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MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS
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QUÉBEC (QUÉBEC) - CANADA
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Opening Address

NAHPO 1989

Yvan Demers

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NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY YVAN DEMERS
AT THE 42ND ANNUAL NAHPO CONFERENCE '89

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ALL STATES ASPIRING TO PROGRESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAVE LONG REALIZED THAT WITHDRAWING AND CLOSING THEMSELVES OFF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD CAN ONLY LEAD TO STAGNATION AND AN INTOLERABLE STATUS QUO. NATIONS TODAY ARE OPENING THEIR DOORS TO THE MODERN WORLD AS EACH SEEKS TO GAIN THE MOST UP-TO-DATE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ITS CITIZENS.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC HIGHWAY PLANNING OFFICIALS (NAHPO), AN ASSOCIATION WHICH REPRESENTS SOME AMERICAN STATES AND CANADIAN PROVINCES, FITS IN WITH THIS TREND SINCE ITS PRIMARY ROLE IS TO PROMOTE EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION, EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS ON TECHNICAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.

IN THE PAST, NAHPO CONFERENCES PROVIDED MEMBERS WITH A WEALTH OF NEW INFORMATION FROM WHICH EVERYONE BENEFITED. WE WILLINGLY RECOGNIZE THAT YOUR EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN USEFUL TO US, AND HOPE THAT WE HAVE ALSO BEEN OF SOME HELP TO YOU IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.

BECAUSE WE HAVE MANY COMMON CONCERNS, WE ARE PLEASED THAT WE ARE ONCE AGAIN GOING TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND OUR MOST RECENT RESEARCH RESULTS.

A PROBLEM COMMON TO MOST WESTERN COUNTRIES TODAY IS THAT OF SOCIETY'S EVER-INCREASING TRANSPORTATION AND ROAD SYSTEM MANAGEMENT NEEDS. MAJOR INVESTMENTS WILL BE NECESSARY OVER THE NEXT DECADE AND IN THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE YEAR 2000 TO MEET THESE NEEDS AND ENSURE RELATED ECONOMIC PROGRESS. BUT HOW CAN WE RECONCILE THIS IMPERATIVE WITH THE NECESSITY OF

STABILIZING GOVERNMENT FINANCE BY REDUCING BUDGET DEFICITS?

TO RESOLVE THIS DILEMMA, TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES WILL HAVE TO RACK THEIR BRAINS TO FIND NEW SOURCES OF FINANCING THAT OUR POLITICIANS WILL FIND SUFFICIENTLY ATTRACTIVE TO BE WILLING TO RECOMMEND AND MAKE THEM ACCEPTABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

YOU WILL HAVE NOTICED IN YOUR CONFERENCE PROGRAM THAT SOME AMERICAN STATES HAVE ALREADY BROKEN NEW GROUND BY TAPPING NOVEL SOURCES OF FINANCING TO CARRY OUT ROAD PROJECTS. GIVEN THESE EXPERIENCES, QUÉBEC, TOO, WILL PROBABLY MAKE AN APPEAL ONE DAY FOR LOCAL, REGIONAL AND EVEN PRIVATE FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION TO ENSURE THAT VARIOUS PROJECTS ARE CARRIED OUT.

AS WE NEAR THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, OUR SOCIETY IS CONFRONTED BY MANY EXPANSION PROBLEMS AFFECTING TRANSPORTATION. FOR EXAMPLE, LARGE URBAN AREAS EXPERIENCE INCREASING TRAFFIC CONGESTION, AND THE SLIGHTEST ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT CAN TAKE ON CATASTROPHIC PROPORTIONS AND CREATE TRAFFIC JAMS CAUSING INCALCULABLE LOSSES OF TIME. ONTARIO'S EX-MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION, MR. FULTON, RECENTLY ESTIMATED THE ANNUAL ECONOMIC COST OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION TO HIGHWAY USERS IN TERMS OF LOST TIME, ARRIVING LATE AT WORK AND WASTED FUEL AT SOME \$1.9 BILLION.

WE CAN ESTIMATE THAT THIS SAME PHENOMENON PROPORTIONALLY COSTS HIGHWAY USERS IN THE GREATER MONTRÉAL AREA OVER \$1 BILLION PER YEAR. A FEW DAYS AGO AT THE END OF THE DAY, A SIMPLE GAS LEAK NEAR A MAJOR INTERCHANGE OF MONTRÉAL'S EXPRESSWAY SYSTEM CAUSED THE INTERCHANGE TO BE TEMPORARILY CLOSED AND ALL AERIAL TRAFFIC WAS DIRECTED AWAY FROM THIS ZONE FOR SEVERAL HOURS. THOUSANDS OF VEHICLES WERE THUS IMMOBILIZED TO THE GREAT FRUSTRATION OF THEIR OCCUPANTS.

