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COVER PHOTO: Lafarge Canada has created a winning education and outreach program in the Edmonton area. For the full story, turn to page 26.
Bring me to your future leaders

The Top 10 Under 40 program is back for 2019!

From British Columbia and The Yukon to St. John’s, Newfoundland, Rock to Road is searching Canada's aggregates and roadbuilding sectors for the best and brightest young workers in the industry.

Building on the success of last year’s contest, which recognized 10 outstanding individuals who had made significant contributions to the industry before their 40th birthdays, this year’s contest will acknowledge another 10 additional individuals from across Canada. This year’s Top 10 Under 40 will involve anyone who was under the age of 40 as of December 31, 2018. Nominees can come from anyone who is involved in Canada’s rock to road industry, including business owners and management within all aspects of the roadbuilding and aggregate industries, equipment operators, technicians, trainers, industry association employees and researchers.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR NOMINATING SOMEONE FOR TOP 10 UNDER 40?

Here are the guidelines to the Top 10 Under 40 contest:

• Nominees must be younger than 40 before December 2018.
• Nominees must either be working in Canada or of Canadian nationality.
• Nominations are due March 3, 2019.

DOES THE NOMINEE HAVE TO BE CANADIAN?

No. The nominee can be of any nationality, but must be employed in Canada. We also encourage the nominations of Canadians working outside of the country.

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO NOMINATE SOMEONE?

Nominators can include advisors, supervisors, coworkers, or colleagues familiar with the nominee’s work and character.

WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION SHOULD BE INCLUDED ABOUT THE NOMINEE?

Potential information to submit about the nominee can include (but is not exclusive to): Projects or initiatives the individual is or has been involved in; results from past projects; day-to-day job responsibilities; workplace initiatives outside of regular job duties; and community involvement.

IS A SECONDARY REFERENCE FOR THE NOMINEE REQUIRED?

No. However, the nomination form includes fields for a secondary reference, which is suggested to include. Nominations close on March 3, 2019, so don’t delay, get those nominations in and help recognize the industry’s up-and-comers. All nominees that are selected for Rock to Road’s Top 10 Under 40 program will receive a framed certificate recognizing their achievement, and will be featured in the March/April 2019 issue of the magazine. Who knows, one lucky individual might even end up gracing the cover!

STILL HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

For more information on the Top 10 Under 40 program, or how to nominate an individual, visit: www.rocktoroad.com/top-10-under-40. You can also email me at asnook@annexbusinessmedia.com, or call me at 289.221.8946. Good luck to all the nominees. I look forward to reading about the aggregate and roadbuilding industry’s best and brightest again in 2019.
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CDE opens new North American headquarters

CDE officially opened its North American headquarters in Cleburne, Texas this past fall. The new facility, located near the Dallas-Fort Worth area, was acquired by CDE Global Inc. in March 2018 to become the main office in the United States to serve the North American market, the company’s fastest growing strategic region.

“North America is our highest potential growth region,” said Kevin Kelly, president of North America for CDE. “For CDE to continue growing and serving our customers, we must be directly in their markets. This is a significant investment in the North American marketplace and the start of a series of investments for the company across its eight key regions.”

The new North American headquarters will see engineering, CustomCare, business development, technical support, and marketing personnel serving the local customer base, with plans to double this team over the next 12 months. The new facility in Cleburne boasts ample office space along with a lecture room. A fully stocked warehouse with spare parts for the North American market is also part of the new facility. Source: CDE Global.

Champlain Bridge Corridor Project delayed to 2019

Commuters will need to wait a little longer to drive across the fully constructed new Champlain Bridge. The federal government held a press conference with a tour and technical presentation on Oct. 25 for members of media letting them know the project would not be complete by the end of 2018, and will be delayed until upwards of June 2019.

The Signature on the St. Lawrence (SSL) private consortium responsible for building and operating the new corridor announced the delay, adding that an official date for the new bridge’s opening will be confirmed in 2019. Infrastructure Canada stated that SSL is expecting to complete the main structure of the bridge by Dec. 21, 2018; but that some of the weather-dependent permanent work, including waterproofing and paving, will most likely start up in early spring of 2019.

JCI names new president

Johnson Crushers International, Inc. (JCI) recently announced the promotion of Rob Killgore to company president. In his new leadership position, Killgore will be responsible for setting and achieving JCI’s goals and objectives.

Killgore joined JCI in 2016 and served as manufacturing manager. With over 30 years of leadership experience, beginning with his military career and progressing through many manufacturing businesses, he has been an integral part of JCI’s success over the last two years.

“Rob’s long and diverse career brings a new perspective to JCI. We are eager to see how his background will help us operate more efficiently and serve our customers more effectively,” says Jeff Schwarz, group president, Astec Industries.
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Big attractions coming to 2019 National Heavy Equipment Show

Canada’s largest trade event for the heavy equipment industry is making its return to Mississauga’s International Centre on March 28 and 29, 2019. As part of its 22nd year, the event is planning a variety of special pavilions and activities for all corners of the industry.

Every two years, industry leaders head to this event for big sales, networking, and a glimpse at what’s on the horizon for the various sectors of the construction industry, such as road building, snow and ice removal, crushing and screening aggregates, and beyond.

With enticing features including a strong educational program, recruiting efforts and a focus on safety products, the show offers an unmatched chance to get on top of current industry trends and prepare for the big projects of tomorrow.

CRUSHING & SCREENING PAVILION
A crowd favourite at the show returns! Part of the International Centre’s Hall 5 will be transformed into “The Pit”. This area will treat visitors to the largest and most complete display of aggregate equipment like crushers, conveyors, scales, recyclers, front end loaders, hammers and breakers, drives and motors, and more.

RENTAL PAVILION
Housed in Hall 1, the Rental Pavilion will showcase the latest equipment, tools and products for sale or rent to the tens of thousands of contractors and road building professionals who attend the show. It offers exhibitors a unique opportunity to influence the rental frequency and volume of both large and small contractors.

Since its first edition in 1997, well over 100,000 visitors have walked the floors at the National Heavy Equipment Show. The majority of attendees are comprised of professionals from contracting, equipment rental, and government sectors — meaning thousands of serious buyers on the show floor. With over 13,000 visitors in both 2017 and 2015, next year’s event is expected to draw larger crowds than ever, including key decision makers and purchasers.

If you’ve ever been involved with the National Heavy Equipment Show, you know that booth space fills up fast. The show is a sell-out year after year - so if you’re interested in exhibiting at the largest heavy equipment event in Canada, it’s a good idea to get space booked early.

