fair held in the Castlegar Arena. This major community event sponsored by the Kinsmen Club attracted about 5000 residents from surrounding communities over the weekend of April 23rd. Our booth was busy throughout the fair and the ministry won the Kinsmen Club award for the most outstanding display.

DMHs Monty Frederiksen and Barrie Pearce back up Sue Lakeman on vocals.

REGION 4

YRB Captures the Jiminy... Again!

Every spring for 28 years now, seemingly sane highways employees have been hitting the sheets to fiercely compete for the coveted Jiminy Cricket trophy, emblematic of curling supremacy in the Central North East. This year’s event sponsored by Argo Road Maintenance, was played in Quesnel in March. Prizes were awarded to winners in three events but it was the Yellowhead Road and Bridge foursome who had their names inscribed on the Jiminy Cricket trophy.

Jiminy Cricket’s origin isn’t clear. But we all know for sure that he started as a beaver log with stick arms and not much else. He’s grown to his present status when the winning team adorns the gaudy creature with something new and appalling.
IN THE FIELD

REGION 5

Participation

In honor of "Fitness Month," our regional director organized several events. First, the challenge to walk or run from region office to properties office and back (vice-versa if you were from properties). Jon Buckle was the only runner, completing in 18 minutes. Sandy Crawford, wearing steel-toed boots, finished the walk in 27 minutes, taking first place among the walkers. Then there was the family hike up Terrace Mountain as well as a noon hour cycle.

The month was wrapped up with annual Sneaker Day activities - everyone has to wear sneakers to work (but we expand it to tacky ties and shorts too and give prizes to the tackiest and wildest outfits).

Sneaker Day is a Terrace-wide event and MoTH was awarded best participation in the city. Another sporting event: June 3rd, Ministry of Health challenged MoTH in a volleyball game. It was close, but we managed to take the last two games to one.

Trade Shows

The region has been very busy with trade shows. Bulkley Nass District kicked off the trade show "season" on April 16 in Smithers and Lakes District followed with the Burns Lake show on the 23rd. Wrapping things up was Skeena District and region in Terrace on May 6. We asked people to fill out a short questionnaire to tell us how well they think we're doing our job. The response was great.

What Goes Up Must Come Down

Nature provided some unnatural events to test emergency preparedness in the Central/North East in two separate incidents. The first occurred the morning of April on Highway 29 between Hudson's Hope and Fort St. John. As much as 250,000 cubic metres of material came down across the highway. Regular users were forced to detour almost 150 kilometres out of their way to get around the slide site. But in 32 hours, a detour had been put into service.

One month later, unusually high temperatures in the Robson Valley resulted in a quick melt of snow pack, releasing another debris current which came across Highway 16 near Tete Jaune Cache. Over 200 metres of highway was buried with mud, rock and debris to a depth of over two metres in some places. This slide affected considerably more traffic for over a day and imposed an unusually lengthy detour for those wishing to reach points west. Prince George, normally a 270 kilometre drive, became a 650 kilometre journey.

Road and bridge maintenance contractors and ministry staff worked diligently to restore normal traffic flow.

Staff Names in Print

It's been seven years in the making, Grant Lachmuth, DHM, Lakes District and Nick Polyson, regional geotech and materials engineer, Central North East Region, now have their names in print. Back in 1985 Grant and Nick developed an innovative roadway design. In 1987, the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering approached them to submit an article for a book on geosynthetics they were publishing. If anyone is interested in the article, the book is Geosynthetics Case Histories, G.P. Raymond and J.P. Giraud, editors, or give Grant a call in Burns Lake.

Sr. Engineer Retires

Francois Lake, Lakes District: Sr. Engineer Bill Banfield, Ocmecica Princess celebrated 20 years with the ministry at his retirement party. His co-workers presented him with a painting of Francois Lake and the Ocmecica Princess, done by a local Francois Lake resident.

Kids loved the '57 Vette.

Lloyd Parker left won for tackiest tie and Dale Nyland was recognized as tackiest judge on Sneaker Day.
REGION 6

Raising Awareness About Family and Sexual Violence

Personal problems outside of the workplace can affect an employee’s performance on the job. Recently, a joint effort by Judy Robertson of the employment equity committee and Julie Mieras of the wellness committee helped staff at the Vancouver Island Region learn more about family and sexual violence. Judy and Julie borrowed videos and pamphlets on the subject from a number of sources, including local agencies and the ministry library, and made them available for interested staff to take home over a two-week period.

