

Talking Safety with Mayor Fougere

As the current City of Regina Mayor and former President of the Saskatchewan Construction Association (SCA), what improvements to the safety culture in the building construction industry have you observed over the years?

Certainly the profile of the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is much more in the public's mind than it has been before. During my time as the President of the SCA, and even afterward, you hear about the Certificate of Recognition (COR™) program in the media a lot. You know, Collin Pullar, the current SCSA President, is high-profile in the community and you hear a lot about that, but I also know there are a lot of companies that have their COR certification more so than ever before. At my time at SCA, it was growing, it was moving forward, but now you see a lot of these companies have [COR]. Many times it's a requirement on contracts — you've got to actually have that certification, so that's quite important.

What barriers do you think still exist in how safety is viewed and adopted in the building construction industry?

I think education is very important and it is important to continuously update safety programs as well. The fact that safety programs are tied to WCB rates is also important to get the attention of owners. If they follow [their safety programs] and have their certifications in place, that affects their rates in a positive way and so that gets attention as well.

Are there any initiatives the City of Regina has or will be taking on to improve worker safety in our communities?

Certainly the issue of all of our construction groups, operation groups — when you're paving streets, all of those things — there's always training that's included. There's Safety Work Days that take place, and I'm told by my staff, there's a lot of updating of Work Safety Practices in the workplace itself. We have some pilot projects with respect to photo radar and red light cameras that are for the public to be aware of, and of course, those can

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His Honour, Michael Fougere, Mayor of Regina, speaking at the 2016 SCSA Annual General Meeting in Regina.

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be close to worksites as well, so it's also for the safety of workers involved at different worksites. We also have been talking to SGI about the red and blue lights on city snow ploughs for increased public safety that is quite important as well. During construction season, we have a lot of public service announcements that always reflect the public being aware of safety and driving in a responsible way near worksites, and also to be aware of what's happening around you. They always include a safety message. And of course, whenever we have a visit by media at worksites, we are adamant that they actually have protective safety equipment on all the time. So, those are some of the things that we do.

Are there any commitments the city has made to increase the safety of construction workers, specifically?

There is definitely a formal commitment to safety in the workplace. We have a high level of safety in the workplace all the time. As I say, we have meetings, staff safety days that take place, and all those kind of programs are in place today and I can expect they'll continue to be in the future as well.

How do you think business leaders in Regina, and Saskatchewan as a whole, are doing in terms of bringing safety to the forefront of construction operations?

I think there's a high profile from the Workers' Compensation Board with safety, and the Mission: Zero program is important. Certainly the SCSA and the Heavy Construction Safety Association of Saskatchewan have their safety programs as well that are bringing a higher profile to this. As I said before, if you can make it compulsory — having COR certification or other safety programs as a basis for being able to bid on public works — then that makes it even more important. Those are really critical factors, I think.

Do you have any comments or thoughts regarding the impact of safety on our economy?

Well, I think in general terms, if you have any work that's been done without injuries, that's going to save time and money so it's critical that you do that. But just on a human level, you want to make sure the workers and the workplace is safe; they go home safe, come back to work the same way. If you have an accident in the workplace, it's going to slow you down, it's going to be tragic on a human level, but also makes it very inefficient. Safety in the

workplace is critical for efficiencies of the economy, of worksites, and all the things that happen that drive our economy.

Where do you see the future of construction safety headed in Regina, and in our province as a whole?

In a general sense, it's moving in the right direction of understanding the critical need for — at all times — worker safety. Even the public that's near a construction site is actually critical. It's nothing but good news in terms of educating both construction owners, construction companies, and the general public, of how important it is to have a safe workplace.

Do you have any other comments or thoughts on current construction projects and safety initiatives in Regina?

I think that the city is a big investor in public infrastructure; places a high degree of importance on safety, and will do it again this year as our construction starts in the spring.

Safety in the workplace is critical for efficiencies of the economy, of worksites, and all the things that happen that drive our economy.



SCSA President Collin Pullar (right) presents Regina Mayor Michael Fougere with a gift from the SCSA for bringing greetings to the 2016 SCSA AGM in Regina.