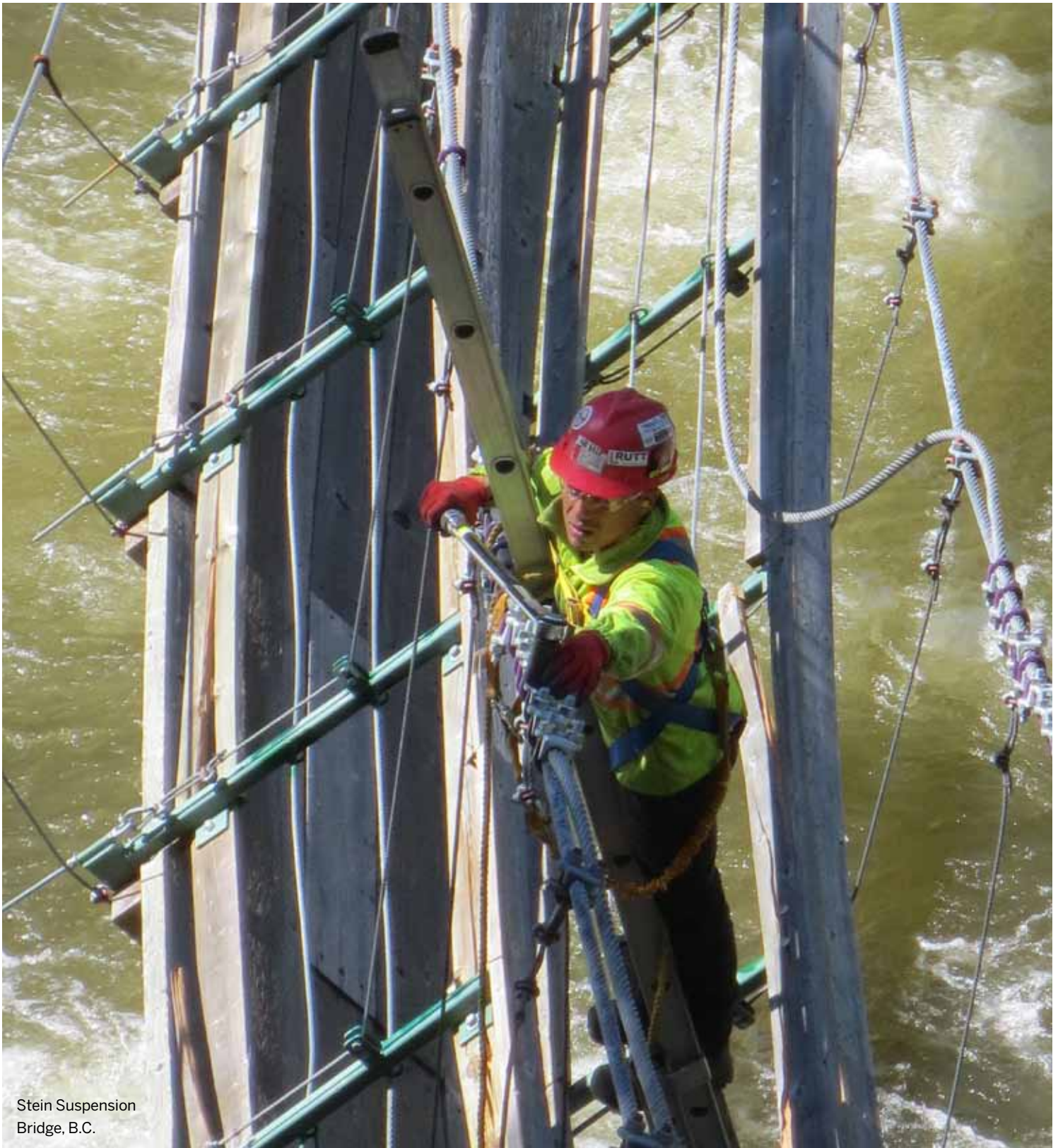


Maintaining Excellence

Mainroad Group celebrates 25 years. BY CHERYL MAH



Stein Suspension Bridge, B.C.

Maintaining our transportation infrastructure is no easy task. Maintenance contractors work hard every day to ensure roads and bridges are clear and safe to keep goods and people moving efficiently. Battling Mother Nature, responding to emergencies and meeting public expectations are just some of the challenges.

In B.C., highways are maintained by private contractors in 28 service areas. As one of the

largest maintenance contractors in the province, Mainroad Group manages some of the busiest highway corridors. And some of the most high profile routes in the Lower Mainland — Port Mann Bridge, George Massey Tunnel and the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

Mainroad maintains a provincial highway contract area with the most structures, bridge decks, swing bridges, counterflow systems, and local municipalities.

“Our crews recognize they are not only providing a public service but ultimately could be saving lives so our employees are committed to delivering quality service,” says Mainroad president Peter Ashcroft.

Headquartered in Surrey, Mainroad is an employee owned group of companies specializing in road services and products. It consists of 15 operating companies with 500 employees and an annual volume of \$125 million,

making it one of the largest construction companies in B.C.

