

[Chairman: Mr. Martin]

[10:02 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to bring the meeting to order. I believe the minutes for May 16 and May 23 have been circulated. Are there any errors or omissions? Seeing none, all those for approval of the minutes say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The only comment before we get to our special guest is that if we analyze what's going on in the Legislature, it seems clear that we will not be in session next week. We had one person scheduled. I gather that we will want that person rescheduled when we come back in the fall.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will do that, and we'll have one for sure. Then we'll organize our schedule of who we want in the fall, if that's okay.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I'm certain we'll probably be here next week.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if we're here next week . . .

MR. R. MOORE: That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You know something I don't, then.

First of all I'd like to welcome our guest, the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Moore. We appreciate your coming to our Committee on Public Accounts, taking time out of a busy schedule. What we'd like to do is turn it over to you, if you have a few opening remarks you would like to make. Then we'll turn it over to questions from committee members.

MR. M. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I don't have any significant opening remarks, but perhaps I could briefly comment on some of the areas that may be of interest to the committee with respect to expenditures of the Department of Transportation for the year ended March 31, 1983.

Members will no doubt be aware of the comments made by the Provincial Auditor respecting certain operations of the department. We have responded to those and, for the most part, have taken fairly significant corrective action in those areas of financial control that were outlined by the Auditor. Perhaps there are some exceptions to our having conformed totally to some of the directions there, largely on account of the dispersed nature of our operations throughout the entire province. But I believe it's fair to say that we have been diligent in our efforts to try to meet the financial requirements that have been outlined by the Auditor.

There are some areas of concern expressed by Mr. Rogers that perhaps need to be put in the context of the total operation of the department. For example, there was an overexpenditure of funds — I forget the exact figures; I believe it was some \$48,000 in one particular part of the department's vote. In Transportation we're operating on a budget this particular fiscal year — the last two years were not

much different — of \$650 million of capital expenditures. We have projects that carry over from one year to the next. Quite frankly, while it may appear that an overexpenditure of funds in any amount is inappropriate accounting, it is almost impossible for the department to spend the exact amount of funds allocated by the Legislature. We have to have either some significant underspending or try to hit the target as closely as we possibly can.

So we're trying to improve in that area, but I believe it to be almost impossible for a department which has projects that carry from one year to the next, is required to make progress payments to contractors, and has all the different projects we have, to operate on the basis of the exact expenditures each year.

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, it may be that some further thought somewhere along the line needs to be given to some type of revolving fund for construction projects, such as is used by the department with respect to supply of vehicles and equipment and gravel and so on. That may be a way in which we could ensure that we meet the letter of the law, if you like, in terms of ensuring all our commitments are paid for in the year they're made. A revolving fund would allow us to literally budget and work over a period of perhaps two or three years. Many of our projects — for example, building a highway with an overpass — have a three-year construction time frame. Once we start, we're oftentimes committed to a signed contract that may extend over a period of 24 or 36 months. So there is a commitment by the government, if you like, to make that expenditure, yet it hasn't been voted on by the Legislature. I only raise that as a concern that's been expressed to us by the Auditor, and one that's real in terms of the manner in which the Legislature allocates funds.

Further to that, Mr. Chairman, I'd be open to any questions members might have. I didn't bring any senior staff from my department along, because I wasn't sure what area of questioning members might want to get involved in. When I last appeared before this committee some years ago as the Minister of Agriculture, we wound up talking about the export of calves to Europe. So I wasn't sure if we would continue with a subject of that nature or talk about accounts or construction or whatever. I'd be pleased, though, if the committee wants to continue their deliberations on this department beyond today — and that could well be next fall — to bring any number of staff from any section of the department that the committee might be interested in. Perhaps it would be useful today at some point in time if they could indicate that.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, after I indicated I had some questions, the minister must have read my mind, because he came right to that area. I was concerned that the Auditor General had said:

most of the previously reported systems deficiencies persisted throughout 1982-83, though to a lesser extent.

From the minister's remarks, I can see that he's on top of this. I take it that these things are being corrected now, and these deficiencies are not in existence at the present time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to enlarge on that, or

is it covered in the first part? Okay. Mr. Zip.

MR. ZIP: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a question that is repeatedly brought to me by constituents; that is, whether the Calgary metro area, which now has one-third of Alberta's population, is getting its fair share of the Transportation Department's expenditure, which is viewed by them as one-third of this department's spending. I think this is a good question.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, my quick answer is yes, a little more than their share. In terms of the responsibilities of the Department of Transportation, in my view the first responsibility is the development and maintenance of a primary highway system in Alberta to serve all residents, whether they be in urban metropolitan areas, smaller urban centres, or rural centres. The largest number of travellers on Highway 2 — the four-lane highway between Edmonton and Calgary, which is the most expensive highway we have in this province in terms of construction and maintenance costs — are residents and businesses in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Quite naturally, I think those citizens want the primary highway system in our province to be the number one priority for the department.

The second priority is the provision of an adequate secondary road system, which serves people on the basis of regional and oftentimes provincewide needs and serves industries, like the forest and the oil and gas industries, that aren't located in one specific municipality. Hence, it's reasonable that the development of the secondary highway system should have a major call on provincial sources of funding. In my view, those are our two primary objectives.

We're involved to a lesser extent in airport development, which is \$9 million to \$10 million a year. Beyond that — I'll relate to the current budget, because it's fresher in my mind — we provide grants to municipal districts, counties, towns, villages, cities, and for improvement districts in special areas, for the construction of works within their municipalities; in other words, the local road system.

The Department of Transportation is the road authority in improvement districts because of the very sparse population in most of them. In that regard, in the current year's budget we have some \$20 million for construction of roads in improvement districts, and \$10 million in that same vote for construction of access roads to, in, and around Indian reserves and Metis settlements, for a total of \$30 million.

We provided just over \$25 million for capital construction funds to municipal districts and counties for their local road construction system. In the year under question, we didn't have any vote at all. This year we provided \$7.5 million, of a \$50 million five-year program, to towns and villages for street improvement. Finally, for the residents of cities in this province we provided \$137 million this year for capital construction work, most of which goes to Calgary and Edmonton.

If one looks at all those grants on any basis — miles of road, per capita — it's reasonable to suggest that our urban transportation grants for capital construction do exceed the grants that are given to municipal districts and counties and to towns and villages. I hasten to add that there is a reason they

should exceed that. We require that the cities be responsible for primary highways within their boundaries. Calgary is responsible for Highway 2, which runs through the city from north to south, and for the Trans-Canada Highway from east to west. Edmonton is responsible for north-south and east-west arteries as well. I've only mentioned the major highways. There are others they're both responsible for.

In that regard we provide additional assistance for operating by paying them \$3,000 per lane mile for maintenance of those primary highways and by providing, in addition to the regular urban transportation capital grants for arterial roadways and so on, some major grants under what we call the major continuous corridor program, which again is in addition the dollars I've talked about this year. In fact, in the year that's before the committee, we provided significantly more than \$137 million, because I believe we're in the last year of the development of the Deerfoot Trail in Calgary, which was 90 percent funded by the province. Well over a \$100 million went into the construction of the Deerfoot Trail, the major north-south artery in the city.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, there isn't any doubt at all in my mind that the residents of the two metropolitan areas of Edmonton and Calgary have been very fairly treated in the overall budget of the Department of Transportation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I might just say, don't feel that you have to stand up each time. We can have you sit down and relax for the questions. Feel comfortable to do whatever you want.

MR. ZIP: I have a further question that relates to truckers. Quite of a number have come to me and complained about the unfair treatment they get in other provinces, and truckers from other provinces get much fairer treatment in Alberta. We are not doing anything to redress that situation and make it tougher for out-of-province truckers to do things in this province. I am wondering if representations like that have been made to you, Mr. Minister, about this problem.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, they certainly have, and that's a fair comment except the latter part, that we're not doing anything about it. From the point of view of my office, the department, the Motor Transport Board, and the Alberta Trucking Association, Alberta has been a leader in Canada in terms of urging regulatory reform in the motor/trucking/busing industry. As a matter of fact, I'm leaving this afternoon for a meeting in Ottawa tomorrow to review this exact subject — the first meeting in many, many years of provincial ministers of transportation and the federal minister. It was held at our urging after a meeting in Edmonton last September with the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and the ministers. We view the problems associated with overregulation in the trucking industry across Canada as a serious detriment to the economic recovery and advancement of our province.