Contact Mark Cusack (mcusack@mplt.ca) or Mike Neeb (mneeb@mplt.ca) and visit NHES.ca for complete exhibit package and pricing.
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Darren Neil has built and grown Darren Neil and Sons Excavating Inc. from the ground up in the heart of Ontario’s cottage country. Born and raised in Collingwood, Ont., Darren identified several opportunities in his hometown where a person with a strong entrepreneurial spirit could build a business doing niche work within the construction sector. In 2003, he did exactly that.

“I went out and mortgaged my soul and got a skid steer and a mini excavator,” he says while laughing over lunch at a pub in downtown Collingwood. “My first jobs were in landscaping, trenching, grading, that sort of stuff.”

Over the past 15 years people have recognized the quality of his work and his business has grown substantially, expanding into several other sectors of the industry. And as the business
has grown, so has its staff. The company currently employs 38 people; including his mother working in the office and two of his sons working alongside him in the field, making the company a true family affair.

“We do excavating, trucking, crushing, snow removal, grading and property maintenance,” Darren says. “We have about 24 trucks on the roads right now… we also do a fair amount of concrete demolition in Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Stayner and the Elmvale area – old barn foundations, commercial buildings.”

COMPACT CRUSHING
Currently one of the main focuses of Darren’s business is custom crushing.

“We really got into crushing and screening over the last two years,” he says.

Darren’s company offers its services across Ontario going as far north as the Muskoka Region. When he started up his custom crushing operation, Darren wanted to ensure he had some of the latest equipment available that was also easy to transport and offered a quick setup time. He ended up opting for McCloskey International’s new I34R impact crusher – the first to be delivered to a customer outside of Ireland. The compact unit is only eight feet, five inches wide and weighs approximately 30 metric tons, so it requires no specialized weight permits for transport.

“It’s a one-piece setup, you’re up and running in 10 minutes,” Darren says. “The high mobility is important for us being able to handle small to large jobs. It helps us fill a niche for smaller jobs but has also been efficient for handling larger jobs.”

To say Darren is familiar with McCloskey’s line of products would be a serious understatement. In addition to his new I34R, his crushing fleet is comprised of an I44 v3 impact crusher, an R155 screener, an S130 screener, four ST80 wheeled stackers, and an old 412 portable trommel screen he bought back in 2007, which is when Darren first developed his business relationship with the Keene, Ont.-based manufacturer.

“I’m a big one to buy local,” he says. “It’s keeping our local people employed, which is huge.”

The crushing fleet produces a wide variety of new products as well as recycled concrete and asphalt products.

“The crushing fleet is happy doing recycled products at 1/2”, 3/4”, 2”, 4” or doing sand and gravel or limestone at any size requested,” Darren says.

The compact size of the I34R has also won over some of Darren’s clients, after they got over its small footprint. He says some clients have laughed when they first saw its small size but quickly changed their tune when they saw it producing efficiently.

“People are also happy to see that it isn’t tying up their space,” he adds. “It’s definitely outperforming people’s expectations.”

FUTURE PLANS
As demand for local aggregate products grows, Darren plans to expand his crushing and screening operations. He sees increased opportunity coming in the future and has purchased a pit in the area, but adds that finding more qualified staff for his crushing operation will be challenging.

“The hardest thing in the world is to find people,” he says. “Some days you’re swinging a sledgehammer all day, doing repairs, sometimes you’re running a loader all day. Every day has its challenges in the crushing business.”

That said, Darren sees a bright future ahead for his company, one that will continue to create employment opportunities for his sons and other people residing in the Collingwood area.
The Manitoba Heavy Construction Association (MHCA) has been a strong advocate for the construction industry for three quarters of a century, and not just in Manitoba. When the MHCA was founded in 1943 out of the Prairie Roadbuilders Association, members of industry across Western Canada had some big plans on their minds to grow the industry throughout the region and improve stability. Several key members believed the MHCA should champion a national highway program to help better connect Canadians across the country. By the 1950s, the association made a renewed push for that program; and by 1962 the association’s advocacy efforts came full circle with the opening of the Trans-Canada Highway – partially constructed by its own members.

“A country cannot trade together if it is not connected together,” says MHCA president Chris Lorenc during an interview at the association’s office in Winnipeg. Lorenc’s knowledge of the association’s work and history is arguably as good as anyone’s within the MHCA. He has been the president of the MHCA for 27 years.

“I’m a very lucky person. I get up every morning and can’t
wait to get to work,” he says. “The scope of our work is so broad.”

Having an earned ‘presence, profile and impact’ reputation as the recognized voice of and for the heavy construction industry in Manitoba, the MHCA continues to advocate for sustained investment in core infrastructure, and seamless, multi-modal transportation systems.

The MHCA works with other associations across Canada to tackle topics that go beyond its provincial borders. Helping create the blueprint for Canada’s national highway program isn’t the only way the country, as a whole, has benefitted from the hard work of the MHCA. One of the proudest achievements of the MHCA, in Lorenc’s opinion, was helping people understand the importance of the terms “infrastructure” and “infrastructure deficit,” from industry stakeholders at the federal, provincial and municipal levels to the general public. He says many important policies have been built around these terms since their inception – like strategic investment in infrastructure, for example.

The MHCA advocates for strategic investment of infrastructure program budgets based on six principles. Photos courtesy of MHCA.

1. Permanent, strategic and sustained: Infrastructure investment should be set out in permanent multi-year plans;
2. Focus on economic growth: Evidence systems). Those principles are:
3. Focus on economic growth: Evidence
4. Focus on economic growth: Evidence
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The MHCA advocates for strategic investment of infrastructure program budgets based on six principles. Photos courtesy of MHCA.
shows that investment in strategic infrastructure has defined returns to the economy of up to $1.60 for every $1 invested (Finance Canada, 2011);

3. Embrace innovation: Adopting new, better ways to build or maintain infrastructure will get more value out of the infrastructure budgets;

4. Harness private-sector partnerships: The private sector is the source of ingenuity;

5. Funded by dedicated revenue streams: Taxpayers must be able to follow the dollar, to know how much is invested, and for what purposes; and

6. Review annually: Annual review of investment programs ensures accountability, discipline to purpose and allows for adjustment to benefit from emerging circumstances and lessons learned.

By promoting the importance of strategic infrastructure investment, all levels of government, the construction industry and the general public have a better understanding of the term.

“People now better understand why infrastructure is important, better than anyone in the last 25 years,” Lorenc says.

ALWAYS LOOKING AHEAD

The MHCA sets itself apart by focusing on the big picture and changing with the times. One example of this progression as an association – in a male dominated industry – was the naming of MHCA’s first female Chair, Colleen Munro, back in 1995-96. Munro was the first woman to be named chair of a heavy construction association in Canada.