“Family and sexual violence is an issue for both the employment equity and wellness committees,” said Judy. “The videos and pamphlets help raise the awareness of employees in the regional office.”

Trevor Evans Retires

April 21, 1993 marked the end of an era for Trevor Evans, regional services superintendent from Region 6. Approximately 100 friends and family honored Trevor’s contribution of 35 years to the ministry. The other five services superintendents decided that this would be a very good occasion to roast Trev. Each one of them said a few words about Trev’s career with the ministry. Trev and Elaine now plan to chart a course for anywhere that their new 41-foot boat will take them.

Jim Kirkpatrick Retires

Jim Kirkpatrick retired May 31 after 36 years with the ministry and his predecessors. Jim’s entire career was spent in the paving section of the ministry, mostly as a project supervisor. Jim was the guest of honour at a barbecue on May 30 in Courtenay, which was attended by many of the people who knew Jim during his career. Jim’s unique and effective style will be missed by his many friends both within and outside the ministry.

Communication Manager Murray Tekano. Five finance staff are moving over as well as two administrative support staff. Tom Waring and Paul Baal also join the group as construction technicians and Ross Groves as senior bridge design engineer. That leaves Brian Stone, Dave Ferguson, Ian Matthews and Leslie Freer as the HQ major projects core group.

Safety Branch 2nd Workshop

by Leah Glick-Sted. Office Manager. Highway Safety Branch

In Richmond, May 13 and 14. Highway Safety Branch hosted its second two-day workshop on the services the branch provides.

In response to feedback from last year’s workshop (June 5, 1992) and to continuing input from regions and districts over the past year, we included a question and answer period after each topic to allow for meaningful discussion while the information was still fresh. We also included four “hands on” sessions.

We have begun our plans for next year’s workshop and will again endeavor to incorporate feedback from this year’s workshop into the format and content.

HEADQUARTERS

HQ Softball Team

They call themselves the “MOTHley Crew.” One of the loyal fans complained, “It does not easily lend itself to a cheering jingle.” And they needed some cheering as the first seven games, they came in second… a nice way to say they lost. The “MOTHley Crew” will be entering the Ninth Annual Mixed Slo-Pitch in Kamloops.

(Latest report: “MOTHley Crew” is one win, one loss in the finals).

Major Projects Staff “Shifts”

With the rising involvement of the ministry in the Vancouver Island Highway Project, some major project staff are now being reassigned to “help out” Project Director Gregg Singer and

Elke Pogol, records coordinator. Highway Safety, hands out material
Highways to Railways

by Tom W. Parkin, Public Information Officer, Vancouver Island Region

Nee-nee-nee-nee, nee-nee-nee-nee. (Recognize the theme song? Read on.) Was it simply coincidence, or were they brought together to fulfill some karmic transportation destiny?

In an odd twist of fate, three current or former MoTH employees helped move a steam locomotive across Canada in April. That this loco, #5468, hadn't been on these rails for forty years sounds like something from Rod Serling's Twilight Zone.

Selkirk district highways manager Dean Handley, Vancouver Island public information officer Tom Parkin and CP Rail diesel inspector Ed Russell rode the engine into Revelstoke on May 1, concluding an epic journey bringing it back to its former operating territory.

Dean and Tom, sons of locomotive engineers, both graduated from Revelstoke Secondary School in 1969, but hadn't seen one another since an epic 36-hour party. Russell worked for a season on northern Vancouver Island in the late '60s, surveying near Port McNeill.

The 13-day journey for Handley began in White River, Ontario. The engine had broken down there the previous fall while being towed from a museum near Montreal. Dean is involved in a group helping build a magnificent museum dedicated to the railroading heritage of his hometown. It opened June 16 and the engine is a focal point for visitors.

Tom got involved by making a donation toward the expense of moving the engine, and volunteering to publicize the museum's effort. He joined the crew in Calgary, and rode with the engine for the last two days of its 30-kilometre-an-hour ride through the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains.

"The whole trip was an emotional high for me," said Tom. "I think I missed my calling by being born 50 years too late."

"We're dinosaurs," admitted Dean proudly. "These machines will never be taken seriously again, but it's important to recognize their pivotal role in the development of B.C. If you're passing through Revelstoke, you really must come in to see what we've done. The museum is a symbol of what can be accomplished if you have people who really care about something."