Season's Greetings

BC Ministry of Transportation and Highways Newsletter
December 1997

Road Runner

On the Road to Mount Washington

Page 6
Welcome Back, Road Runner

From the Deputy Ministers

Public servants face many challenges but none is so demanding as the challenge of change.

And just as British Columbia society is changing and evolving rapidly, so too is its government and so too is the Ministry of Transportation and Highways.

In the past few years we have seen significant reduction of headquarters operations, expansion of regional responsibilities, and transfer of certain responsibilities to other agencies, as with the transfer of the Motor Vehicle Branch to ICBC.

Government’s priorities are, of course, driving change. So, to understand why our work is changing, we need to know what those priorities are and how we can best contribute to them. For example, as government places an increasing emphasis on jobs, we need to prioritize transportation investments that facilitate job creation and economic development.

A major function of the Road Runner in the months ahead will be to provide staff with informed reports on ministry happenings in the context of government objectives. It will complement, not replace, regional magazines, which are providing a valued service.

The Road Runner has a different look. But these are changing times.

Blair Redlin
Deputy Minister

Clair Dansereau
Associate Deputy Minister

Contents

Response to High Water Crises ........................................... 3
New Executive Members .................................................. 4
On the Road to Mount Washington ...................................... 6
Duke Point ................................................................. 8
Chief Highway Engineer Appointed ..................................... 10
Barnet-Hastings Update .................................................. 11
Kinchilt Road Project ....................................................... 12
Missions from Asia ......................................................... 14
Truck Safety ................................................................... 15
Facilities Review ............................................................ 16

Cover
Top: Mount Washington photo courtesy of BC Tourism. Bottom: Region 6 staff.

From Minister Lois Boone

The Ministry of Transportation and Highways plays a very important role in helping British Columbians maintain a quality lifestyle. A safe and efficient transportation system is crucial to creating jobs, developing our economy, and providing opportunities for all regions of British Columbia.

The success of our road transportation system is a reflection of the hard work, commitment and valuable contributions of people who work for the Ministry of Transportation and Highways.

I am very pleased to see the Road Runner is back, because it is an excellent vehicle to recognize achievement and to provide news about the good work of Ministry staff. Welcome back, Road Runner!

Well Done!

This month we give a big tip of the hard hat to Lois Donovan-Korte in the ministry’s Correspondence Unit. Lois showed real tenacity in solving the case of a missing camera.

It seems a tourist from the Philippines lost his camera in Vancouver International Airport during a stopover. Not certain who to turn to, his son e-mailed a plea for assistance to the minister’s office who asked the Correspondence Unit to look into it.

Ordinarily finding lost items at an airport is not part of the ministry’s daily work, and Korte could have responded to that effect. She didn’t. Instead, she contacted the Vancouver Airport Lost and Found. At first she was told that no camera fitting the description had been turned in.

Korte persisted, and asked them to dig through their records again. This time, they struck pay dirt! The camera was found and arrangements were made for the tourist’s son to identify and collect it. Way to go, Lois!

Staffers who take that extra step are the unsung heroes among us, and they deserve to be recognized not only for performing a special service but for providing the kind of example that makes us proud to be a part of this ministry.

If you know someone who should be mentioned here please let us know, so we can share their stories and join in the applause for a job Well Done!
MINISTER THANKS STAFF FOR RALLYING TO THE RESCUE
RESPONSES TO HIGH WATER CRISIS PRAISED

A large number of washouts, slides and floods that hit the highway system this spring and summer left many district offices reeling and added millions of dollars in expenses to already strained budgets.

The Thompson-Okanagan Region was one of the worst affected: the replacement cost of damaged infrastructure has been put at around $18 million.

Damages were lower in the Kootenays Region and the Central/North East but still ran into the millions of dollars.

Flood alerts were posted as rivers and lakes rose to record levels at some locations.

The South Coast Region went into full flood alert on June 2 when the Fraser topped six metres and threatened to go over 6.5 metres at the Mission Gauge.

However, the river crested at 6.35 metres just under that critical point, and by June 6 the danger had passed, allowing the flood centre to be deactivated three days later.

Sector commander Keith Besplug had words of high praise not only for MoTH staff at the centre but for the employees of all agencies involved.

His sentiments were echoed in other parts of the province, where staff gave their all to deal with some truly menacing situations.

The closures in Region 2 gained national prominence, and at the height of the crisis the regional communications office was inundated with up to 70 media calls a day, some from as far away as Toronto. In a normal day the office would receive six to 10 calls from the media.