The MHCA is also very active when it comes to promoting safe-work practices and procedures within the industry. The industry and association run and support the WORKSAFELY education and training program. In the 30 years of its operation, trend lines continue to show a significant reduction in the frequency, duration and severity of injuries, making the industry vastly safer and more attractive.

“We are very focused on the big picture, I think that’s what sets us apart,” Lorenc says.

Canada’s construction industry has certainly noticed and acknowledged the MHCA’s efforts and accomplishments over the years. The MHCA has been recognized for its advocacy efforts on more than one occasion. During the 2011 CCA Annual Convention, for example, the MHCA was presented the 2010 CCA Member Association Award of Excellence “for demonstrating outstanding leadership and excellence in achievements;” as well as the CCA International Business Award, “which recognizes the outstanding activities, programs or accomplishments of a Canadian-based business or association active in the construction industry in the area of international business or trade.”

The legacy that the association has built over the past 75 years is one that Lorenc is very proud to be part of.

“We punch way above our weight... we have added value to the development of public policy, and that’s something we’re very proud of,” he says. “When you can say that legitimately, it’s a heck of a feeling. It is a huge source of personal satisfaction and personal pride. I’ve never regretted leaving the law practice to join the MHCA. Since starting in 1991, it has been incredible to have worked with every Manitoba premier, provincial ministers, Winnipeg mayors, municipal leaders, successive federal ministers. I’ve had the privilege of serving 13 MHCA Chairs and working with every board since starting. I have learned from each Chair and every board member. The MHCA is a great organization supported by a great team in its staff. It’s been wonderful.”

MHCA is very active when it comes to promoting safe-work practices and procedures within the industry. The industry and association run and support the WORKSAFELY education and training program.
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Change lies ahead for British Columbia’s construction and roadbuilding industries, as a new project labour agreement from the provincial government aims to provide construction workers and contractors with fair wages, job opportunities closer to home and greater access to training and apprenticeships.

B.C. officials announced the new Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) on July 16, hailing the initiative as a “landmark agreement for key public-sector infrastructure projects.”

“British Columbians rightfully expect B.C. projects to benefit B.C. workers, families and communities. Our new Community Benefits Agreement will help deliver those benefits,” stated Premier John Horgan. “With this agreement, we’re not just investing in roads, bridges and other infrastructure, we’re investing in good jobs and new opportunities for people who live in B.C.”

According to the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, its new CBA includes efforts to prioritize the training and hiring of Indigenous people and women as well as workers living in close proximity to public infrastructure projects. Ensuring fair wages for local workers, maximizing apprenticeship
opportunities on public infrastructure projects and working to improve access to existing training programs are also key points in the agreement.

These measures are part of a government effort to address current skills gaps in the province’s construction and roadbuilding industries as well as looming labour shortages in these sectors, the ministry says.

“Over the next 10 years, approximately 100,000 job openings are expected in the trades, transport and equipment operators sectors, and the skilled workers who train and apprentice on these projects today will be able to fill those jobs in the future,” a ministry spokesperson told Rock to Road.

While training targets for CBA projects will be set on a case-by-case basis, the ministry aims to meet an overall goal of 25 per cent apprenticeship hours per project. Greater efforts to train and hire women, Indigenous people and other underrepresented groups will also help to diversify the skilled workforce within the province’s construction and roadbuilding industries, while priority hiring for workers living near project worksites will help to bring jobs to communities across B.C.

Though the new CBA aims to tackle the province’s present-day challenges, this is not the first time B.C. has implemented project labour agreements on public infrastructure projects. According to the ministry, BC Hydro has constructed 17 dams since 1963 using similar agreements, in which details such as hiring, wages and budgets are settled prior to the start of construction in an effort to pre-

B.C. officials announced the new Community Benefits Agreement this summer, hailing the initiative as a “landmark agreement for key public-sector infrastructure projects.”

Photo: B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure/flickr.

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Henry Derksen, Lonesome Prairie Sand & Gravel operations manager
vent delays once the project is underway.

To implement the new agreement, provincial officials created a new Crown corporation, BC Infrastructure Benefits, Inc. (BCIB), which drafted the CBA in co-operation with the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council, a coalition of roughly 18 B.C. Building Trades unions.

Moving forward, BCIB will be responsible for managing employment logistics, such as hiring, payroll and benefits, on infrastructure projects that use the CBA model. By finalizing these details prior to the start of a project, provincial officials hope to eliminate the possibility of strikes and lockouts during the construction period.

Though both union and non-union contractors are encouraged to bid on CBA-affiliated projects, all workers and contractors will be required to join a union for the duration of a CBA project within 30 days of being on the worksite.

“A union membership included in the CBA ensures that workers on the project are treated fairly, paid good wages and provided benefits for their work,” said the ministry spokesperson.

While organizations like the B.C. Building Trades have celebrated the new agreement, its announcement has rankled some business associations and non-affiliated unions in the province, who argue that the CBA provisions will favour a small number of preferred unions, thereby excluding non-unionized contractors and workers from training and job opportunities.

In August, The Globe & Mail reported that the Independent Contractors and Business Association (ICBA) – along with the BC Chamber of Commerce, several building and trade organizations and two unions unaffiliated with the building trades – filed a petition against the CBA in B.C. Supreme Court.

“You don’t train more people in construction by cutting backroom deals with the building trades unions and giving them a monopoly on government projects,” ICBA president Chris Gardner said of the agreement in a news release. “You train more people by being inclusive, by investing in more training spaces, and by working with the private sector who train workers on construction projects in every community across the province every day.”

“It’s simply not fair to discriminate against the 85 per cent of construction workers who are not part of the old-fashioned hiring hall model where unions control who can work where and when,” Gardner added.

One oft-cited statistic in arguments against the CBAs unionized worksites is that a mere 15 per cent of construction workers in B.C. belong to unions. While critics of the CBA claim the new agreement will alienate a large swath of the province’s construction workers, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure argues this statistic is misleading because it includes both residential and non-residential construction workers. When only non-residential construction workers – who are more likely to be employed on a public infrastructure project – are taken into account, the ministry believes the CBA will be favourable to local workers and contractors, as the B.C. Building Trades represents 58 per cent of the non-residential construction industry.

Several organizations, including the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, also believe the new initiative will increase delays and budget overruns on major public infrastructure projects.

