

Speaking Notes
for
Charl van Niekerk
Chief Executive Officer
Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority
at the
2022-2023
Annual Public Meeting
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Check against delivery

Thank you, Heather and good morning, everyone.

It is my pleasure to be here, speaking with you today, in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer. I've been WDBA's CEO since July of this year. Prior to joining WDBA, I worked at Infrastructure Ontario on large-scale P3 projects including the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway, making me very familiar with mega-projects and with this community.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Chair, Tim Murphy, for his ongoing support to me in this new role and additionally I extend my appreciation to each member of the Board of Directors for their continued confidence in our work on one of the largest infrastructure projects underway in North America.

If you live here or have had the chance to visit the region, it is hard not to be impressed by the size and magnitude of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project. The bridge towers on both the Canadian and US sides are dominating the landscape and are quickly becoming some of the tallest structures within the region.

Our project is breaking records. It includes the longest cable-stayed bridge in North America, the two largest land ports of entry along the Canada-US border and the first crossing system in the region that will feature highway-to-highway connectivity.

Fiscal year 2022-2023 marked the ninth year of operations for WDBA. While you can read about the year's achievements in our Annual Report, there are a few highlights we are particularly proud of.

- Construction of the bridge deck over the Detroit River began in December 2022. For the first time boaters and the public are getting a unique look, in both countries, of what it will be like to travel over the river itself.
- The first stay cable was installed connecting the US tower and deck in January 2022. The team has made tremendous progress having already installed over 130 of the 216 cables with over 50 per cent of the span over the river in place. We are now able to see the iconic cable-stayed bridge design that is visually stunning.

- We shared our first public art commission.
Integrated into an exterior wall of a maintenance building at the Canadian Port of Entry, the piece depicts diverse Canadian landscapes.
- WDBA released its inaugural Accessibly Plan that emphasizes the organization's commitment to a fully inclusive workplace – not only for staff but for the public at large.
- WDBA implemented its Action Plan in response to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada's Special Examination, fully ensuring the organization meets government recommendations.
- At the Canadian and US Ports of Entry, crews worked hard over the summer and fall to enclose exterior of buildings so that they were able to use the colder winter months to begin electrical, HVAC and drywall work on the interior of buildings.

- Beyond the highly visible ramps being constructed along the I-75, the first cars were able to cross over three of the four road bridges constructed across the Michigan Interchange as part of the project.
- Looking to the future, WDBA is delivering on our operational readiness plan so that we are prepared for opening day when the first vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists cross the bridge.

I invite you to read more about the strategic objectives for the reporting period and our delivery on those in our annual report that can be found on our website.

None of this could have been achieved without the support and patience of our host communities and our stakeholders who engaged with us at over 250 meetings

and events last fiscal year and submitted over 600 public inquiries.

In addition to the magnitude of the project, my other key observation since beginning my work with WDBA, is the dedication of staff. The passion and motivation I see each day by our over 100 employees are inspirational, and I am pleased to report that the organization was recognized with five national and international awards in the last fiscal year. Under the leadership of our executive team, employees have achieved many successes with expertise, vision and drive.

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge the work of our colleagues at Bridging North America, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and Infrastructure Canada, all of whom

play a critical role in the achievements I highlighted today.

Behind the awe-inspiring design of the project that we can now clearly see, is what the bridge represents and will bring to the region, Canada and the US as it eases travel, maximizes efficiency and increases the movement of trade. The bridge is about opportunity.

Opportunity for growth. Opportunity for jobs.

Opportunity for new investment.

In short – the crossing infrastructure represents a bright new course toward economic prosperity for our neighbouring communities, the province and state and both nations.

Thank you.