A provincial response centre was set up in the regional office in Kamloops to cope with flooding in the Thompson, Nicola and Shuswap, while a district response centre was set up in Penticton to deal with record levels on Okanagan Lake and flood events in several communities in the area.

Two of the most spectacular events occurred in the wake of torrential rains on July 11 when a major washout occurred at First canyon on the Clearwater Valley Road, and a slide closed Highway 97A south of Sicamous for several days.

Transportation and Highways Minister Lois Boone lauded the efforts. "Staff really put themselves out and deserve the gratitude and thanks of everyone in the affected areas."

Kootenay Region suffered a double whammy with one set of slide events in mid-March and another round in early June.

The first set of problems stemmed from the early snowfall last winter. The snow formed an insulating layer so that when the spring thaw occurred, the runoff went straight into the ground, which became supersaturated and unstable. The second set stemmed from the heavier than normal snowpacks at higher elevations.

Highway 3 between Salmon and Creston had 16 separate washouts. In one case a watercourse shifted, and a person who lived in a riverfront trailer woke up to find the river on the opposite side of his home!

Continued on Page 15
NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Wearing two hats has become old hat for Blair Redlin. He is currently deputy minister of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways as well as president of the BC Transportation Financing Authority. Yet the double duty is logical. Minister Boone serves as chair of the BCTFA board.

Redlin, 41, joined MoTH as deputy in February, coming from the Ministry of Employment and Investment where he’d been three years, starting as assistant deputy of policy and winding up as acting deputy minister as well as President of the BCTFA. He negotiated the Columbia Basin Accord on behalf of the Province, helped to develop the Columbia Basin Trust, and worked on the Job Strategy for Vancouver Island in response to the C.O.R.E. report Both Investing in Our Future — A Plan for BC and Going Places were produced under his helm. He was a part of last January’s Team Canada trade tour to Asia that visited Seoul, Manila and Bangkok.

Born and raised in Calgary, he studied political science at the University of Calgary. From 1987 to 1994, he directed the western regional research department for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, based in Burnaby.

Redlin thinks it is critical not only to make sure Ministry priorities fit with those of government but — and this is most important for staff — to help show how the Ministry contributes to overall government objectives, such as job creation.

In his spare time, Redlin enjoys cycling, swimming, travelling and reading. Canadian literature is high on his list of likes, as are, in the field of non-fiction, the works of John Ralston Saul.

Associate Deputy Minister Claire Dansereau is someone who likes to get things done. She’s an organizer, a planner and, in short, a doer. She sees her role at MoTH as a fixer of problems, a person whose first duty is to make sure Ministry and government goals are met while ensuring staff feel comfortable in the work environment and secure in what they are doing. She wants to ensure that Ministry activities help the government achieve its overall priorities.

Dansereau spent her youth in Baie-Comeau, PQ, before moving to Montreal where she was involved in community organizing. Traveling west, she entered University of British Columbia and studied microbiology. After graduating with first-class honors, she moved on to study urban and regional planning, combining her dual interests of science and community.

She then left academia to become Director of the Environment Department at the IWA under Jack Munro. The job took her around the country, exposing her to the concerns of workers and communities alike.

In 1992 she struck out on her own as a consultant, one of a number who helped the team that provided support to the government’s forest sector strategy. When Forest Renewal B.C. was created in 1994, she was appointed Vice President, responsible for setting up regional operations and implementing the corporation’s programs. She was appointed Associate Deputy Minister of MoTH in July 1997.

Dansereau, who has one daughter, says her interests are wide ranging and include music, crafts, books, camping and sports. Travel is a major interest. She once spent a year in Australia and has traveled in Southeast Asia, the South Pacific and Brazil.
HAVE VARIED BACKGROUNDS

A man of many disciplines, Har Singh took over in April as Assistant Deputy Minister in charge of Management Services. He is singularly well qualified for the large tasks at hand, having a doctorate in engineering as well as a master’s in business administration. His expertise extends to computer models, which was the subject of his master’s engineering thesis, and to developing and overseeing economic models and systems used by governments.

Prior to joining MoTH, Singh was head of analysis and evaluation at B.C.’s Treasury Board. He has held numerous senior positions in the provincial government, including Executive Director of Policy, Planning and Program Evaluation with the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, economic advisor to the Premier on federal-provincial issues, and Director of Analysis and Systems at the former Economic Development Ministry. He has also worked for the Alberta government and was seconded to Ottawa for a year with the federal government.