“As a free enterprise organization, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade believes in free and open competition for government contracts, to get the best value for increasingly scarce taxpayer dollars,” the organization said in a statement on the day the CBA was unveiled. “We have concerns that today’s announcement will inevitably lead to higher costs and added complexity for public infrastructure projects, which will ultimately cost taxpayers.”

Moving forward, opportunities to put the new CBA into practice will come quickly, as the provincial government plans to employ this model in two forthcoming projects: the $1.377-billion replacement of the Pattullo Bridge and a four-laning project on the Trans-Canada Highway between Kamloops and Alberta.

The Pattullo Bridge project, currently in its Request for Qualifications stage, is expected to begin construction in 2019 with a target completion date in 2023. According to the ministry, a four- to seven-per-cent budget increase is already factored into this project, limiting extra costs for taxpayers, and the additional funds will largely go toward apprenticeship opportunities, representing what the ministry believes is a long-term investment in the B.C. workforce.

“We know there is a looming predicted skilled worker shortage, and the Pattullo Bridge replacement project is a great opportunity to train and expand the qualified workforce for the future,” the ministry said.
Training is essential to staying cutting edge in the concrete and masonry industries. WOC’s world-class educational program offers everything you need: more than 100 Hands-on Training sessions, Interactive Workshops and targeted seminars that address the constantly evolving technology. When you earn Master Certificates and complete skill-building certifications, there’s no stopping increased profit, production and opportunity.

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When telematics solutions were first introduced, fleet managers and owners were excited at all the possibilities to optimize their operations that the data they received from their fleets offered them. But in recent years many fleet owners and operators have grown out of love with some aspects of telematics. This is due to the amount time they’ve had to dedicate to staff members filtering through the almost infinite amount data available, to find the information they require to run their operations more efficiently. This is a fair complaint, of course, since the main advantage of telematics systems is supposed to be that they will save operations time and money. Several equipment manufacturers have recognized this issue and having been releasing solutions to counter this issue.

At John Deere, for example, the company’s WorkSight system removes the noise from the incoming data so the user can focus on the data they need to run their operations smoothly without having to dedicate staff to data crunching.

“WorkSight is delivering value to customers from telematics using a two-pronged approach,” explains Paul Garcia, product
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manager for John Deere WorkSight. “First, we are transitioning the user interface from our JDLink legacy website to the JDLink Dashboard. The JDLink Dashboard is insights focused, for example, the dashboard tiles show machines listed with the highest idle time, machines with low fuel levels or those over- or underutilized in the past seven days. This helps fleet managers find machines that might need attention.

“Second, our corporate Machine Health Monitoring Center reviews the health of connected John Deere machines. When an issue is found they work with the product engineering team to develop a solution and share that information with our dealers. Dealers use the information to work directly with customers to resolve issues, which leads to increased uptime. With Deere and our dealers monitoring machine health, our customers have more time to focus on running their business; whether it’s moving dirt or building roads.”

At the Wirtgen Group, the WITOS FleetView telematics solution allows users to customize their dashboard so they only see the information they are interested in. “We have a pretty big system that has a lot of data but we don’t necessarily tell customers what in the data that they want to see,” explains Wirtgen Group telematics expert Tommy Wilson. “They get to pick and choose. Their dashboard is completely customizable to see exactly what parameters they want to see day to day.”

At Volvo Construction Equipment (Volvo CE), the company dived into upgrading its telematics system after discovering some of its customer base was getting overwhelmed by the amount of data coming in, unsure of how to best take advantage of it. “We had all these tools, and they really weren’t taking advantage of it... too many resources, too much time,” Volvo CE connected services product sales manager Dave Adams explains, adding that customers started requesting that Volvo CE monitor and filter data for them.

Volvo CE listened to their customers’ requests and began by monitoring data for a small number of key clients across the U.S. and internationally two years ago. The response from customers was extremely positive, so the company expanded its services and built the Volvo Uptime Center in Shippensburg, Penn.

The Uptime Center works with Volvo CE dealers to provide technical support, parts support and case management. Volvo CE started offering ActiveCare Direct as standard to customers in July 2017, with the first year of service free of charge. The new system has not only re-ignited the company’s clients in telematics data, but it has also substantially expanded the construction equipment manufacturer’s customer base.

Advantages customers have experienced using the new telematics systems include improved communication between the job sites and dealers; faster ordering of parts and services; right-sizing of asset fleets by application; improved operator awareness and training; reduction in machine-misuse cases; decreases in idle time; reduced fuel costs; and decreases in repair costs and time.

“Now they pretty much just sit back and wait for monthly reports to come in,” Adams says.

TRAINING AND ROI
Wirtgen Group’s WITOS FleetView telematics solution informs users on the location and operation state of their machines at all times; simplifies scheduling and planning processes for maintenance; and allows for faster response times in the
event of faults.

In addition to using the data collected for improving planning on job sites, and for increasing efficiencies on the maintenance side of the business, it is being used to identify opportunities to better train operators. Using the data for training is particularly helpful for companies that run multiple pieces of the same model of equipment in their fleet, allowing for very accurate comparisons among operators in terms of production numbers, idle times, and reasons for wear and tear on equipment.

“To know how to get more life out of your machine, to get more life out of your parts, it’s just the added benefit that you can use all this information, put it out on paper and show actual physical evidence to an operator,” Wilson explains. “It’s not just our opinion anymore, that’s a really cool aspect to it.”

FUTURE USES
Adams says Volvo CE is always working towards providing further value with more predictive maintenance data, with the goal that it will eventually result in assisting companies with having no unscheduled downtime. New capabilities are constantly being added to ActiveCare Direct, such as oil analysis and component life replacement criteria. The goals is that the telematics system will offer its customers predictive maintenance schedules similar to those used in the airline industry – constantly offering guidance on machines before they fail.

At John Deere, the WorkSight system is quickly gaining popularity among John Deere’s customers.

“We are seeing an increasing number of customers integrate the JDLink Machine Data Application Program Interface (API) into third party business systems,” Garcia says. “WorkSight has four providers: Foresight Fleet Intelligence, HCSS, LHP Telematics and Verizon Connect, that have already done the integration work. Using a mixed fleet solution gives customers a fleetwide view of their machines. This solution enables customers to see data from all their machines regardless of equipment manufacturer, which improves efficiency. “WorkSight will continue to focus on delivering value through connected machines. Today we deliver value by increasing machine uptime; but we have on-going projects that will deliver value through productivity improvements.”

The data collected through telematics systems like WITOS FleetView will be used by contractors in the future to get a more accurate understanding of their operating costs per hour on a job site, and this will lead to changes in buying pattern trends, explains Brodie Hutchins, vice president of dealer development at Wirtgen Group.

