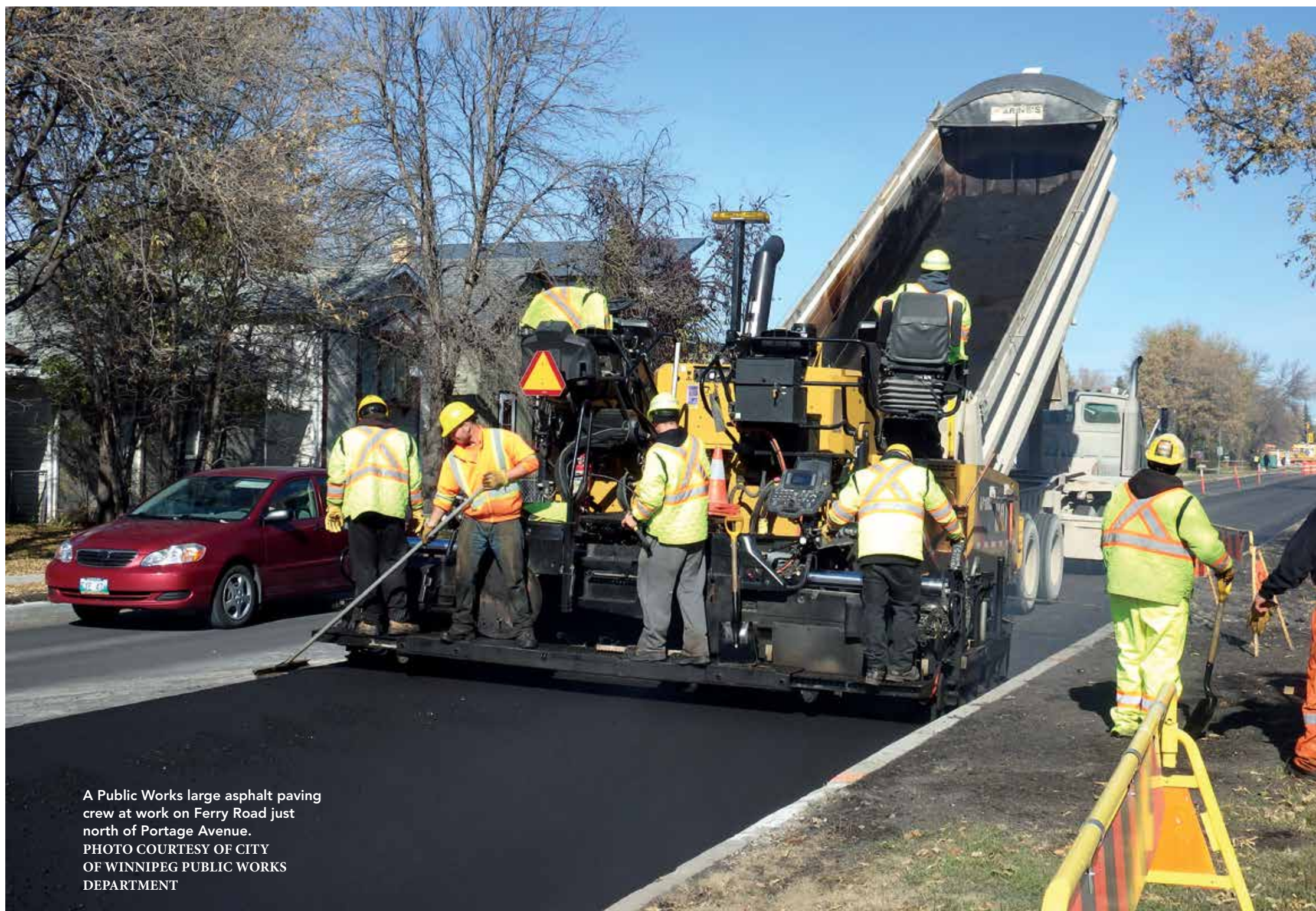




Celebrating 75 **GROUND BREAKING** years in 2018



A Public Works large asphalt paving crew at work on Ferry Road just north of Portage Avenue. PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF WINNIPEG PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SAFETY TRAINING FOR MANITOBA'S MUNICIPALITIES

CITIES AND TOWNS TURN TO MHCA'S WORKSAFELY™ FOR CERTIFICATION

Public employees who maintain municipal streets, sidewalks and other vital infrastructure deserve the same level of workplace protection as their peers in the private sector. And many are getting it through the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association (MHCA), as cities and towns across the province partner with MHCA WORKSAFELY™ to earn COR™ (Certificate of Recognition) certification.