Born in the Punjab just prior to the partition of India, Singh came to Canada in 1964 through a scholarship for the University of Alberta, and subsequently opted to make this country his home. It’s a decision, he says, he’s never regretted.

John Dyble’s first job with MoTH was surveying the Kispiox-Hazelton highway in the summer of 1979 while still a student at UBC. He rejoined us in May when he was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister in charge of Planning and Major Projects.

His appointment is a measure of his strong ability that has been tested in both the public and private sectors.

Born and raised in Sardis, the son of an agriculturist and grandson of an early Fraser Valley hop grower who came to Canada from Yorkshire. Dyble, 38, spent the first seven years after graduation from UBC working as a civil engineer for Swan Wooster and later Sandwell, both in Vancouver.

His assignments included a variety of transportation projects, mostly connected with railways or ports, in places like Mozambique, Cameroon and Bangladesh. In his spare time he took an MBA program at UBC, completing that in 1987.

When his wife, a physician, had their first child in 1989, Dyble looked for a job that wouldn’t take him away so much from home, and found it in the provincial government.

His career has included stints as Director of Development Regions, Regional Director of the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture in Nanaimo, and acting Assistant Deputy Minister of SBTC. Prior to joining MoTH, he was an Executive Director at Forest Renewal B.C.

He was involved with the Freedom to Move initiative and was a provincial economic development representative to the Transport 2021 project, working closely with his predecessor, Bruce McKeown.

[We shouldn’t forget the other member of the executive—Dan Doyle, ADM Highways Operations—who is well known to all in the ministry and requires no introduction]
Mount Washington ... A Road for all Seasons

Vancouver Island's premier ski area at Mount Washington is fast becoming a year-round destination for recreation seekers.

And George Stuart, president of Mount Washington Resort Ltd., attributes the cash-register-ringing development in large part to improvements to the 17-kilometre road up the mountain over the past two years.

While the BC Transportation Financing Authority financed the $16-million project, the company has agreed to pay annual instalments from a surcharge on lift tickets over the next 20 years to help defray the cost of the road.

Under the agreement, the company will contribute at least 50 per cent of the costs. But this share could rise to 60 per cent overall since the instalments are based on lift ticket sales.

The project, which involved realigning some sections and paving the road throughout, was one of the BCTFA's first public/private partnerships.

Blair Redlin, President of the BCTFA says the financing arrangement represents an important new direction for the government in developing transportation infrastructure around the province. It's a direction that stresses partnering, cost-sharing, and choosing investments that help create jobs and generate wealth for the province.

The outcome has been a win-win for all concerned. Major improvements are made to a public road, which serves a provincial interest as the access to Strathcona Park. The improvements spur condominium and other development, which is good for the resort. Users of the road have a safer, smoother route. And skiers, who are among the primary beneficiaries, pay a nominal $2 surcharge on their lift fee to help pay for the costs of the road.

For George Stuart, the project was an extension of work he'd done in the late '70s when the ski area opened. A Campbell River construction company he owns put in the first water and sewage system and upgraded the logging road that had originally been constructed in the late '40s by Crown Zellerbach.

The gravel road remained private until 1990. That year MoTH spent about $1 million on improvements, but it became soon apparent that unless more was done and the road paved, the full potential of the resort would never be realized.

When the go-ahead for a partnership was approved by the BCTFA board in
1994, the investment was seen as strongly supporting the economy of the mid-Island region. The design and initial construction was project managed by long-time MoTH employee Garry Forgaard. When Garry retired in May 1995, Bruce McGorman took over project management duties.

The first phase, involving grading and paving over five km, started with day labor in the fall of 1994. It was completed by Challenge Construction Ltd. under contract the following year.

The second phase, involving grading and paving over the remaining 10 km, initially involved Sleepy Hollow Ltd. of Campbell River, and was completed by North Pacific Roadbuilders in September 1996.

Of the 10 km of Phase 2, six involved new alignments and included three km to avoid an avalanche hazard and straighten a dangerous switchback known locally as "ICBC corner."

Though not initially part of the project scope, two km of Nordic Road, serving a new day lodge, were also reconstructed and paved.

The construction cost had been estimated at $14.7 million, but on completion, the project came in at $14 million, resulting in a $700,000 savings for taxpayers, thanks in part to a unique value engineering exercise.

Project supervisor Doug Gentles and the value engineering group identified cost savings during construction by eliminating the need for a bin wall, reducing the amount of roadside barrier, and raising the grade at key locations which meant there wasn’t as much drilling and blasting required as originally planned.

"Staff did a very fine job and are to be congratulated for the value engineering work they did and for the savings that were realized," says Redlin.

The project presented a number of unique environmental challenges. Many of the streams on the mountain feed fish-bearing streams. Heavy rains during construction created difficulties, but siltation barriers, fences and sedimentation ponds mitigated the impact on habitat. MoTH and BCTFA staff worked closely with wildlife and fisheries officials and local environmentalists.

Wood wastes from the upper sections of the road were burned using blowers to produce an intense fire that was smokeless and reduced everything to fine ash. Wood wastes from the lower sections were hauled to a depleted gravel pit, where they were put into a chipper and the chips then spread.

George Stuart says the road improvements didn’t seem to make that much of a difference to the traffic numbers last winter, when the resort received about 2,500 visitors per day, rising to 5,000 at peak times, which was about average.

But it was quite a different story with the traffic count over summer.

He says summers used to bring only a handful of the most intrepid backroads drivers to the roads. A number of crossings were added to provide access to a number of logging roads.

Continued on Page 8
New Road Pays Off in Jobs, Opportunities
Continued from Page 7

explorers. But this summer there were some days when as many as 1,000 visitors came up the mountain in a day. During the Courtenay Youth Musical Festival, about 300 a day visited the resort, and organizers of the event are already planning to use the venue again next summer.

Many of the summer visitors have been an older crowd, coming to enjoy the scenery or outdoor recreation, such as hiking into Strathcona Park, next door to the resort.

“We’ve become a four-season resort,” says Stuart. And that has translated into local jobs — about 400 in winter and 60 in summer. The economic spilloff to the region is estimated at about $30 million a year.

To date, about $70 million has been invested in the ski runs, day lodge, restaurants, about 500 chalets, and basic services, including a $4 million state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant.

Currently, about 3,000 visitors can be accommodated on the mountain, but this number will swell with the completion of a 59-unit condominium/hotel that a Vancouver company is building, the first on Mount Washington.

Stuart says the resort is investing $600,000 for additions to the day lodge and $200,000 for a new tubing and tobogganng park. There are plans for tennis courts and perhaps a golf driving range.

Road safety has also improved. North Island Highways Operations Manager Dan Olson says there were eight crashes between November 1996 and April 1997, the first year of the paved road. Back in 1989, when the road was privately managed and maintained, there were 33.
is all about

Going Places, B.C.’s transportation plan, outlines a strategy for development of a first-class transportation system.

That system must be multi-modal, offering a range of transportation choices.

It must be integrated, so all the investments are linked to make a unified system that supports job creation.

And it must meet the public need for safe and efficient movement of goods and people.

If you are looking for an example, travel to Nanaimo, and ride the four-lane expressway to the Duke Point Ferry Terminal.

There you’ll find a multi-modal, integrated transportation system that is supporting economic growth and job creation in the mid-Island region.

A cooperative venture of MoTH, the BC Transportation Financing Authority, Ministry of Employment and Investment and the BC Ferry Corp., the Duke Point project has included the construction of a new seven-kilometre highway through Cedar, an interchange which connects to the Nanaimo Parkway and the new Vancouver Island Highway, as well as a ferry terminal at Duke Point. The total investment by all agencies totalled some $100 million, including a $50-million BCTFA investment in the access road.

The project’s completion in June, under budget and on schedule despite tight timelines, showed this was a cooperation that not only worked, but worked well.

The improvements exemplified another Going Places objective: Making capital investments that count.

The investments have provided a more direct route between mid-Island and Tsawwassen that is saving time and money for travelers and movers of goods. The investments have improved access to the Duke Point Industrial Park, a focus for future economic development of the region. They have helped reduce heavy truck traffic in Nanaimo, by providing an alternative terminal that takes traffic around the city, not through it, thanks to the new Parkway. They have also helped remove congestion at Departure Bay.

“The benefit comes not only from the new terminal or from the new highway alone but from their integration,” says Blair Redlin. “The Duke Point Road serves the terminal and the terminal serves the highway, and both the road and the terminal support the industrial park. They are mutually dependent on one another.”

Diana Johnstone, BC Ferries’ spokesperson at Duke Point, sees the project as a winner.

And so does Ed Townend, who managed the design and construction of the highway for MoTH. It shows the region has the ability to take on a big job and do it right, he says.

It was a job furthermore marked by challenge, innovation and a few surprises.

The project involved building four bridges, including a $6-million span over the Nanaimo River. One of the bridges, crossing Cedar Road, had to be redesigned when two coal seams were found where the footings were to go.