“Over the last 20 years or so, just like with automobiles, people don’t buy equipment anymore to the extent they used to,” Hutchins explains. “They’re leasing cars, they’re paying a fee to keep them each month. Rollers, for sure, have gotten there, customers want to rent them and maybe get a rental-purchase option. But mills and pavers for the most part are capital purchases or an asset. At some point these contractors are going to want to know exactly what their costs are going to be per hour on these things, or per tonne. This is how you really zoom in on understanding ownership costs… more equipment is going to be leased or rented with a purchase option.”
When it was time to buy two new plants, a Dillman UNIDRUM® plant was the best fit for us. We like the Unidrum because of its very consistent, homogenous mix and very low maintenance. The Unidrum plants provide more uptime with less routine maintenance.

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Operating Four UNIDRUM Plants
At 15 tonnes, Alberta uses more tonnes of aggregate per capita than any other province. Despite the province’s needs for stone, sand and gravel products, industry still has its challenges starting up and operating pits and quarries in many communities, due to concerns from residents related to groundwater quality, increased truck traffic, and potential dust and noise. In areas where residents are especially concerned, community outreach and regular communication between producers and residents are keys to creating positive relationships between municipalities and...
aggregate companies.

In the case of acquiring new licenses and operating new pits, consultation with the affected communities and residents is a necessary part of the process for all aggregate producers, but some companies go above and beyond. One example is Lafarge Canada’s Calahoo Pit, which was awarded the Alberta Sand & Gravel Association’s inaugural ASGA Award of Excellence in 2018. The award was developed to spotlight outstanding examples of stewardship, community relations and operations from aggregate producers in Alberta.

The Calahoo Pit is a major source of aggregates for the Edmonton area, and is located about 30 kilometres northwest of the city. Permits to begin extraction were finalized back in 2012 with mining commencing in 2013. Although the area is sparsely populated, approximately 500 people live within a three-kilometre radius of the pit, Lafarge has gone to great lengths to ensure the residents in the area stay informed with any changes to the operation and provides assurance that their well networks are protected through the groundwater monitoring program. The annual groundwater monitoring network has existed in the area since 2001, and extends over the 13-km long by 3-km wide regional aggregate deposit.

“The monitoring well program consists of 21 monitoring wells, paid for by the aggregate producers, but administered by Sturgeon County who engages a third-party environmental consultant,” says Bill Gowdy, Lafarge’s environment and public affairs manager for northern Alberta. “In addition, another dozen monitoring wells and nearby resident wells are also monitored for water levels and water chemistry by the aggregate producers through third-party consultants. An annual groundwater monitoring report for the area is prepared and is publically available. The monitoring well network has evolved over the years with additional wells being added as the need arises and extraction migrates.

BACK TO SCHOOL
Between the long-term groundwater monitoring program and actively communicating with residents, Lafarge has been improving relations with the nearby residents; however, they have also found another way to build on its positive relationships while solving a serious challenge affecting most aggregate companies – the recruiting and training of its next generation of skilled workers.

Lafarge has teamed up with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in Edmonton (NAIT) and Sturgeon Composite High School, and provides the students of both educational institutions classroom lectures on geology, the environment and its Calahoo Pit operations. As part of NAIT’s field school, the students tour the Calahoo Pit. The tours convey the importance of aggregates and the aggregate industry as a whole, while offering a balanced message of the real impacts of operations.

“We’re more than happy to take them out there to explain the geology, the mining and the programs in place to ensure environmental protection,” Gowdy says.

Lafarge has also set up summer fieldwork placements for students at NAIT. These students get the opportunity to job shadow experienced staff members while gaining experience within the industry. The NAIT Geological Technology program provides a minimum two-week summer placement for its students between their first and second years. Over 30 students have participated in the job shadow program over the years.

“Our relationship is needed to tie in real-world experience with the curriculum,” says Candace Farrer, interim chair and long-time instructor for the Department of Geological Technology at NAIT. “It really helps bridge that gap. We want to make sure that our students are pre-
pared for the industry."

By placing students with Lafarge, NAIT can also ensure that its classes remain relevant to the needs of the industry. Farrer says her program is grateful for all the efforts Lafarge makes to ensure their students are well prepared for the real world.

“It affirms for us that the content for our students is relevant,” she says.

These work placements have resulted in full-time work for some of NAIT’s graduating students.

“Lafarge Canada has hired three students from NAIT over the last few years,” says Gowdy, who is also the chair of the advisory committee for NAIT’s Department of Geological Technology. Lafarge has participated on the committee since 2008.

Students don’t just get to go on site when the sun is shining, either. These tours are often done in the cold, or when it is raining or snowing, so the students get a realistic idea of working in aggregate operations.

NAIT’s students get to see active mining operations and reclaimed pits first-hand. They get to review the geological history and deposition of the sedimentary layers using cross sections, see exposed pit faces and stratigraphy. Lafarge also discusses the Sturgeon County monitoring well network with the students, and allows them to measure water levels and use their multimeter to get water parameters, and collect water samples. Drill logs (lithological) of the wells they measure are provided. They take the field data they gather and review it in a class exercise.

“In order for students to succeed they need to have buy-in,” Gowdy says. “For the students, this is relevant, as it is real information from a real world project.”

At Sturgeon Composite High School, Lafarge brings in speakers to talk about the
As part of NAIT’s field school, the students tour the Calahoo Pit. The tours convey the importance of aggregates and the aggregate industry as a whole, while offering a balanced message of the real impacts of operations.

Local aggregates industry. Gowdy has done presentations with four science classes at the school – a total of 350 staff and students – on the importance, use and consumption of aggregates; reclamation practices; biodiversity programs; and the types of careers available in the industry (outlining pre-requisites required to pursue those careers in post-secondary schools). Gowdy even brings rock, mineral and fossil specimens with him to show the classes some of the materials he works with on a regular basis.

In addition to peaking the interest of potential future employees, Lafarge is filling young minds with industry knowledge they can take back with them and share among their families and friends. In an industry that constantly struggles with community and municipal relations – partially due to a general lack of understanding of its operations – this benefit alone should pay dividends well into the future for all members of industry in the region. Whether its happier residents around the Calahoo Pit, NAIT students graduating into positions within the industry, or just a better understanding of aggregate operations by the general public, Lafarge’s education and outreach efforts have definitely created a winning scenario for everyone in the Edmonton area.
Every region of Canada has unique geographic features; ones that set them apart from the rest. However, while that description also applies to our newest province – Newfoundland – when you are there, there is also a vaguely perceptible “other world” sense about the place.

