

Highway 69 Resolution

BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety identified that investments in highways can generate productivity growth, play a critical role in regional development and generate a more efficient economic structure including improvement to the nation's trade.

In particular, studies have determined that highways have at least two important impacts on the economy:

1. highway construction supports immediate on-site and off-site employment – such investment also lays the foundation for future job growth by making markets accessible;
2. highway investment increases national productivity by improving mobility and reducing transportation costs for businesses and families.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) research in the U.S. determined that one of the most tangible benefits of highway investment is the immediate employment generated by construction. The study reveals that on site highway construction jobs together with material purchases from supplying industries can translate \$1 billion of highway investment into 44,709 full-time jobs.

At least one study has shown that highway construction also has long-term employment impact to the extent that such highway investment improves market accessibility. Specifically, a U.S. study in the Appalachian region found the following:

- i) that a significant number of jobs were added to the region as a result of its improved access to the Atlantic and Midwestern markets;
- ii) that a significant population increase occurred in the Appalachian region since the highway construction as people moved to the area which was originally perceived as a depressed region.

It has been stated that one of the most important impacts of highway investment is its effect on national productivity to the extent that highways improve mobility for businesses, reducing the time it takes to transport materials or finished goods. Accordingly, it has been found that when businesses are more productive they can use savings on research, product development, firm expansion and other activities.

ISSUE:

The immediate investment of funds by the provincial government to four-lane Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound as well as to immediately develop an accelerated plan to commence such highway construction as a universally recognized means of generating productivity growth, regional development and a more efficient economic structure for the North.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, in 1998 the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety identified that investments in highways can generate productivity growth, play a critical role in regional development and generate a more efficient economic structure including improvement to the nation's (province's) trade;

Whereas, a recent census has shown that the Northern communities and the City of Greater Sudbury in particular have lost a significant population base and accordingly have or will potentially lose federal and provincial representation as a result of electoral boundary changes sensitive to population;

Whereas, studies have shown that highway investment can have positive immediate and long-term impact on creating employment through construction, market accessibility, supply industries and population growth;

Whereas, closed highways due to accident or inclement weather, can result in a significant adverse impact on the inter/intra-provincial trade, especially for companies which are dependent on "just in time" delivery to achieve maximum productivity efficiencies;

Whereas, the road (Highway 69) is routinely closed for several hours at a time due to accidents and that such accidents serve as an economic deterrent as well as a health and safety risk.

Whereas, infrastructure designation under a national/provincial highway policy would ensure levels of service, safety, and standards for all users and promote business, tourism and industry in Ontario/Canada;

Whereas, Highway 69 is a narrow, hilly, winding two-lane road which offers little maneuverability and the accident and death rate between Sudbury and Parry Sound is more than double that between Parry Sound and Toronto, which is four-laned and serves a significantly greater volume of traffic;

Whereas, the road acts as a funnel for Northern Commuters travelling south and for tourists, business people and relatives who travel north;

Whereas, the road was designed at a time when the majority of freight traffic was still being transported by the railways and cannot accommodate the heavy transport traffic that is now the major user and an integral part of commercial trade and industrial growth in the North;

Therefore be it resolved that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce do direct the provincial government to:

- Immediately allocate new or increased funding to invest in the four-laning of Highway 69 south between Sudbury and Parry Sound;

- Immediately announce an accelerated start date and completion date for the construction project;
- Specifically engage in proposing a construction schedule to commence immediately from or about the Richard Lake area of Sudbury where the two-lane roadway begins to Parry Sound;
- Urge the Province of Ontario to immediately enter into discussions with the Federal Government to negotiate an arrangement under the Canadian Strategic Infrastructure Fund for the four-laning of Highway 69 similar to the recently signed agreements with the Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick to equally share in the cost to four-lane sections of the Trans Canada Highway within their provinces;
- Consider that in determining the need to perform upgrades on Ontario roads, the government review not just traffic volumes but traffic volumes in relation to the rate of accidents, injury, death, economic advantage and regional and northern development as well as consider the potential for increased traffic volumes and the economic benefits of increased volumes;
- Acknowledge that citizens traveling in all areas of the province, including the North, are entitled to timely market accessibility, improved mobility, reduced transportation costs for businesses and families as well as a uniform and reasonable level of safety on Ontario roads.