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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure in a Changing World A panel discussion

Ottawa – Today in a live round table on water.ca, all panelists agreed that rather than wondering when the impacts of climate change will be insurmountable, it is imperative that we plan now for the worse case scenario.

Hosted by Bob Brouse, the panel included: Dr. Virginia Burkett, Chief Scientist for Global Change Research at the US Geological Survey; Edward J. Dobson, Author and Professor at the Henry George School of Social Science; David Swann, MLA and Environment Critic, Mountain-View, AB ; Dr. Barry Wellar, Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa; and Hans-Peter Plag, Research Professor, University of Nevada.

The discussion is available on demand on water.ca but here is an overview of the topics discussed.

Burkett, a scientist and one of the lead authors of a recently published report: of climate change on transportation infrastructure in the central Gulf Coast Region in the US, says that accelerated ice sheet melting, changing precipitation patterns, extreme hurricane activity and drought brought on by higher temperatures would all have a severe impact on ports, roads, rail and water infrastructure, not to mention the energy infrastructure, the pipelines and the onshore tank batteries and processing plants.

As an economist, Dobson believes our real challenge is planning, in spite of the absence of absolute information from the scientific community, for the worse case scenario whether it occurs or not. He fears that the United States is not prepared to face the situation and invest in solutions such as flood prevention the way the Netherlands has done. He also says that difficult questions must be asked regarding the development of urban centers. For example a key question that should have been asked after Katrina is whether New Orleans should be rebuilt as it clearly lies in harm's way.

As MLA for Mountain-View, Alberta, Swann says that in spite of the huge greenhouse gas issues facing the province no real effort is being made to decrease our demand and encourage alternative energy. There is also considerable drought particularly in the southwestern region of the province which is threatening agriculture and even urban populations as they expand with the oil boom. He says that the population is way ahead of politicians when it comes to sustainable solutions. In Alberta, the government has spent decades denying the existence of climate change and is only now addressing the huge issue of land use, water management and transportation.

According to Plag, the warming climate can be seen first-hand in Nevada, where winter precipitation is lately taking the form of rain rather than snow and thus running off immediately and not being stored as snow would. Our challenge, he says, is planning solutions in a context of uncertainty. According to him, the biggest uncertainty is predicting the rate of sea level rise because we do not have to science to build a model that can predict the dynamic behaviour of ice sheets under warming weather.

Dr. Wellar says that changing climate has a direct impact on land use –there are lands that cannot and should not be used - which in turn directly affects transportation. There is also a huge issue with the transport of our water and wastewater with almost every

city around the world losing water through aging water mains. He believes that there is no need to look into the future to see how bad it could get; the problem is here right now in 2008.

For more details, go to water.ca where all interviews are available on demand.

Water.ca is an online media that chronicles the water issues in Canada and bordering US states. The site also features an interactive map pinpointing water advisories across the country; a Red Button Service to alert and help communities faced with a water crisis; and a directory of over 1,000 names.

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