



THE VAN HORNE INSTITUTE

Northern Transportation Conference 2009: *Weathering the Economic Storm*

Post-Conference Report



L-R: Peter Wallis (President & CEO, The Van Horne Institute), The Honorable Eva Aariak (Premier of Nunavut), and Julia Beange (Programs Manager, The Van Horne Institute)



L-R: Peter Wallis (President & CEO, The Van Horne Institute), Allan Nixon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation Division, Government of Yukon), Jim Stevens (Director, Planning Policy and Environment, Government of Northwest Territories), Methusalah Kunuk (Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development and Transportation, Government of Nunavut), Ryan Reichl (Policy Coordinator, Transport Canada), and Julia Beange (Programs Manager, The



The Van Horne Institute is a not-for profit research organization that assists industry, governments, and the public in addressing issues affecting transportation. Efficient and low-cost transportation services are essential to both industry and the public. Developing sound strategy, public policy, and progressive legislation and regulations are therefore imperative for these industries to be competitive. The Institute contributes to this competitive challenge through its education and public policy research activities.

The Institute is affiliated with the Universities of Calgary and Alberta, SAIT Polytechnic and Athabasca University.

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This report was written and produced by Ryan Reichl, Transport Canada, and The Van Horne Institute

Introduction

The Van Horne Institute, in partnership with Transport Canada and the three Northern Territories, organized the fourth bi-annual Northern Transportation Conference held September 10-11, 2009 in Iqaluit, Nunavut. The purpose of *The Northern Transportation Conference 2009: Weathering the Economic Storm* was to bring together public and private sector stakeholders to discuss transportation issues impacting the North. The conference generated discussion about the ability of current transportation resources to meet demand and what needs to be developed.

The focus of the conference was to discuss opportunities and challenges for improving the northern transportation system and reducing transportation costs in the North. Reducing transportation costs in the North is essential for long-term sustainable economic development in the three Northern Territories.

The conference was designed to address a large majority of the priorities of the Governments of Canada, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon in the Arctic, such as transportation, social and economic development, sovereignty, and infrastructure investment.

Speakers ranged from First Nations/Aboriginal groups, all levels of government, development agencies, and business leaders, all of whom presented their perspective on these issues and provided delegates with potential solutions for dealing with these transportation and societal challenges.

This report summarizes the topics and sessions of the conference. A list of delegates concludes the report.

Message from the Premier of Nunavut

Premier Eva Aariak's welcome address outlined the importance of improved northern transportation systems for economic development in the North. To date, resource development in Nunavut has not resulted in significant improvements to Nunavut's transportation system. In 1958, the Government of Canada "Roads to Resources" program resulted in transportation infrastructure into all corners of the country, except in Nunavut. In the 1970's and 80's development of marine infrastructure at the Polaris and Nansivik mines occurred, but this infrastructure was removed after the mining projects ceased production.

Today, Nunavut does not have a transportation corridor to the south or a road connection to the national highway system, an issue that **Paul Kaludjak, Nunavut Tunngavik**, highlighted as a significant barrier to future economic growth. Nunavut also lacks harbors and docking facilities for vessels carrying freight, people and automobiles. Nunavut's fishing vessels need to land their catch all the way in Greenland for further processing.

To address its transportation infrastructure deficit, Nunavut recently developed a transportation strategy with three components. The first part focuses on making the most urgent improvements required for Nunavut's aging transportation infrastructure. The second part outlines improvements needed to make Nunavut's resources accessible and to allow Nunavut to attain equal footing with the rest of Canada. The third section makes a case for federal investments in the northern transportation system.

Perspectives from the Resource Development Industry

The key driver of further economic development in the North is resource development and one of the pre-requisites for sustainable resource development is adequate transportation infrastructure. Northern resource development projects are challenged with significant transportation and logistical challenges.

According to **Lou Covello, NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines**, it is essential that the future transportation system support sustainable resource development in the North. Over the next 50 years, over 30 deposits in the North can be developed, given access to the required infrastructure. The infrastructure required includes all-weather roads through the central Slave Geological provinces, new railroads and port facilities at Mary River, and the construction of the Bathurst Inlet Port and Road project.

The NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines recommends building a pan-territorial electrical system in the North. Such a system would help reduce the need to ship large volumes of bulk fuel from Southern Canada. Additionally, it would help reduce the cost of living in the North and improve the sustainability of northern communities.

Larry Connell, The Meadowbank Gold Project, discussed one of Nunavut's major mining projects. Although numerous mining projects have been postponed due to low metal prices and lack of capital funding, The Meadowbank Gold project is on schedule to begin production in early 2010. The project will result in over 4,000 job

opportunities. In order to develop the mine site, a 110 kilometer all-weather private access road and a new 1,750 metre airstrip at Baker Lake are being built.

The project proponents are utilizing two routes to move material to the project site. The first route is by ship from Becancour, Quebec, around Labrador and into Hudson's Bay. This route is longer and involves higher shipping costs but it allows the use of larger ships and more efficient loading facilities. The second is by road and rail to the Port of Churchill and by barge to Baker Lake. This route is shorter and involves lower shipping costs, but this is offset by higher rail and loading costs and inefficient and limited loading capacity at the Port of Churchill.

Tim Stevens, SNC-Lavalin, presented plans for another major Northern project, a Manitoba-Nunavut Road. Due to limited transportation infrastructure in Nunavut, communities generally depend on air and seasonal marine service for goods transport and passenger travel. All all-weather Manitoba-Nunavut Road would provide savings for freight and passenger traffic.

Another major project under consideration in the North is the Mackenzie Gas Project. **The Mackenzie Gas Project** includes the construction of a major pipeline that will travel through four aboriginal settlement regions from the Mackenzie Delta to the Alberta natural gas distribution system.

The Aboriginal Pipeline Group, OD Hansen, represents three of the four affected aboriginal settlement regions, and considers the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project as essential for economic development in the Northwest Territories. Unfortunately, delays in the regulatory review process have put this project at risk. If the Alaska Highway Pipeline project moves forward, construction of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline could be delayed by generations, so timing of the latter is vital. Falling natural gas prices and new methods of extracting shale gas from existing deposits presently in the south closer to major routes also challenge the viability of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project.

Air Transportation Providers

John Graham, Iqaluit International Airport, provided context for the session by outlining how the airport is growing in importance since its terminal and runway infrastructure can accommodate greater volumes of flights and larger aircraft. This

was demonstrated when the airport was used for cold weather testing for the Airbus A380. Representatives from Air North and Canadian North described challenges of operating in the North and discussed opportunities and challenges for economic development in the North. Both carriers suggested that competition from southern-based air carriers is one of the most significant challenges facing the northern air transportation network.

Air North is an airline based in Whitehorse, Yukon. Air North operates scheduled passenger, charter, cargo and ground handling services throughout Yukon, with flights to the Northwest Territory, Alaska, British Columbia and Alberta.

According to **Joe Sparling, Air North**, the airline industry will continue acting as a significant engine for economic growth in the North if given the opportunity to continue. Today, six airlines provide scheduled air service in the North. Three are owned by Northerners and are based in the North. These three air carriers account for more than fifteen hundred territorial jobs and contribute more than \$50 million to the northern economy.

The major difference between northern and southern air carriers is that northern-based air carriers use northern airports as the 'hub' of their networks, whereas southern-based air carriers use northern airports as a 'spoke' in their networks.

Transportation hubs in the North are at risk because of competitive pressures from southern-based carriers, who, in an attempt to capture market share, dramatically increased capacity in the North, resulting in lower load factors and yield for all carriers operating in the North. The long-term implications of this trend are higher costs and lower services for air travelers across the North.

Canadian North is an airline based in Yellowknife, NWT. Using specially designed aircraft, Canadian North provides scheduled transportation services for passenger and freight to and from small and remote communities across the Nunavut and the NWT. Its southern gateways include Edmonton and Ottawa. One of the challenges for Canadian North is to meet the demands of moving both freight and passengers. This is especially challenging in an environment where loads are not balanced and cargo only moves in one direction. To meet these unique demands, Canadian North utilized aircraft with removable bulkheads and gravel kits.

According to **Tracy Medve, Canadian North**, competition from southern-based air carriers on key northern routes is threatening the viability of the broader air

transportation system in the North. Southern-based air carriers do not have to contend with the challenges of moving freight to small communities in the North.

Marine Transportation Providers

Representatives from the **Northern Transportation Company Limited (Dave Foster)** and the **Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping (NEAS), (Suzanne Paquin)** described challenges of providing marine transportation services in the North. These challenges include short shipping seasons, moving small loads over long distances, lack of supporting infrastructure, and high capital cost requirements.

The Northern Transportation Company Limited (NTCL) is Canada's oldest Arctic Marine Company. NTCL provides marine transportation services in Eastern and Western Arctic and sails from ports, including Churchill, Hay River, Richmond and Montreal.

Over the past few years, NTCL significantly increased their capacity to serve projects such as the Mackenzie Gas Project. The economic downturn of the past year caused further slowdowns in the resource development industry, resulting in overcapacity in the marine transportation industry.

NEAS provides marine transportation services to communities across Nunavut and Nunavik. As an Inuit owned company, its mandate is to promote local community socio-economic development. NEAS operates in a challenging environment where the lack of marine infrastructure creates safety concerns and operational challenges for community resupply.

An immediate need for basic marine infrastructure exists in all of Nunavut's communities. Dave Foster recommended that Nunavut prioritize its marine infrastructure projects across the Territory to improve the system-wide resupply system.

NEAS suggests that Nunavut learn from Nunavik's success in improving its marine transportation systems in Northern Quebec. Nunavik was successful in prioritizing its marine requirements for all fourteen of its communities using a collaborative approach involving all levels of government. This initiative resulted in the construction of marine infrastructure that was designed to meet the unique needs of each community.

The Need for Partnerships in the North

Russell Neodorf, Deputy Minister, GNWT Transportation, provided an update of developments in the Northwest Territories and outlined the need for partnerships in addressing transportation challenges of the North. Two overarching challenges are 1) the size of the land and the need to build new infrastructure where none has existed, and 2) the extreme weather and climate challenges. The key to overcoming these challenges is partnerships with local communities, aboriginal groups, industry and other levels of government.

The GNWT successfully partnered with the Government of Canada to build new infrastructure under a variety of infrastructure programs (including the Building Canada Fund, the Economic Action Plan and the Airports Capital Assistance Program). The GNWT also partnered with aboriginal groups on numerous projects, such as the Deh Cho Bridge.

Greg Cousineau, Government of Northwest Territories, reported on The Deh Cho Bridge Project, which is the GNWT's first infrastructure project undertaken as a public-private partnership. Construction of the bridge is on schedule to be completed in 2011. The GNWT continues to pursue public-private partnerships (P3's), such as for the Mackenzie Valley Highway project. Over the past 15 years, the GNWT has improved the existing winter road system. However, extending the Mackenzie Valley Highway to the Arctic Ocean is critical to opening up access to resource development in that region.

The GNWT views the economic downturn as an opportunity to reinvest in infrastructure. The GNWT is spending \$125 million on capital projects this year.

The Federal Government's Role in the North

Representatives from **Transport Canada (Tim Meisner)**, the **Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) (Tim Gardiner)**, the **Geological Survey of Canada (Dr. David Boerner)**, and **Canadian Forces (Peter "Guy" Killaby)** provided an overview of the federal government's role in the North and in the northern transportation system. All departments play an important role implementing the Government of Canada's Northern Strategy.

The four priorities of the Northern Strategy are:

1. Exercising Canada's Arctic sovereignty
2. Protecting Canada's environmental heritage
3. Promoting Canada's social and economic development
4. Improving and devolving Northern governance

Transport Canada (TC) is responsible for the Government of Canada's transportation policies and programs, and is working to improve northern transportation through investments in infrastructure (through programs such as the Airports Capital Assistance Program), and improvements to the safety regulatory regime (such as the introduction of Safety Management Systems).