I was thinking this as I drove the new 2019 GMC Sierra from St. John’s through the Avalon Peninsula on my way to Conception Bay.

Perhaps this is why GM chose “The Rock” for this debut. They very much want to present the Sierra as having a different feel from other brands; but mostly from its other in-house version: Silverado.

The Sierra’s big sister, the Chevy Silverado, which is also new this year has in some ways stolen the Sierra’s thunder by debuting first.

It was rolled out as part of the 100th anniversary celebrations for Chevrolet trucks.

So, while this later Sierra release could be considered a second act, there are differences in the Sierra that do make it different. These are vaguely perceptible at first, but then like Newfoundland itself, they make themselves known in a way that’s indelible.

Style-wise, Sierra continues its separation from the Silverado – a direction that started well over a decade ago.

For 2019 the new grille is upright and dominant with a proportional chrome three-bar pattern (Denali though continues to get the exclusive “cheese grater” look).

The new lights are large and C-shaped anchoring the taller hood to the powerful shoulders on the truck’s front end. The wheels have moved closer to the body corners making it look that much longer. These body features are in sharp contrast
to the slick, flatter, pulled back look of the new Silverado.

The truck body is actually larger than the old model with the small space increases mostly being devoted to the interior comfort of passengers. For instance, the 2019 Crew cab has nearly three inches of additional rear-seat legroom compared to the current model.

Other new exterior design elements include bright chrome side window surrounds, integrated dual exhaust tips and a wider range of available tires (18-, 20- and 22-inch options).

Still, while the look matters, if you want to set a product apart from its competition you have to give it exclusive features. GMC has now done that.

THE BUSINESS END

Starting at the business end of this new truck you’ll see that GM has invested in two very unique new features, neither of which will be shared with Silverado: a convertible tailgate with multiple functions and an industry-first carbon-fibre cargo box.

The new convertible tailgate is called the MultiPro. It features six unique functions and positions. The key is the split function that folds half the gate down to create a second tier for loading and/or to be used as a backstop for long cargo. If the tailgate itself is down the split function now creates an extra wide step up into the cargo bed as well as a cut-out for closer bed access. The weight capacity is 375 lb. and the tailgate will also function as a workstation. This fits nicely with the addition of an 110V outlet added to the box nearby. This tailgate will be standard equipment on Denali and SLT trucks.

Working with the tailgate at our lunch stop it struck me that these innovations are the inevitable next-level evolution of the one-piece tailgate. I mean, ever since the early days of trucks tailgates have doubled as work benches, picnic tables and bleachers. We have always used them for more than just keeping cargo in the bed. Now the GM engineers have made it easier and more convenient to do what we’ve always been doing.

The second big deal is this newly formed one-piece bed that uses a purpose specific carbon-fibre composite. Once complete it is 62 lb. lighter than the base steel version on the Sierra. GMC is claiming best-in class dent, scratch and corrosion resistance for this innovation – and with good reason.

Carbon-fibre is one of those materials normally associated with high-performance race cars and fighter jets. It’s very strong, yet very light – both traits that will benefit any truck cargo bed. This box, called the CarbonPro, is not a standard feature and it will cost more as an option. The standard bed continues to be made of roll-formed steel. This is where it remains to be seen how much value customers are willing to pay for a truck bed. However, having the option is revolutionary. This material is tougher than steel or aluminum. Putting a hole through it is virtually impossible – but should it happen, it can be repaired with a propane torch.

When I first saw this bed in Detroit, I had a chance to speak to a director of the company (Continental Structural Plastics) that developed this bed for GMC. We
talked about how tough it was and he told me that one of tests they had subjected it to was loading a snowmobile with a steel-pick studded track into the truck bed, starting it and then pinning the throttle – spinning that track – in place, with those hardened two-inch steel picks tearing at the floor.

This uniquely Canadian-ish torture test did not damage the material. Personally, I can tell you I have shredded steel, aluminum and bed-liners doing the same thing – well, actually trying not to.

**POWER AND DRIVER-ASSIST TECH**

For power – this is where GMC and Chevy do share – new versions of the 5.3L and 6.2L V8 engines will be joined by an all-new 3.0L inline-six turbo diesel engine (very late availability). The 6.2L and 3.0L engine will be paired to a 10-speed automatic transmission. But past the usual updates GM has unveiled a new fuel saving system called Dynamic Fuel Management. This industry-first technology enables the engine to operate in 17 different power patterns (using from two to eight cylinders) all governed by demand. DFM will be available on both the 6.2L and the 5.3L V8.

Driver-assist technologies are new and found throughout the new Sierra. Key among these is an electronic trailering system called ProGrade. Included in its features is a hitch-view camera with zoom feature for hooking up; side-view cameras to see down the side of the truck and trailer; also an auxiliary camera may be mounted on the back of the trailer for an in-cab view of what’s behind you.

A nice touch is a new Auto Electric Parking Brake Assist which automatically applies the parking brake as you shift into park; preventing that one-inch lurch that takes you off the ball. Also part of the package are wireless tire pressure sensors that when installed on the trailer wheels relay tire pressure and temperature information to the in-cab trailering screen. A new trailer light test and diagnostics system is included too.

Inside the Sierra offers another industry first. A 3-in. x 7-in. heads-up display projecting vehicle info onto the windshield within the driver’s sight-line. The standard 8-inch infotainment screen offers a new Smartphone-like experience, faster responses and improved voice recognition. This screen also stitches various camera angles together for a bird’s-eye view of the truck.

Also new is Adaptive Ride Control (of-
For 2019, the new grille is upright and dominant with a proportional chrome three-bar pattern.

Carbon-fibre is one of those materials normally associated with high-performance race cars and fighter jets. It’s very strong, yet very light.


TRIM PACKAGE
No conversation about a Sierra would be complete without talking about the Denali trim package. Since its debut in a 2001 Sierra it’s taken on a life of its own. This organic marketing coup happens only occasionally in the automotive world; GM knows it and is working to exploit it. They are pumping even more upscale styling and materials into the truck and expanding its stand-alone character by including a prominent Denali nameplate on the tailgate.

For the off-road crowd GMC has decided to add a new Sierra spin-off, the AT4. It is billed as a premium vehicle that holds its own off the beaten path. To that end it gets a 2-inch factory lift, upgraded Goodyear DuraTrac tires (up to 20 in.) and an overall look that can best be described as “blacked-out”.

These cues come on top of the standard off-road features of Sierra; namely, Rancho shocks, locking rear diff, 2-speed transfer case, skid plates, traction select system and hill descent control.

Pricing for the new 2019 GMC Sierra has not been released yet. It’s due in showrooms late this fall.
Anyone who has ever spent anytime in Gander, Nfld. will tell you: this is an aviation town. Being my first trip to this part of The Rock, I was unfamiliar with the aviation industry's impact. As I drove around the town of 11,000-plus residents, I passed by entire neighbourhoods that honoured the pioneers of aviation. In most cases, I would have had no idea. Fortunately for me, I was driving alongside long-time Gander resident Jerry White.

“Every street around here was named after a famous aviator,” he says as he takes me on a tour of a sub-division his crews were worked on recently.

Jerry's company, The McCurdy Group of Companies, has offered trucking, equipment rental, roadbuilding and excavation services in the aviation town and the surrounding area for 55 years. Under the company's current umbrella are: McCurdy Construction
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Jerry’s journey started out in Norris Arm, Nfld. about 60 kilometres from Gander, when he purchased an old truck for $75 that he used for hauling pulpwood to an old Bowater plant in 1963. Jerry used it for the first few years, before buying another used truck for $150 to supply hauling services around the area for various industries. In 1969, he decided to grow his company when he jumped on an opportunity to expand into Gander and started up McCurdy Construction & Equipment Rentals.

“I bought a company that had gone into bankruptcy in Gander and built the company up piece by piece,” he says.

NO INTEREST

After purchasing the company and entering the construction sector, Jerry began to offer road building and excavation services throughout the area. One of the first things he decided to do for the financial health of his business was save up enough capital to prevent having to rely on loans from financial institutions. He bought his equipment at bargain prices, whenever possible, and gained his financial independence a few years later in 1974.

“That was the last time I ever financed anything,” he recalls. “We’ve never paid a cent of interest to bank since 1974. You’ve got to manage pretty tight to do that. You’ve got to know where you’re headed… I sort of grew the company a little bit at a time.”

These days his fleet is comprised of between 100 and 120 pieces of equipment between his trucks, tractors, excavators, crushers, asphalt plants and paving equipment.

“We have all the different gear,” he says, adding that he’s particularly happy with his Gencor 250 asphalt plant that he purchased 10 years ago; when he was forced to retire his old asphalt plant that didn’t meet changing emissions requirements.

“You need to have the right equipment, and rightly so, you’ve got to look out for the environment.”

BUSY TIMES

His busiest company under the McCurdy Group umbrella, B & M Paving, has worked on a various important infrastructure projects over the years, including roadbuilding work on the Trans-Canada Highway and paving work on the Gander International Airport’s taxiways. Jerry’s company also constructed the first tilt-up office building in Newfoundland, Jerry White’s company built the first tilt-up office building in Newfoundland, a 60,000-sq.-ft. complex named The McCurdy Complex.

The McCurdy Group of Companies runs its own crushing and screening operations to meet its aggregates needs.
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a 60,000-sq.-ft. complex he later named The McCurdy Complex that he built for his own use. At peak times over the years his company has employed upwards of 100 people, with slower periods ranging between 25 and 28 people.

“At one time we were doing a lot of heavy lifting projects, but we were struggling with people leaving for Alberta to work for oil companies,” Jerry recalls. “That all seems to have come full circle now.”

These days much of B & M Paving’s work is excavation and foundation preparation work for sub-divisions going in around town. It is currently working on 150 lots around town and Jerry is looking at getting another 3,000 acres developed. For all the aggregates needed for The McCurdy Group’s operations, Jerry runs his own crushing and screening operations.

“We do between 100,000 and 120,000 tonnes per year,” he says. “It’s mostly for our own projects. I own quarries and sand pits in the area.”

None of the aggregate tends to travel very far to get to project sites. Jerry believes one secret to his success is not straying too far from his base of operations.

“We keep the radius as tight as we can,” he says. “We get out further only when we need to. I learned that very early in the game.”

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Jerry has been teaching his children how to follow in his footsteps with the business. He has three daughters, and two of them work with him every day. His daughter Linda started working with him at an early age.

“She started out at 12 years old working with me in the summertime,” Jerry recalls, adding that since then she has gone to school for her Bachelor of Commerce degree and now runs the accounting side of his business.

Through all the ups and downs that come with running his businesses across more than half a century, Jerry looks back at his experiences with great fondness.

“It wasn’t really a challenge, more of a pleasure than anything else,” he says. “You start off with one little thing and you grow it.”

If there were any one piece of advice that Jerry would give up-and-coming business owners for managing the ups and downs that come with operating within the construction sector, it would be this:

“There a lot of people doing good when they’re on the top of the wave, but you’ve got to be prepared for the bottom.”

Anyone who has ever spent anytime in Gander, Nfld. will tell you that this is an aviation town. Jerry White, owner of The McCurdy Group of Companies, is no exception. He’s a helicopter pilot.

Gander was a regular refuelling area and stop for Canadian, British and American military personnel over the course of The Second World War.
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A closer look at what full cost security on public lands could mean for Alberta

Land reclamation is of great importance to sand and gravel producers in Alberta, and from smaller operators to larger ones, all of them realize the value of being good stewards to the environment in which they operate. The Alberta Sand & Gravel Association's (ASGA) very roots go back to ensuring that players in the aggregate industry in Alberta go about their work in an ecologically responsible way; which ensures that land is reclaimed to a state which makes it usable once more.

Today, many landmarks in Alberta reside on reclaimed land from former sand and gravel pits, such as Rundle Park in Edmonton or Carburn Park in Calgary. Like in many other provinces, Alberta’s aggregate industry is one of the most highly regulated ones in the country. Companies that mine aggregates must adhere to multiple environmental laws and regulations, which as of 2018 stands at more than 20 municipal, provincial and federal Acts, Policies and Regulations which govern aggregate extraction.

However, currently it seems that for those within the aggregate industry the question getting asked more often surrounds
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industry regulation and the perceived speed at which it is implemented. Specifically, how much more can those within the industry, especially the smaller operators, bear when it comes to managing costs to run a profitable business?

Some operators are worried about the potential in increased costs in security reclamation on public pits. Full cost land reclamation security has been the norm for private pits in Alberta for a long time, but not so for public pits.

Brock Helm serves as both an ASGA director and as a land and aggregate manager for Mixcor Aggregates Inc. based in Leduc, Alta. Helm sees that there are both pros and cons to going to a full cost security model for public lands, but stresses that it all comes down to those in the industry wanting consistency.

"It really goes back to the Auditor General's report. The report clearly indicated that the government needs to collect more security so that the public is not left to foot the cost," Helm said. "A homogenous system of how pits are regulated is a good thing, and that includes full cost security. I am a big fan of permitting consistency and this is a good thing for ASGA and the Alberta government as well."