Maintenance contracts are Mainroad's bread and butter and core specialty, but it has diversified its services over the years through strategic acquisitions and organic growth.

Specialized services include road and bridge construction, pavement marking, electrical and tolling systems as well as supplying a variety of products such as de-icing salt, aggregates and concrete. Mainroad operates concrete plants in Cranbrook and Kimberley. The newest product offering is EZ Street Asphalt. Mainroad is the exclusive Canadian distributor of EZ Street products from B.C. to Ontario.

"The climate really lends itself to it in Canada where you've got temperature extremes and lots of potholes. It's a cold asphalt product. It's known as a pothole repair product but we are finding it is a very useful alternative in certain situations for hot mix asphalt," notes Ashcroft. "We've seen significant increase in sales volume since we've introduced the product into the market."

Mainroad has completed a number of projects using it as a paving solution such as the Deering Bridge in Port Renfrew.

"From manufacturing to lifecycle costing it's a sustainable product with very little waste," notes Ashcroft.

While Mainroad primarily works in B.C., the company is expanding into Alberta. G&E Contracting (acquired in 2008) is currently working

with Parks Canada in Lake Louise. Last October, Mainroad signed its first Alberta highway maintenance contract for the Southeast Stoney Trail (SEST) project. SEST is the largest single highway project in Alberta's history, and its largest P3 road infrastructure project.

"It's an exciting opportunity that we're mobilizing for now," says Ashcroft.

It's also been an exciting past 18 months for Ashcroft, who joined Mainroad in 2012. He brings more than 25 years of experience to the

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position having worked on commercial, institutional, residential high-rise and civil projects both in Canada and internationally.

"When I look back at the projects I've been involved in, it's really been about the people. I really enjoy establishing a team and making sure individuals are in the right spot and complemented by like-minded people," reflects Ashcroft, 47.

Construction was a natural choice. Growing up in England, Ashcroft's father was a civil

Peter Ashcroft



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engineer and influenced his interest in buildings. Following in his footsteps, Ashcroft graduated in 1988 with a B.Sc. in building (Hon) from Leeds Metropolitan University, UK.

He started his career with Balfour Beatty Building in England as a site engineer and became a member of the Chartered Institute of Building. From there he travelled around the world working on a number of different projects.

In Solomon Islands, he worked for a nonprofit organization on building various infrastructure projects. Then he joined Mivan in 1993, first working in Israel's Gaza Strip before moving to Japan and then finally Florida in 1997 where he served almost eight years as vice president/general manager.

Deciding to put down roots to raise his family, he moved to B.C. in 2004. Married for 16 years, Ashcroft currently lives on the Sunshine Coast and has two children.

In 2005, he joined Scott Construction Group as vice president of buildings and spent seven years overseeing a variety of large projects.

When approached by Mainroad, Ashcroft admits he was initially not interested but the more he found out about the company and its diversity he realized it was a unique opportunity.

"This position promises to provide both unique challenges and exciting opportunities," he says. "It is an honour to lead an organization with such an outstanding reputation."

As president, he reports to the board of directors and is responsible for leading the executive team to meet the strategic objectives of the company. Over the last year and half, he has enjoyed getting to know the people

and the culture of an employee owned business.

"Having only worked for owners, the outlook and thinking here is a little bit different. There's a high level of engagement and passion when you're dealing with an employee owner," says Ashcroft.

Employee ownership has been key to the company's success.

"Pride is very evident throughout the organization, the quality of work, the dedication of the people and the team spirit," says Ashcroft. "Not many employee owned companies can say that they've been in operations for 25 years."

Mainroad was established in 1988 by 100 former provincial employees when the B.C. government privatized road and bridge maintenance services. Since then, Mainroad has grown to become one of B.C.'s most successful and diversified groups of civil infrastructure, maintenance and construction experts.

"Mainroad started off with one contract — that involved employee buy in — and has evolved now into four provincial contracts which is the maximum any one contractor can hold," explains Ashcroft, noting a recent five year maintenance contract extension with the province through 2018/19 will provide a solid foundation for further growth of the company.

Achievements over the past two decades have included many firsts and innovations including being the first in Canada to install safety cable barrier fencing on freeways to prevent head-on collisions; the first in B.C. to use salt brine for

water road maintenance and the first highway maintenance company to become ISO registered in North America.

Mainroad's maintenance excellence was recently recognized with the Deputy Minister's Contractor of the Year Award in road and bridge maintenance for work in the Lower Mainland service area.

"It was really special to celebrate our 25th year with that award," says Ashcroft, noting to commemorate the anniversary, various events are planned for employees and clients.

The company expects to see substantial growth over the next five years as it continues to look for opportunities and expand beyond its traditional maintenance contracts to create a national presence. That growth will require increased manpower and Mainroad is proactively addressing the issue.

"A challenge going forward with all companies is the aging demographic," says Ashcroft. "The challenge is to make sure that we get new blood into the organization and we can attract the young people. We encourage people to become a part of Mainroad." **CB**