TO AVOID THE PROBLEM OF URBAN CONGESTION, NEW INDUSTRIES PREFER TO BECOME ESTABLISHED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LARGE URBAN CENTRES. THIS CREATES OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH ARE NO LESS COMPLEX SINCE ROAD SYSTEM PLANNING WAS DESIGNED FOR URBAN, NOT SUBURBAN, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

URBAN CONGESTION ALSO HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES ON THE SOCIAL LEVEL. BECAUSE OF THE INCREASING AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT TRAVELLING IN LARGE CITIES, MANY CITY DWELLERS AVOID GOING OUT AND PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, DOING VOLUNTEER WORK OR TAKING ON POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS SCHOOL BOARDS, MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, ETC., OUTSIDE OF WORKING HOURS.

IF WE TALK OF CONGESTION, WE MUST ALSO TALK OF ROAD SAFETY, TO WHICH GOVERNMENTS DEVOTE A LOT OF ENERGY AND MONEY. WE ARE STILL FAR FROM BEING ABLE TO CLAIM THAT WE HAVE SOLVED THIS PROBLEM. WE MUST CONTINUE TO BE INNOVATIVE IN THIS AREA.

YOU WILL AGREE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY MEASURES TO MAINTAIN URBAN ACCESSIBILITY. OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS WE WILL THEREFORE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE IDEAS ON THE TOOLS WHICH CERTAIN GOVERNMENTAL AND MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE USED TO CORRECT THESE SITUATIONS AND ON OTHER MEANS USED IN GOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF ACCIDENT SITUATIONS. VARIOUS STRATEGIES WERE ASSESSED IN A RECENT STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF A TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE MONTRÉAL AREA. THIS STUDY RECOMMENDED THE USE OF SEVERAL TOOLS FOR THIS SPECIFIC CASE, SUCH AS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A EXPRESSWAY TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WHICH INCLUDES ESTABLISHING A MONITORING SYSTEM, AN AUTOMATIC INCIDENT DETECTION AND DATA GATHERING SYSTEM, A VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGN SYSTEM AND, FINALLY, A COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK WHICH WILL TRANSMIT NECESSARY DATA.

EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IS ONE WAY OF CLEARING DOWNTOWN AREAS OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION. HOWEVER, THIS MODE OF TRANSPORTATION IS NOT USED AS MUCH AS WE COULD WISH. IN MONTRÉAL, FOR EXAMPLE, IT HAS BEEN NOTICED THAT THE RATIO OF MÉTRO USERS TO ROAD USERS IS DECREASING, ALTHOUGH THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF MÉTRO USERS IS INCREASING.

THIS OBSERVATION TELLS US THAT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE AVOID LIVING DOWNTOWN, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS WHERE THE COST OF OWNING OR RENTING HOUSING IS MORE THAN WHAT THE MIDDLE CLASS CAN AFFORD. THE RESULTING EXODUS TO THE SUBURBS AND OUTLYING AREAS CONTRIBUTES TO THE BURDEN ON THE ROAD SYSTEM.

BECAUSE IT IS NOT EASY TO CONVINCE INDIVIDUALS TO OPT FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT OVER THEIR OWN CARS IN THEIR DAILY TRAVELS, MANY SOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN FORMULATED TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM: LIMITING ACCESS TO DOWNTOWN AREAS TO CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF VEHICLES, ESTABLISHING LANES RESERVED FOR BUSES IN PEAK HOURS (WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE IN SEVERAL LARGE NORTH-AMERICAN CITIES), PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC BUS AND TRAIN SYSTEMS, ENCOURAGING CAR POOLING, VAN POOLING, ETC.

MOST OF THESE PROJECTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL ONLY IF WE MAKE THE GENERAL PUBLIC AWARE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS OF THEIR CO-OPERATION.

THE DETERIORATION OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURES IS ANOTHER CONCERN OF THE DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED. BECAUSE OF THE RIGORS OF THE CLIMATE, NORTH AMERICA IS MORE AFFECTED BY DETERIORATION IN THE NORTH AND EAST THAN IN THE WEST AND SOUTH. BECAUSE OF ITS GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION, QUÉBEC IS OBVIOUSLY ONE OF THE REGIONS WHERE ROADS AND STRUCTURES ARE MOST EXPOSED TO THE EFFECTS OF FREEZING AND THAWING.