In July of 2014, the Alberta Auditor General released a follow up report to its original 2008 report. It detailed steps and measures Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), which was then known as Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, should take to better ensure that land is being reclaimed properly on public lands.

This report again stressed that AEP should improve its systems processes for inspecting aggregate holdings on public land so that it can enforce reclamation requirements. The report heavily stressed risks associated with orphaned un-reclaimed sites and recommended that the security deposit amount be seriously looked at to see if it was sufficient. According to AEP, Alberta Environment identified around 63,000 acres of land that had not been satisfactorily reclaimed between 2009 and 2013.

Much like sand and gravel operations in Canada in general, land reclamation was barely on the radar out west 60 years ago. In Alberta, it was not until 1963 that the Surface Reclamation Act was introduced and although this Act did not impact gravel pit activity directly, it did pave the way for the 1973 Land Surface Conservation and Reclamation Act, which designated that surface disturbances would require conservation approvals, including reclamation plans.

However, it was not until 1978 when the Act was amended – this spelled out which types of conservation and reclamation standards were enforceable. In 1979, the Regulated Sand, Gravel, Clay and Marl Surface Operations Regulation took effect. This is really when mandatory reclamation, including security reclamation costs for pits on private lands, began.

What is now known as “full cost” security for private land pits did not come about until 1993 with the introduction of the Environmental Protection and Enchantment Act. Operators must post security – be it in cash or in performance bond form – as a guarantee that the land will be reclaimed to an acceptable level. This has been the norm for a long time and is an accepted practice among private operators.

Public lands are different, however, and are exempt from full cost security in Alberta and fall under the Public Lands Act, meaning security costs are different. They average around $1,000 per acre which works out to about 15 per cent compared to full cost.

There are many in the business who say that not having full security on public lands contributes greatly to orphaned and abandoned pits not being reclaimed properly. Although operators on public lands have been required to submit full conservation business plans for a long time now, one of the main issues is that in the past there never really was a strong plan in place for reclaiming dormant or orphaned public pits.

The official ASGA position on the matter of full cost security for public pits as reiterated by ASGA executive director John Ashton is that this is not something which can be implanted in a sudden manner.

"The industry needs a lot of warning about full cost for public lands," he said. “This is not something you can do quickly without harming our members.”

Smaller businesses with Surface Material Leases (SMLs) on public lands will no doubt be directly impacted by
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any new reclamation cost requirements. ASGA Board of Director member Eddy Nash of Nash Enterprises in Slave Lake, Alta., is very concerned that going to a full cost model could literally put him out of business.

“What it does is it starts shutting down the small operators. I’ve got about 15 different SMLs, but if I suddenly had to, even slowly come up with the cash, I would have to give up my SMLs,” Nash said. “A larger operator is in the position to absorb these costs, but I might have to sell these things. The status quo is bad enough, but if we can live with it because that was the rule sure, but now for them to potentially suddenly throw this at us, I can’t really see any advantages. I might be faced to force to go out of business.”

Helm also feels there are some obvious negatives in going to a full cost model in a sudden way and he shares Nash’s feelings that it could put smaller operators out of business.

“Is it going to be sticker shock on how a lot of these guys are going to have to operate if there is a sudden full cost security for public lands,” Helm said. “You could see a large abandonment of leases and smaller operators will simply up and quit. I think it is a huge risk to government of going full costs suddenly. I think the key is communication to those in industry from government officials so that they are not blindsided by sudden changes. We need to be at the table.”

Whatever action the government takes on the matter, one thing is clear, there will no doubt be consequences, even if unintended, to smaller sand and gravel operators in the province if a full cost model is implemented to public pit operators. Both Helm and Nash point out this fact and agree that what really needs to happen right now is clear and open information on what could potentially be coming down the pipeline in terms of regulations.

For more information about the Alberta Sand & Gravel Association, visit www.asga.ab.ca or follow ASGA on Twitter at @AB_Sand_Gravel.

Anthony Murdoch is the communications and events coordinator for ASGA.
Closing the gender gap

Diversity enhances problem solving in the design and construction sectors

It has become almost trite to say that diversity is important in the context of collaboration and decision making. We pretty much take that fact for granted now, but we seem to be at a point where we pay lip service to it rather than take action to benefit from it. I believe it's time for a new approach and a new attitude towards diversity, especially as it relates to the design and construction sectors.

With regard to innovation, problem solving and decision making, the benefit of diversity comes from the spectrum of experiences and perspectives of those around the table. The best decisions are made when a problem is examined from a variety of perspectives; those perspectives being derived from the diverse experiences and backgrounds of the problem solvers. The best form of diversity can't be assessed visually – you have to know more about the individuals assigned to collaborate on a project.

I am reminded of a time in my late teens in Mississauga, Ont. when my circle of friends in high school would have looked like the poster child for diversity. There was a reasonable balance of males and females, and roughly half of them would have been identified as “visible minorities.” However, every one of them was born in Canada, grew up in a suburban, middle-class socioeconomic environment, came through a common education system and was roughly the same age. The depth of the diversity of that group was not as great as it might have appeared on the surface.

In the engineering, design and construction sectors, gender diversity alone is a significant challenge. For the past 30 years, women have made up slightly more than half of the Canadian population and currently represent about 48 per cent of the workforce. Yet, only 13 per cent of the licensed professional engineers in Canada are women. Despite science, engineering and technology programs and campaigns targeting girls in public school and high school, or young women in university, only 17 per cent of new professional engineering licences issued last year went to women. The situation is even more bleak in the skilled trades, where a 2017 report stated that women make up less than 5 per cent of the workforce.

It's clear that there needs to be a major shift in the mindset, attitudes and the corporate culture of organizations in the design and construction sector if there is to be any meaningful progress towards leveraging real diversity. The focus has to be on the outcomes – better decisions, more innovation, more creative solutions to the challenges that face our organizations and our industries. Directors and senior management within our organizations need to view this as a strategic and existential imperative. If your competitor begins to embrace real diversity and experiences the benefits of better problem solving, where will that leave your organization?

Change is required. Change is rarely easy. You may not like change, but you’ll like irrelevance and insolvency even less. The design and construction sector is a competitive environment where only those who demonstrate innovation, creativity and keen problem solving are going to thrive – all of those things are enhanced by having diverse perspectives on the team.

Labour market analysts talk about a “skills gap” between the needs of industry and the available workforce. Within your organization, ask yourself if you have a “perspectives gap” when it comes to decision making and problem solving, and then do the work to leverage real diversity to bridge that gap. Don’t view it as an opportunity, view it as a necessity.

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