Transport Canada is working to promote marine transportation improvements in Nunavut. Over the past year, Transport Canada completed a Canadian Arctic Marine Assessment and organized a number of industry meetings to discuss opportunities for improving community resupply in Nunavut. Some issues needing to be addressed include challenges to federal capacity to deliver marine services in the North and the lack of adequate marine transportation infrastructure in many northern communities.

The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) is an agency recently created to develop and diversify territorial economies in order to support prosperity for Northerners. The functions of CanNor include 1) delivery of regional programming, 2) coordination of national economic policy at the regional level, and 3) policy research and advocacy of regional interests within the federal system.

CanNor programs include:

- *Strategic Investments in Northern Infrastructure (SINED)*: a \$90 million/5-year program, targeting long-term economic development, diversification and capacity building in the North. Investment plans for SINED were developed in consultation with Northerners from industry and from all levels of government, and
- *Aboriginal Economic Development*: \$11.8 million-a-year program targeting aboriginal business and community development.

CanNor is also responsible for administering the Community Adjustment Fund, a two-year, \$1 billion stimulus fund designed to mitigate the short-term impacts in

communities affected by the economic downturn. CAF will result in \$33 million spent over two years in the North.

The Canadian Forces (CF) plays an important and visible role in the North. One of CF's objectives is assisting local forces in responding to catastrophes that may arise in the North, such as another Exxon Valdez oil spill. The CF also asserts Canadian sovereignty in the North, and this role is felt in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) negotiations involving Canadian ownership of the extended continental shelf and the right to develop these resources on or below the seabed.

In recent years, the CF considerably increased its Northern presence. In 2007, the Government of Canada announced plans to construct a new training center in Resolute Bay, and a new deep-water port at Nanisivik to protect the Northwest Passage. The Government of Canada is working to introduce new offshore Arctic patrol boats to patrol Canadian waters.

The Geological Survey of Canada is gathering scientific evidence to support Canada's submission under UNCLOS that it exercises jurisdiction over a large region of the Arctic Ocean sea floor adjacent to Canadian waters. To secure these rights, Canada will submit evidence demonstrating that the claimed undersea territories are geologically linked to Canada's mainland or its Arctic Ocean. The size of the region in dispute is equivalent to the size of the three Prairie Provinces.

Challenges Facing Northern Communities

Representatives from the Nunavut **Economic Forum (Glenn Cousins)**, **Arctic Co-Operatives (Duane Wilson, presented by Stephane Diagle)**, and **Hybrid Aircraft Canada Inc (Jim Thompson)** provided an overview of challenges facing northern communities. The high cost of transportation and energy are the main barriers to economic development in the North.

The Nunavut Economic Forum developed a Nunavut Economic Development Strategy in collaboration with a broad coalition of government, Inuit organizations and private sector groups to address these challenges. The Strategy recognizes that economic growth is necessary if Nunavummiut are to attain a high and sustainable quality of life. Presently, the Nunavut economy is developing, and government is the largest component of economic activity.

Nunavut is progressing to ensure all components needed for economic development are in place. Significant progress has been made in Iqaluit, but development has been slower in other Nunavut communities.

Arctic Co-Operatives Limited operates 31 Co-Ops in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Co-Op operations are involved in retail stores, hotels, cable television, fuel distribution and art marketing in communities across the North. The Co-Op System is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal people in the North.

High transportation costs and power costs make Northern operations expensive. Transporting freight by air to a retail operation in the North costs significantly more than transporting freight by truck to a retail operation in a rural location in the South.

Different modes of transportation are important factors in reducing the cost of living in the North. One potential for reducing the cost of resupply in the North is investing in airships. Airships are currently being developed offer the ability to move large indivisible loads on a year-round basis with potentially lower operating costs relative to conventional options.

Lessons Learned from Nunavik

One of the strong messages received at the conference was the recommendation that the Government of Nunavut learn from Nunavik in addressing its marine transportation issues. Much like Nunavut, Nunavik does not have roads to link communities together or to the broader national transportation system. Communities rely on marine transportation for annual community resupply, and air transportation is the sole means of year round transportation.

Ten years ago, minimal marine transportation infrastructure was present in Nunavik's fourteen communities. In 1998, the federal government and **Makavik Corporation** implemented the Northern Quebec Marine Transportation Infrastructure Program. Under this program, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec provided Makivik Corporation with \$88 million to build marine transportation infrastructure across Nunavik.