The project involved a lot of blasting, and drainage problems, notably in the

Continued on Page 10
Duke Point Project
Continued from Page 9

Holden Creek section, where the solution included installing some 50 kilometres of wick drains to provide adequate drainage for the new alignment.

Another interesting feature was the use of "silent pavement" to reduce traffic noise through Cedar. The pavement, which is coarser than ordinary asphalt and has a popcorn-like consistency that absorbs sounds, was applied over four kilometres. It was the first time it had been used on a provincial highways project, other than a test application on Highway 19 north of Nanaimo two years ago. Voids in the mix promote drainage, too, which in turn reduces glare at night and provides more traction for vehicles when wet.

Of the surprises, none was greater than the unearthing of a giant fossil of an extinct palm near the Cranberry Arms Inn. It and other fossil fragments showed the mid-Island region once enjoyed a semi-tropical climate 80 million years ago!

Environmental issues received much attention. With the cooperation and assistance of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, an artificial reef was created parallel to Berth 1 at the terminal. A berm at the terminal was planted with wildflowers. And a 46-hectare flyway sanctuary was established in the Holden Creek estuary adjacent to the terminal, thanks to the cooperation of seven environmentally-minded groups and agencies, including Nature Trust of B.C.

Community involvement and public interest in the project was high from the start. A task force of local mayors recommended the terminal site. Two open houses were held five months apart, each drawing more than 1,000 visitors.

Diana Johnstone says ferry users rave about the location of the terminal, which is bounded by a city park and faces the cliffs of Gabriola across Northumberland Channel. Bald eagles nest in nearby trees and occasionally killer whales make an appearance in the channel.

Humans have lived in the area for eons judging by petroglyphs in the area. The history of the Nanaimo First Nations describes Duke Point as the home of the raven. There have even been suggestions the name should be changed to Raven Point.

Johnstone says she and Peter Lutzman, the engineer who oversaw the terminal construction for BC Ferries, once were meeting with members of the Nanaimo First Nations in an unfinished building at the construction site when a raven flew in and landed on a rafter. The bird nodded to each member of the assembled gathering, and then departed.

Everyone noticed but no one said a word about the visit.

Johnstone says she and Lutzman took it as a good omen. "In a way it reassured us that we were doing the right thing by putting the terminal here," she says.

Merv Clark
repeats high achievement

Appointment as chief highway engineer of a province is a solid achievement in anyone's book. Merv Clark has done it twice.

The first time was in Saskatchewan. The second in B.C., where he was confirmed in the position in June. A graduate in engineering from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Clark spent 30 years with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways and Transportation working his way up the ladder to Chief Engineer and then, finally, Associate Deputy Minister of Engineering.

In 1987 he left to become an engineering consultant, and for the next six years he and his wife, Lynn, called Indonesia home. He had a number of contracts through ND Lea International helping the country develop its transportation system.

Returning to Canada in the fall of 1993, he was offered the position of Director of Highway Engineering with MoTH, and the rest is history.

Clark says his experience is helpful, but his expertise, he feels, is his ability to work with people with expert engineering skills, "such as we find right here."
First HOV project is meeting objectives

Jessie Bains is in the business of reducing the amount of time motorists spend on the road. He manages the HOV operations on the Barnet-Hastings corridor, the first in the provincial highway system.

Since the facility opened a year ago, travel time on the corridor has declined by about a third, or nine to 13 minutes, for the 18-kilometre trip. HOV users benefit the most, of course, shaving four minutes off the morning trip and two off the afternoon.

The faster, smoother trip means lower gas consumption and less air pollution from vehicle emissions, as well. And this is convincing motorists there are big benefits from ridesharing.

The primary objective of the $105-million project is to reduce travel demand by getting more people to travel together.

Project manager Terry Walton says the project results to date demonstrate that investing in alternatives to general purpose lanes is money well spent.

The project earned Walton the W.H. Curtis Memorial Award from the Greater Vancouver Section of the Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers for outstanding technical achievement, an award which he says he shares with all Ministry staff who have worked on the project over the last six-and-a-half years.

A study by engineer-in-training Phoebe Ho found the HOV corridor well utilized at two-plus riders, with a good level of service for general purpose and high occupancy lanes. About 700 vehicles with two or more riders use the route per hour; less than 100 carry three or more riders.

The average vehicle occupancy is 1.21 to 1.38.

Bains says he expects the occupancy rate will rise as the overall HOV network unfolds and the public becomes better informed about the virtues of ridesharing.