THESE ROADS AND BRIDGES ARE ALSO THREATENED BY INCREASINGLY

HEAVY AND NUMEROUS LOADS. AS PLANNERS, OUR CHALLENGE IS TO FIND SOLUTIONS WHICH BALANCE OUR CITIZENS' ABILITY TO PAY AND USER NEEDS. OUR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION METHODS MUST BE IMPROVED. WE MUST ALSO OPTIMIZE OUR METHODS OF MAINTAINING AND OPERATING NETWORKS.

TO THIS END, THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE MUST LOOK FOR WAYS TO INCREASE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE RESOURCES AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO OVERCOMING THIS DIFFICULTY IS TO FULLY DEVELOP THE POTENTIAL OF THE COMPUTER, AN UNPRECEDENTED MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING AID. THE POSSIBILITIES OF THIS TECHNOLOGY ARE LIMITLESS. TODAY, THANKS TO THE POWER OF MICROCOMPUTERS AND THEIR LOW COSTS, AND THANKS TO THE WIDE CHOICE OF SOFTWARE PACKAGES AND DATA BANKS IN WHICH INCREDIBLE QUANTITIES OF INFORMATION MAY BE STORED AND CALLED UP IMMEDIATELY BY THE USER, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS ARE BETTER EQUIPPED THAN EVER TO MAKE QUALITY DECISIONS.

NEW WORK METHODS SUCH AS COMPUTER-ASSISTED DESIGN AND DRAFTING MUST TAKE A GREATER PLACE IN MANAGING AND PLANNING OUR ACTIVITIES.

IF WE WERE TO LIST ALL COMPUTER APPLICATIONS IN THE TRANSPORTATION FIELD OR DESCRIBE ALL SYSTEMS WHICH EXIST NOW OR ARE UNDER DEVELOPMENT, THE TASK WOULD BE ENDLESS. GIVEN THAT THESE SYSTEMS WERE DESIGNED FOR VARIOUS, HIGHLY SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS, ONE OF THE DANGERS FACING US IS THE LACK OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN THEM. THE HARMONIOUS AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS IS DOUBTLESS ONE OF OUR MAJOR CHALLENGES.

AT THE MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC, WE HAVE A MASTER DIAGRAM OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND A GENERAL SYSTEMS ARCHITECTURE FOR EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF ALL SYSTEMS.

MOREOVER, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SOME OF THE MAJOR AREAS TO BE DEVELOPED, INCLUDING PROJECT MANAGEMENT, COMPUTER-ASSISTED DESIGN, AND ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT. A MORE DETAILED PRESENTATION WILL BE MADE DURING THIS CONFERENCE.

THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) COMMITTEE IN WHICH THE MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE; THE GOAL OF THIS COMMITTEE IS TO INTEGRATE THE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION DATA BASES OF THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS AND MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO ALL MANAGERS. QUÉBEC IS PROUD TO HAVE BROKEN NEW GROUND IN THIS AREA.

I WAS HAPPY TO NOTE THAT COMPUTERS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN SEVERAL SESSIONS DURING THIS CONFERENCE.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION ALSO BENEFITS FROM RESEARCH, WHICH OPENS THE DOOR TO NEW TECHNIQUES AND NEW FORMS OF MANAGEMENT, CREATING NEW MATERIALS OR PERFECTING THE QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE OF THOSE ALREADY IN USE.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, THE MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC HAS MADE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO MAKE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND UNIVERSITIES A PARTY TO ITS TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH EFFORTS. JOINT ACTION IN THIS AREA HAS ALREADY PRODUCED APPRECIABLE RESULTS.

CONCLUSION

THESE ARE ONLY SOME OF THE ISSUES COMMON TO GOVERNMENTAL OR MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORTATION.

CLEARLY, WE WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM THE EXCHANGES AT THIS NAHPO CONFERENCE AND, WHEN IT IS OVER, WE WILL LEAVE BETTER EQUIPPED THAN EVER TO ENSURE GOOD TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT.

THE MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC IS PROUD TO BE
ASSOCIATED WITH THIS CONFERENCE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND I HOPE YOU HAVE AN ENJOYABLE
STAY IN THE VIEILLE CAPITALE AND IN THE PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC.

MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS



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