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Making inroads in Manitoba, across the country





McAsphalt Industries Ltd.

Paving company makes inroads in Manitoba, across the country

BY HEATHER HUDSON

There's no one who appreciates a smooth road like Ivan Chrusch. You might say the semi-retired sales and marketing professional has devoted his career to the pursuit of perfect pavement.

Indeed, he's a paving pioneer with a number of industry-wide achievements under his belt. And he says he couldn't have done any of it working for a different employer. McAsphalt Industries Ltd. has left a mark on the paving industry, particularly in Manitoba, all by being innovative and empowering its employees.

"From the beginning, McAsphalt was a progressive company. I found I could do a lot of work on my own and use my own initiative," Chrusch says.

In 1987, Chrusch was working for Koch Materials in Winnipeg, Man. and was satisfied with his role as a sales and marketing representative. He wasn't sure what to think when McAsphalt bought the company. But he soon

learned that he would hit his career stride under their management.

About McAsphalt

McAsphalt is a diversified, privately owned Canadian company formed in 1970 by John Carrick Sr. and Leo McArthur in Scarborough, Ont. Starting out with two products – paving asphalt and emulsions used for pavement maintenance – the two steadily grew the business through the acquisition of paving companies and other facilities.

Today, McAsphalt is an industry leader, offering a wide range of asphalt products from 20 terminals located coast to coast. It's committed to developing, producing, distributing and marketing asphaltic products, related services and technology.

Influencing the industry

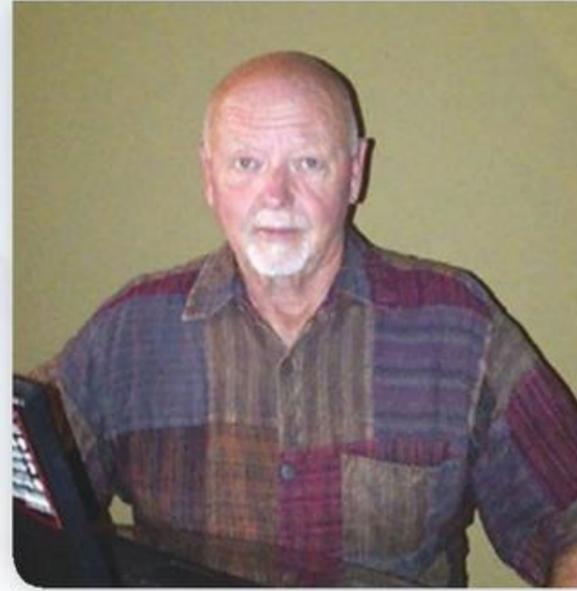
Since the late 1980s, Chrusch has been on a crusade to improve the paving industry, all while offering extraordinary customer service for McAsphalt. Some of the milestones he has led include:

Introduced micro-surfacing/slurry into Western Canada

It's so thin, most people don't even know it's there. The protective coating applied to pavement to improve its ride qualities and skid resistance was initially developed in Europe, but was modified for North American traffic and weather conditions. In 1990, it was Chrusch who lobbied to start using it.

"My role was to get the agencies together to promote it," he says. "We did trial and test sections to show the features and benefits of these projects before rolling it out in Saskatchewan

Photo courtesy of McAsphalt Industries Ltd.



“Under the closed system, we wouldn’t get results about a tender for two to three weeks. Today, we learn almost instantly, which has improved the whole system and made it more efficient.”

– Ivan Chrusch, Sales and Marketing Professional, McAsphalt Industries Ltd.



first. But the people who are benefitting from it the most right now are Manitobans.”

Improved MIT tenders: from a closed to open system

There was a time when Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) had a closed tendering system. This meant that suppliers who submitted a quote for a road construction project had to wait weeks to learn whether or not they were the successful bidders. Only then could they prepare, notify suppliers for raw materials and carriers to get products.

For four years, Chrusch conducted meetings, presentations and case studies with government officials to compel them to switch over to an open tendering system. With the rest of the industry, including his competitors, behind him, the change finally happened.

“Under the closed system, we wouldn’t get results about a tender for two to three weeks.

Today, we learn almost instantly, which has improved the whole system and made it more efficient,” says Chrusch.

Improved the surface treatment system by promoting aggregate strip testing

Before 1990, it wasn’t uncommon for errant stones on rural roads to fly up and crack car windshields in Manitoba.

“We were having a lot of problems due to the aggregate stripping,” explains Chrusch.

“I promoted a solution that involved getting samples of aggregate and testing it so we knew which chemicals and additives could be added to the emulsion. This minimized the aggregate stripping and improved aggregate retention. The added anti-strip agent has almost completely done away with that problem.”

Promoted emulsions to replace cutbacks for the cold mix patching industry

Cold mix, using cutbacks (eco-unfriendly products), was a soup of volatile organic compounds – not exactly environmentally conscious.

The paving industry was urged by the federal government to reduce cutbacks, but it

was Chrusch and McAsphalt that developed emulsions to produce cold mixes that met performance and environmental standards. These emulsions are now used by the entire industry.

Secret to success

Chrusch says McAsphalt has been the ideal company in which to spearhead these and other improvements to the industry. And over the years, the company has continued to grow. The Winnipeg location now employs 12 to 14 people and boasts state-of-the-art equipment and storage facilities, which meets customers’ “on spec., on time” expectations.

“The company’s labs and research and development department are constantly developing new formulations and processes to meet the needs, which is important because things change,” Chrusch explains. “We have increasing traffic volumes, vehicle weights and speeds and there’s also the environmental issue. We’re constantly working on improving.”

While McAsphalt is still going strong, Chrusch has started to take it easier. He’s currently passing the torch to others who will no doubt carry on the tradition of initiative and ingenuity. **M**