In the meantime, the biggest headache has been enforcement. Although enforcement agencies assign as many resources to this initiative as they can, the results indicate more needs to be done to achieve the government's target of 85 per cent compliance.

Initial surveys found between 10 and 15 per cent of vehicles using the restricted lanes in Port Moody during HOV operating hours have a single occupant, and thus were not in compliance. However, this rate rose to 20 per cent and even higher in parts of Burnaby and Vancouver, and that's unacceptable.

Motorists who ignore the rule face an $85 fine and two demerit points.

Bains is confident HOV is an effective way to solve congestion problems in the Lower Mainland. "In the long-term, once an overall HOV network is in place, I see it a huge success," he says. "But I believe we are taking steps in the right direction."

Photos courtesy of Jesse Bains
A new road planned to link the remote Nisga’a community of Kincolith to the provincial highway system is undergoing some of the most thorough environmental assessment ever required in B.C.

It’s one of the first highways projects to be subject to both B.C. and Canadian environment assessment processes, and it is presenting some uncommon challenges for environment experts and survey crews, not the least of which is an at-times menacing population of grizzly bears.

The project involves the design and construction of about 23 kilometres of two-lane gravel road along the north side of the Nass River from the Village of Greenville to Mill Bay where it will connect with a new road about four kilometres long constructed from Kincolith by Nisga’a Economic Enterprises Incorporated.

At present, Kincolith, one of four main Nisga’a communities, is accessible only by boat or airplane.

The provincial government, through the BC Transportation Financing Authority, is committed to funding up to one half of the $30-million cost of the road. The federal government is funding one third, and the Nisga’a Nation one-sixth.

MoTH project manager Dave St. Thomas says he hopes construction will begin in the spring, and the job completed by the year 2001, but much hinges on finalizing cost-sharing arrangements and obtaining the go-ahead from the provincial and federal assessments by early in the new year.

The original application was filed in October 1996, and it was decided a two-stage approval would be required, involving first the filing of the application and comments from the public and relevant agencies, and then a much more detailed analysis of major environmental and engineering concerns, which was expected to be completed this fall.

The project is eagerly sought by the Nisga’a to improve health, safety and access to educational facilities for the Village of

EXPERTS “BEAR” DOWN ON ENVIRONMENT ISSUES IN KINCOLITH PROJECT

Ministry surveyor Bill Davies sets up his tripod on a sandbar in the Nass River near the mouth of the lknouk.
Kincolith, and to provide economic development opportunities in the northwest.

Because the project will encroach on 1,000 lineal metres or more than two hectares of the Nass River foreshore, it is subject to the B.C. Environmental Assessment Act. It is also subject to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, because construction will impact navigable waters of the Iknouk River and also because the highway will pass through First Nations lands, including five Nisga’a reserves and one small reserve belonging to the Tsimpsean Nation who use it as a base for their annual ooligan fishing.

The environmental review is being managed by Angela Buckingham at MoTH headquarters in Victoria and is being coordinated by consultant Isabel Doyle of Victoria.

The review encompasses many areas of study, from exploring First Nations’ uses to having a vegetation ecologist and a soils expert prepare a map of the land ecosystem.

A streams specialist and an estuary specialist are examining the impact of the road on fisheries, while an ornithologist and a zoologist are looking into the impact on birds and wildlife in the area. An archaeologist has been retained to determine if there are any sites worth saving and if mitigation or preservation will be required.

Members of both Nisga’a and Tsimpsean Nations are assisting in these studies as well as in some of the others.

In addition, an eight-member survey team has worked over summer with geotechnicians, including an avalanche expert, collecting data and charting the route.

The region teems with wildlife, and even though the past year was a bad one for salmon in the area, St. Thomas says he saw grizzlies on six occasions, always from a respectable distance.

Two members of the survey crew were not so lucky; they were charged by a grizzly in May. One of the pair grabbed a temperamental chainsaw and made history when the saw started on the first pull. Startled by the noise, the angry bear veered off and abandoned its attack, but continued to thrash around in the brush for some time to let the two know it wasn’t any too happy.

Fortunately the two were unharmed, thanks to their experience working in the north and especially in remote areas. Since the incident, all members of the field team have been instructed in a bear safety course by the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

And there have been no further close encounters with charging bears.

Photos courtesy of Region 5 survey crew.
**Missions from Asia come knocking on ministry doors**

What might have seemed "missions impossible" 20 years ago have become commonplace events today with the arrival of an increasing number of delegations from Asia keen to investigate various aspects of transportation in British Columbia. China's open-door policy and drive for modernization adopted in 1979 have spawned many of the visits.

