

## DESIGNATION OF THE COQUIHALLA TOLL

The Okanagan – Thompson region is the only area in the province to have a toll and as such represents an economic penalty when it comes to doing business in the region. Since all toll revenues go into the general provincial fund, residents of the Interior are effectively being taxed at a higher rate than the rest of the province. The government gives no good reason for the toll existence other than it is “policy”. The toll was originally levied as a temporary measure via Bill 2 in 1985 to pay for the accelerated costs of the project only (Expo 86 related) and this has long since been paid many times over.

Revenue from the Coquihalla tolls exceeds \$40 million per year. While the Chamber appreciates there are extra costs involved in maintaining the Coquihalla Highway, only \$10 million is needed for this, which includes the annual rehab expense of \$5.7 million for all three phases of the highway.

It is understood that any extra revenue generated goes into the provincial general revenue account and effectively creates an unnecessary additional tax burden to the Interior businesses and all related industries. There are currently other newer mega highway projects completed and in the works like the Island Highway, Sea to Sky Highway, the South Fraser perimeter Road and the expansion to the Rogers Pass involving billions of dollars, all with no tolls.

Instead of eliminating the Coquihalla Highway toll, the membership agrees that they would like to see:

- tolls charged on any new highway projects in BC, thus opening up the concept of reducing the toll on the Coquihalla
- toll revenues specifically designated to upgrade all highways, which would benefit all residents of BC as well as our visitors
- an upgrade to the Trans Canada Highway in our region (from Pritchard to the Alberta border) which has generated many automobile accidents and fatalities over the years.

### THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial government:

- designate all toll funds towards the maintenance of all BC highways
- designate some of the toll funds to improve the Trans Canada Highway from Pritchard to the Alberta border, which would benefit all travelers.
- reduce the Coquihalla toll to cover actual maintenance costs while adding a toll to the Sea to Sky Highway and the Island Highway upgrade to maintain current toll revenues.

Submitted by the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce