

**SHOWCASE AWARDS**

**> 2019**

**CEA LIEUTENANT  
GOVERNOR'S AWARD**

**> For Distinguished Service**



# Embracing Challenges, Building Partnerships

Art Washuta has had a long and distinguished career as a consulting engineer

BY ELIZABETH CHORNEY-BOOTH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BUFFY GOODMAN

**MOST ALBERTANS MAY NOT BE AWARE OF THE WAYS IN** which Art Washuta's work has touched their daily lives – work that includes designing portions of the original Edmonton LRT that opened in 1978, the procurement of the ongoing Valley Line Southeast LRT, and the structural design on the Goldbar Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Oldman River Dam spillway. Over the course of 40 years, Washuta has brought his technical expertise and management skills to many large-scale projects throughout Alberta, as well as Ontario and the Territories. As he begins to wind down a career that has been marked by taking leadership roles on complex, high-profile projects, Washuta is a well-deserving recipient of this year's CEA Lieutenant Governor's Award.

"It was such a nice surprise when I got the call about the award from the CEA," Washuta says. "I'm quite honoured to be selected."

Born in the Peace River area and raised in Edmonton, Washuta, like many who choose engineering as a career, excelled in math and science as a high school student. Upon graduating with distinction from the University of Alberta in 1973 with a B. Sc in Civil Engineering, he landed a job with Bolter Parish Trimble, where he gained a strong foundation in design and construction of infrastructure projects. He then went on to roles at UMA Engineering Ltd. from 1977 to 2008, starting as a project engineer and ascending to become the company's Edmonton regional vice president. In the years since, Washuta has held senior leadership positions at AECOM and Opus Stewart Weir, eventually becoming president of Opus Canada.

While Washuta is grateful for the opportunity to have worked on a wide variety of projects – such as CF-18 fighter jet facilities in the Arctic and the Southeast Anthony Henday Drive – he takes particular pride in the larger, long-term projects that have required careful planning and the development of complex partnerships. With UMA/AECOM, he managed a multi-discipline, multi-consultant project team for the design and implementation of a \$500 million environmental cleanup of 21 Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line sites across the Canadian Arctic, which spanned from 1992 to 2014.

"Signing a long-term memorandum of understanding with DND/DCC was one of my proudest moments," Washuta says. "I believe that building lasting client relationships is one of the most important aspects of consulting engineering. [This project] was a great example

of what you can do when you become a trusted advisor to a major client. It also provides great mentoring and staff development benefits."

Working successfully on a variety of major initiatives – ones with so many moving parts – has allowed Washuta to serve as a vital leader over the years to many young engineers who want to take on multi-faceted infrastructure projects that involve a number of different disciplines and stakeholders. Washuta's collaborative approach with both clients and colleagues, and his commitment to open communication across disciplines, has demonstrated that consulting engineers can serve as visionaries and community builders.

"I've taken pride in contributing to creating a better community," Washuta says. "People are often not aware of how engineering contributes to society."

Washuta's belief in the importance of business advocacy is what led him to become involved with the CEA. Dating back to the early 2000s, he started serving on the City of Edmonton Liaison Committee, was first elected to the CEA Board of Directors in 2007 and served as president from 2009-2010. He remained active with the Board until 2017 as the liaison with the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies and the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta.

His involvement with the CEA has also led Washuta, like many of his colleagues, to become a staunch advocate for a Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) system within the engineering world.

"It's very important to de-commoditize engineering," he says. "You don't go to a doctor or a dentist based on low price. You go to the best available professional, and that's what we're trying to do with engineering."

Washuta left Opus in 2018 and has now taken on what he calls a "part-time" role with CIMA+ as vice president of business development. Even with so many accomplishments on his resume, he continues to contribute through the pursuit of major Alternative Delivery opportunities as well as long-term strategic partnerships with clients, contractors and other consultants.

"Along the way, consultants have had to adjust to the trend toward larger, complex, high-risk projects where clients expect the latest technology and best possible advice," Washuta says. "I feel like I was a bit of a pioneer, informally facilitating partnering processes on major projects." ■