The City of Winnipeg's Public Works and Water & Waste departments are in the process of becoming COR-certified and several municipalities are already seeing the benefits of certification, which is recognized as equivalent to SAFE Work Manitoba's new SAFE Work Certified program.

"For us, it has been incredibly worthwhile," says Town of Morris Public Works sub-foreman Brian Wiebe, whose department received COR certification in December 2015.

"You have to be willing to change and we've adapted very well to that with our Public Works staff, and everybody has bought into the program. You have to create the culture of safety at work and once guys are in then it's a breeze."

City of Winnipeg Water & Waste director Moira Geer says safety is the department's top priority, "and the prime reason we partnered with the MHCA earlier this year, to work toward COR certification.

"We couldn't be happier with the results of this partnership. Though our partnership is relatively new, we are already seeing its impact on our field staff. They are excited about

implementing what they have learned from MHCA as part of the COR certification. This is a testament to the excellent training and support provided by MHCA and we are eager to continue the certification process."

The MHCA is the industry-based service provider that works with industries that most closely resemble the work that the Public Works Department performs. As part of the city's tendering policy, contractors and subcontractors are required to be COR-certified, and administrators felt it would be beneficial to be certified through the same program.

"Workplace safety and health is the No. 1 priority for the City of Winnipeg's Public Works Department and is something we take very seriously," says director of Public Works Jim Berezowsky. "Through our partnership with the MHCA, we look forward to becoming COR certified and continuing to enhance our safety systems to ensure the safety of our valued employees involved in construction projects or maintenance activities within our parks and on our roadways."

The department is responsible for 6,900 lane kilometres of streets, 3,100 lane kilometres of sidewalks and 900 lane kilometres of lanes. In 2018, it has undertaken more than 200 projects. Staff often work alongside private contractors or supervise projects that are contracted out to private construction companies. And many are involved in activities related to heavy construction, such as asphalt paving and concrete repair, on a large number of job sites, versus large single projects.

With more than 1,000 full-time equivalent positions — a number that rises to about 1,500 during construction season, including seasonal employees — Winnipeg's Public Works Department is a large-scale operation.

In Morris, six full-time Public Works employees cover everything from water, sewer and road infrastructure to greenspace maintenance and snow clearing. Because Hwy 75 is a major trade and transportation route through the town, they often work with Manitoba Infrastructure, as well.

Wiebe says there have been significant changes in how his department operates. For example, each day starts with a job hazard assessment and staff discuss upcoming projects and potential hazards at weekly safety meetings to ensure they're prepared for any eventuality.

"You're constantly making the conscious effort to think safely," Wiebe says. "Now that we are COR-certified we take a much more intense look at the safety aspects of jobs and assess

them beforehand to avoid incidents."

While the City of Winnipeg is self-insured, Western Financial Group Insurance Solutions provides liability insurance and other products for municipalities.

The company's director of Risk Management, Rudy Penner, says there are several benefits to COR certification.

"The primary one to me is that it forces companies and municipalities to create and maintain a safety culture to ensure work is completed in a safe manner. So it puts safety on the minds of everybody right from the top level down to the workers," Penner says.

"In the insurance industry as well, documentation is key in trying to mitigate or reduce liability claims and the COR program ensures that this process is followed," he adds.

"I think it's important that municipalities regardless of their size continue to look at it and if they aren't COR-certified yet to receive that certification because it is a great risk management tool!"