The objectives of the Northern Quebec Marine Transportation Infrastructure Program, presented by **Eileen Klinkig** included:

- Improving the safety of travel on the sea
- Improving access to the sea
- Improving the safety and efficiency of the annual sea-lift
- Improving the economic prospects of Nunavik's villages

As a result of this program, marine infrastructure was built in all fourteen communities over a ten-year period, and this provided a safer and more efficient marine transportation system. This program helped facilitate economic development in Nunavik by improving the means of delivery and distribution of goods across the region.

Message from the Commissioner of Nunavut

The Honorable Ann Hanson, Commissioner of Nunavut, shared her experiences of living in the North and described the central role that developments in the northern transportation system have played in Nunavut's history. She recalled how improved air service over the years to northern communities has improved the standard of living for northerners.

According to the Commissioner, Canada needs to continue building towards an effective transportation network that links northern communities to each other and to the rest of Canada. Improved transportation links will help northerners achieve a high and sustainable quality of life, and to contribute to the prosperity of Canada. By investing in community programs, infrastructure development, and the northern workforce, Nunavut can maximize its potential wealth for the North and for the rest of Canada.

Conclusions

The Van Horne Institute undertook the Northern Transportation Conference to create better understanding of the opportunities and challenges for improving the northern transportation system and reducing transportation costs in the North. Any problem or opportunity must be addressed in a systematic and considered manner. The funding of new infrastructure is of paramount concern in the North. The better utilization of existing technology and the timely introduction of new technology have the potential

for moderating what would otherwise be extremely high costs for infrastructure development. The introduction of new technology may be some time in the future. One example of new technology is the utilization of airships that are capable of carrying cargo loads in excess of 40 tonnes. Arctic resupply utilizing ships, conventional aircraft and ice roads could be augmented by this new technology. However, such technology remains unproven.

The Institute was extremely pleased at the caliber of papers delivered at the conference, all of which are available for download at www.vanhorne.info.

Canada's public policy in transportation embraces competition as the fundamental premise. However, the emphasis placed on competition as a matter of policy must be carefully considered in the light of the system economics faced by true northern operators. The issue of competitive air services from Southern Canada to northern points such as Iqaluit and Yellowknife needs to be analyzed in light of the obligation of true northern operators to provide passenger and cargo services to remote northern communities with aircraft types that are capable of carrying palletized freight.


The opportunity for development of new mines in the north is very positive. In addition to gold and diamonds, the exploitation of base metals is progressing positively, which is in part due to the improving world market prices for such commodities as well as the development of all-weather roads into the mining sights. The conference touched on the somewhat futuristic vision of building a pan-territorial electric system for the processing of these minerals.

Marine transportation for resupply of communities as well as potential mineral exploration and exploitation has generated a great deal of discussion. A co-ordinated strategy demonstrated by Nunavik in prioritizing its marine requirements for 14 communities through a collaboration of all levels of government was extremely instructive.

Partnerships between levels of government, transportation providers and communities must be a keystone in the development of Northern Canada. The Institute hopes that the establishment of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency will play an important role in the co-ordination of economy policy in the northern region. It is important that the development of northern policy research and advocacy towards the enhancement of northern interests resulting from this policy research reflect extreme collaboration between all levels of government.

As CEO & President, it has been an honour to produce this conference on northern transportation issues in the north, with the program designed explicitly by northerners to meet these criteria.

The Institute wants to thank the Steering Committee (pictured on Page 2 of this report) for their dedicated work over the eight months during which this conference was developed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Wallis', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter Wallis
CEO and President
The Van Horne Institute

Conference Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Position	Company/Organization
Abigail	Lixfeld	Senior Analyst	Indian & Northern Affairs Canada
Adla	Korcheak	Executive Director	Nunavut Economic Forum
Alain	Hamel	Services General Superintendent	Agnico-Eagle Mines Ltd.
Allan	Nixon	A/Assistant Deputy Minister	Government of Yukon, Transportation Division
Allison	Minty		Nunavut Housing Corporation
Ann	Hanson	Commissioner of Nunavut	Government of Nunavut
Brian	Cox		Illamar Marshalling Inc.
Dave	McIlmoyl	Vice President	Northern Resource Trucking
Dave	Foster	President	Northern Transportation Company Ltd.
Dave	Jackson	Ice Breaking	Environment Canada
David	Boerner	Director General	Geological Survey of Canada
David	Ell	Director of Marketing	Nunavut Eastern Arctic Shipping (NEAS)
David	Wasylciw	Senior Policy Analyst, Dept of Transportation	Government of Northwest Territories
David	Shoults	Aviation Programs Officer	Government of Nunavut
Deirdre	Peet	Detachment Commander	Joint Task (North) Headquarters, Detachment Iqaluit
Desmond	Raymond	Regional Director, Marine	Transport Canada PNR
Don	Hutton		Nunavut Housing Corporation
Don	Brownie	Principal	ProLog Canada Inc.
Don	Tattrie		Nunavut Housing Corporation
Doug	Pon	Executive Assistant	Government of Northwest Territories
Duane	Wilson	Division Manager of Merchandising	Arctic Co-operatives
Edward	Picco	Director, Government Affairs/Sales	First Air
Eileen	Klinkig		Makivik Corporation
Erik	Madsen	Director, Winter Road Operations	Joint Venture Management Committee, Diavik Diamond Mines
Hon. Eva	Aariak	Premier	Government of Nunavut
Francois	Picotte	Senior Economist	GN-EDT Planning
Frédéric	Sirois		Transport Canada
Glenn	Cousins	President	Nunavut Economic Forum
Greg	Cousineau	Senior Transportation Planner	Government of Northwest Territories
Janice	Festa		Transport Canada
Jason	Briffett		Nunavut Housing Corporation
Jeff	Brown		Transport Canada
Jim	Stevens	Director, Department of Transportation	Government of Northwest Territories
Jim	Thompson	President	Hybrid Aircraft Canada Corp.
Joe	Sparling	President and CEO	Air North
John	Hawkins	Director, Transportation Policy & Planning	Government of Nunavut
John	Graham	Director	Iqaluit International Airport
Josée	Tremblay	Manager, Resource Management	Government of Nunavut
Julia	Beange	Programs Manager	The Van Horne Institute

Karmen	Klarenbach	Regional Manager, Major Resource Project & Aboriginal Consultations	Transport Canada
Kenneth	Laubsch	Project Manager SkyHook Project	The Boeing Company
Larry	Connell	Corporat Director of Sustainable Development	Agnico-Eagle Mines Ltd.
Lazarus	Akeegok	Capital Planning Officer	Economic Development & Transportation
Lou	Covello	President and CEO	NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines Government of Nunavut - Dept of Economic Development & Transportation
Madeleine	Qumuatuq	Manager, Community Capacity Building	Economic Development & Transportation
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Mark	McCulloch	Senior Management, Procurement & Logistics	Government of Nunavut
Mark Andre	Poisson	Director	National Food Mail Program
Methusalah	Kunuk	Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation	Government of Nunavut
Michael	McLeod	MLA, Dehcho	Northwest Territories
Mike	Vaydik	General Manager	NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines
Mike	Johnson	Deputy Minister, Highways & Public Works	Government of Yukon
Monica	Ell	Director	Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
OD	Hansen	Manager, Communications, Regulatory & Technical Services	Aboriginal Pipeline Group
Paul	Larson	Director	Transport Institute, University of Manitoba
Paul	Kaludjak		Nunavut Tunngavik
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Peter	Wallis	President and CEO	The Van Horne Institute
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Richard	Charron	CEO	SkyHook International Inc.
Rick	Reynolds	Consultant	Trimac Transportation
Russell	Neudorf	Deputy Minister	Government of Northwest Territories
Ryan	Reichl	Policy Coordinator	Transport Canada
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Tim	Stevens	Senior Transportation Engineer	SNC Lavalin Inc.
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Todd	Frederickson	Regional Director, Coordination & Policy Advice	Transport Canada, Prairie & Northern Region
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