



Bridging the gap between infrastructure and safety

Early stages of construction have begun on the Gordie Howe International Bridge—a new connection between Windsor and Detroit.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the beginning of construction for the bridge

Linking highway 401 to the I-75 freeway on the Michigan side of the border, the 2.5 km, six-lane Gordie Howe International Bridge will be the longest cable-stayed bridge in North America. The Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority has signed a fixed-price contract with its private-sector partner, Bridging North America, for \$5.7 billion to design, build, finance, operate, and maintain the bridge for 30 years. That makes it by far the largest North American infrastructure project that will be seen for years to come.

The project is being hailed as a once-in-a-generation undertaking that expects to see its first traffic by the end of 2024. In addition to the bridge, the project includes Canada and U.S. custom point-of-entry plazas, I-75 interchange work, and a 3.6-metre-wide path for pedestrians and cyclists.

The bridge will be built by a global group of construction firms—Fluor Canada, ACS Infrastructure Canada, Dragados Canada, AECOM, and Aecon—which have joined together in a consortium called Bridging North America. During the six years of construction, it is estimated that 2,500 jobs will be created on both sides of the border.

On October 5, 2018, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was on site to announce the beginning of full construction, which he expects to boost employment and the Ontario economy. According to Mr. Trudeau:

The Gordie Howe International Bridge is a massive, ambitious, infrastructure project that will create thousands of good jobs for tradespeople. The increased capacity at this crucial trade terminal is essential. The Windsor-Detroit corridor facilitates almost a quarter of all trade between Canada and the US, with approximately 7,000 commercial vehicles crossing here every day.



Included in the consortium's undertaking is a Community Benefits Plan, which will have a positive impact on the communities of Windsor and Detroit. It will include local workforce development opportunities and select neighbourhood infrastructure initiatives.

As part of the Community Benefits Plan, Bridging North America will implement a workforce development and participation strategy geared toward engaging local workers and businesses. With a focus on workforce training and pre-apprenticeships/apprenticeships, this strategy will ensure that opportunities for local workforce development and training occur on both sides of the border. Existing local resources will be leveraged to maximize the opportunities for residents of Windsor and Detroit as well as some First Nations communities.

A goal of the project is that \$250 million of the total value of work during the design-build phase in Canada would be performed by or contracted to Windsor-area workers and contractors.

IHSA's local health and safety consultant, Ken Poisson, is excited about the possibilities and is resolute in his duty to the community and province. According to Ken:

The Gordie Howe Bridge is the largest infrastructure job in Ontario with economic benefits for many generations to come. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it will be a special experience to be part of something this spectacular. IHSA will support this project any way we can to help ensure every worker on this site returns home safe to their loved ones.

IHSA recognizes not only the opportunities this will generate for Ontario workers but also the need to promote workplace safety over the next six years. Our Mobile Classroom has already been on site and local consultants like Ken have started training workers from area businesses connected to the bridge project.

In order to extend its reach and offer its wealth of resources to members, IHSA plans to attend the many job fairs, training opportunities, and other events that will be part of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project. This will ensure that the bridge will not only be the biggest but also the safest infrastructure project in North America.



IHSA consultants Ken Poisson (r) and Peter Bervoets (c) brought IHSA's new Mobile Classroom to the project



Artist's rendering of the Gordie Howe International Bridge