So have efforts of the private engineering sector, eager to gain entry into China's vast market, and efforts of the Canadian International Development Agency, every bit as eager to promote Canadian business abroad.

But Dr. Wei Wu Zhou, manager of the Traffic ITS Intelligent Transportation System program in South Coast Region, says many groups are coming to B.C. simply because the Ministry has acquired a reputation in the Far East as a leader in transportation technology and development.

Over the past five years, Dr. Zhou says, he's helped host 10 or 15 missions from Asia. Most have come from China but a few have come from other places, such as Korea, Vietnam and Iran.

Of particular interest have been the Ministry's rockslope stabilization program, pavement management program, and asphalt recycling program, specifically the hot-in-place technology developed by Martec, a joint Japanese-Canadian venture based in B.C.

Chief Highway Engineer Merv Clark sees the missions as valuable opportunities to sell B.C. industry "Canada is viewed as a strong engineering country when it comes to transportation, and B.C. is viewed as having good engineers," he says.

Clark notes that 60 per cent of Canadian engineering consultant billings are for work outside Canada, only 40 per cent arise from domestic contracts.

Presentations to the visitors have dealt with organizational structure, strategic transportation planning, the role and function of the BC Transportation Financing Authority, and Motor Vehicle Branch policies. Sessions in Victoria usually have wound up with a tour of the Vancouver Island Highway Project.

Mike Oliver, head of the Geotechnical and Material Section, says many missions that come here wind up paying more attention to management processes and how our system works.

Clark suggests one reason for this is responsibility for highways rests with provinces in Canada and not with the federal or national government as is the case in most other countries.

He says sessions with foreign missions often begin with a short introduction to our system of government to explain the division of responsibilities.

No one in the Ministry has been more active in forming connections with China than Dr. Zhou, a native of Shanghai and now a Canadian citizen.

Last year when he returned home for the 95th birthday of his father, he visited Shanghai transportation officials, building on relationships that had been established with the group came to Canada earlier in the year.

The officials indicated they hoped a technology link could be established with the Ministry.

As a result, another delegation came to B.C. in June to meet with Deputy
Truck Safety Commands Respect

Minister Lois Boone’s commitment to truck safety is well known.

But what may come as a surprise is her personal experience with trucking.

Her father owned a small trucking firm in Delta, and when he died suddenly in the mid-1960s, her mother took over the business.

“She did the driving and I became her swumper,” the minister says, adding there were times it got a little hair-raising, as when they were leaving the underground delivery area at Oakridge in Vancouver and were confronted by an 18-wheeler coming the other way only to discover they were trying to exit by the entrance.

She says her respect for large trucks started about then.

Her mother soon after sold the business, figuring she wasn’t cut out for that kind of work. But Minister Boone says her respect has never waned.

The measures taken in the past year to make trucking safer in the province have been among her proudest achievements.

They include a doubling of fines for poorly adjusted brakes, establishment of a toll-free number to report possible truck safety violations, and beefing up roadside inspections in the Lower Mainland.

And they include the formation of a task force on commercial vehicle safety in partnership with stakeholders from industry and labor.

The task force made 32 recommendations and some key ones were swiftly implemented. They include a safe carrier recognition program, a review of the driver penalty point system, a graduated licensing system, and a requirement that English be the sole language for examinations for licences.

The minister believes the entrance requirements for truck drivers should be tightened, and gives an example of former Superintendent of Motor Vehicles Vicki Farrally who decided to write the exam without opening a book to study the rules and regulations. It took Farrally only five minutes. And she passed. No one was more amazed than her. She was qualified to drive an 18-wheeler provided a person with a commercial licence sat beside her. “And that doesn’t make much sense,” Minister Boone concluded.

The truck safety task force is now under ICBC. While there is still work to be done, Minister Boone says measures already taken will go a long way to improving the safety of the public on B.C.’s highways.

Missions provide hands across water

Continued from Page 14

Minister Blair Redlin and sign a letter of intent to promote technology in urban transportation systems. This has since been followed with a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in Shanghai on Nov. 4 during the Premier’s visit to China.

Dr. Zhou says it’s important not just to make connections, but to make the right connections.

When transportation ministers of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation met in Victoria last June, a private luncheon was organized for Redlin and the head of the Chinese delegation. Ron Longstaffe, head of the Vancouver Port Authority, also attended the meeting, which lasted two “very productive” hours.

Much of the talk centered around Martec and ITS technologies, and Dr. Zhou says the Chinese official came away impressed, promising to follow up on ways to use the technologies in China when he returned home.

“There’s a big potential if we can consolidate a government linkage,” says Dr. Zhou. “Business activity is sure to follow.”

Staff rallies to repair damage from heavy rains

Continued from Page 3

The highway eastbound from Creston also had a spectacular incident when an embankment collapsed and took out a house on the other side of the road.

Highways crews put in long, tiring shifts, coordinating their work with officials from the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, provincial emergency program, B.C. Hydro and West Kootenay Power.

In the northeast section of Region 4 there was much damage to the road system, and a special $2.6-million fund was provided to help deal with restoration, which will take several years to complete.

Region 5 also had problems. High-water scouring closed a bridge on the Rose Lake cutoff road over the long weekend in May. In the same period, the Colley Mount Road at Francois Lake was hit with slides at several places, blocking the road in one section. There were slides also on the Kispiox Road at Date Creek west of new Hazelton, and load limits went into effect on Four Mile Bridge on the Telegraph Creek Road after high water damaged the abutments and footings.

“It was a wild time, everywhere,” one interior highway worker said.
Facilities review brings dividends to ministry

Consolidation of headquarters in Victoria is saving the ministry more than $1 million a year in rent

A review of facilities owned and leased by the Ministry is generating major savings for the government. It is expected when Ministry-wide downsizing and office consolidations are completed, more than $4 million will be shaved off the Ministry’s current $16-million annual budget for facilities.

Assistant Deputy Minister, Highways Operations Dan Doyle gives a lot of the credit for what’s happening to the many staff members who have contributed creative ideas on how the Ministry can best manage its hundreds of office buildings, yards and sheds around the province.

Staff input, together with measures being taken with the B.C. Building Corporation to develop partnerships and agreements with other ministries or agencies on facilities sharing, is translating into efficiencies that are showing up on the balance sheets.

A total of 200 cost-saving projects have been identified and 82 are under review or have been approved, with many now completed. The net savings for the current year are put at $900,000, of which $217,000 is being returned to the regions for reallocation wherever possible into the local road system, Doyle says.

Brian Jenkins, manager of Facilities Services, says the main thrust of the review, which started with the announcement of streamlining measures last year, is to protect jobs, put more money into the roads, prepare for possible cutbacks or clawbacks in funding, and allow for tenant improvements to create more efficiencies.

Jenkins says there’s been no shortage of ideas from staff. When staff was invited to submit suggestions on improving the ministry’s business, the third highest category of responses dealt with facilities.

The first phase of the review has been more or less completed. It involved consolidation of headquarters in the Waddington Building on Blanshard Street in Victoria. About 500 of the 750 headquarters staff were affected by the changes. Some 35,000 square metres of floor space was vacated. Savings on rent total $1.1 million a year.

The restructuring made it possible for the BC Transportation Financing Authority to relocate to the Waddington Building. It now occupies about 10,000 square feet on the third floor in an area once used by Library Services, Mail Services, Major Projects and part of the Planning Section, which have all been moved to other parts of the building.

Phase 2 of the review is well under way. It involves regional facilities and ties in with Phase 3, which looks at Integrated Workplace Strategies, such as telecommuting, use of mobile offices and better utilization of space.

Doyle says the six regions and the Marine Branch are taking the lead in Phase 2 and 3, and expects them to manage projects within time frames best for their management team and employees. Headquarters coordinated the moves and providing resources as needed, while a planner with BC Building Corporation, Laurette Fagnan, is assisting the regional downsize, as she did with Waddington, and is leading staff through IWS concepts.

Doyle advocates a balance between deadlines and successful facility transitions but quickly adds, "The sooner, the better ... time is money."

The review is touching every corner of the Ministry. One of the biggest moves involves district and regional operations in Terrace, which are currently carried out in five buildings throughout the city.

Project manager George Lomas says the plan is to move the main office on Park Avenue and professional offices on Lazelle Avenue into side-by-side buildings on Keith Avenue which had been used before by the geotechnical lab, properties and professional services. The two buildings being vacated are leased from the private sector. The buildings being moved into are owned by BCBC.

The cost of renovations and office improvements are expected to come to almost half a million dollars, with BCBC picking up $401,000.

But the benefits are significant, says Lomas. Not only will there be a savings in rent, down to $368,000 from $725,000, but the rent will be kept within government.

The fifth building, also on Keith, houses the electrical crew, and is a private leasehold. Lomas says his project team is hoping to move the unit into a BC Hydro building, or failing that into another BCBC building.