Without throwing away all the safety controls that have been put in place to protect both the shippers and the trucking industry, we view 1984 as an

opportunity year to reduce the regulatory burden and to allow carriers to compete more freely with another, at the same time maintaining some semblance of order in the whole industry. I don't advocate that we go the way the United States has gone and completely throw out all the regulations that exist with regard to motor transport, but that we go somewhere in between what they've done and where we're at today, which means a substantial lessening of regulatory control and, hopefully, a system of administration that will be similar, if not in all provinces in Canada, at least within regions.

For example, it would be extremely effective if we had a joint agreement with British Columbia and Saskatchewan that would allow carriers to go to one board to get operating authority in those three provinces or, if they go to three boards, at least to go with the same set of rules and guidelines. It would be even better yet if we could include Manitoba. It probably wouldn't be necessary to include Ontario because 90 percent or more of our industry does not go beyond Ontario. In fact in terms of the trucking industry, when you get beyond Ontario, we would be more concerned with compatibility with the United States, because our traffic tends to be north-south to a great degree as well.

We're working hard on that. Your observations in terms of the concern of the industry have indeed been expressed to me from time to time.

MR. ZIP: Thank you.

DR. CARTER: I wonder if the minister would be good enough to comment on how part of his department functions with respect to local autonomy in regional district offices. If I might go on for a moment to explain what I mean by this, in the Cypress Hills, for example, which is the secondary — I don't know if it's a secondary or a tertiary road. I can't even supply the number, but it runs south from Dunmore, roughly parallel to Highway 41, and then heads down to Wild Horse, Montana. A few years ago, we seemed to be rebuilding and raising that particular stretch of highway. It has been much improved. But I can't help but wonder from time to time, especially in a driving rainstorm, when there is precious little gravel on it, if maybe the local autonomy of the district was that they were able to stretch the construction a few miles further and raise it, which looks after most of the year. But when it comes to gravelling, how does one spread it in a thick enough consistency to keep the road serviceable in all weather?

Another thing which is related to that — and this is information for me, because I don't understand the workings of the departmental system with regard to highway maintenance. I have a side road coming off that, which leads to an historic site, of sorts, in the Cypress Hills. But it is very difficult to try to get through to anyone down there to say: could we have a little of gravel put on that road? It goes about a third of a mile, to an abandoned church and cemetery. Even more important, I suppose: how does one go about getting a mower in there in the fall to get the weeds down, so the snow won't pile up during the winter? I'm curious. I know that is not a very heavily travelled section of highway in the province. I use it as an example, asking the minister the question about the disposition of resources at the

local level. How much autonomy do they have in terms of determining the program and certain aspects of the program?

That leads me to ask a question. I should back up and commend the maintenance of the highway in that section of the province, because many a time I've been more than pleased with the helpful assistance of the Transportation department there. Like many people who travel the Trans-Canada Highway — and I know this relates to Highway 16 as well as to Highway 2, but in particular the Trans-Canada Highway — I'd like to commend the department for all the work that has taken place in recent years with respect to improving the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway. I've asked questions in the House about the parallel roads and access to the Trans-Canada and the relationship to the speed limit. Most of it is still posted at 100 kilometres per hour. In terms of movement of funds within the department, I assume it's not possible to take some funding from the secondary road program and put it into primary, to speed up the process of twinning the Trans-Canada Highway in particular, as well as sections of Highway 16.

One other thing in regard to the major highways is the matter of rest areas. It's quite evident that a lot of the erratic driving on the highway relates to the fact that on large stretches of the Trans-Canada Highway in particular, we have not had adequate funding in the past to incorporate more locations for rest areas.

Mr. Chairman, I apologize for all of that, but I'm certainly interested to see how this . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm trying to figure out how many questions were in that; maybe the minister can.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I've been uncommonly quiet the last few weeks. I thought I'd rap a few more in.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure exactly what questions the hon. member asked, but he did raise some matters I think I should comment on. Firstly, they deal with the jurisdiction and responsibility for highways in the province and with movement of funds between various votes and so on.

First of all, with regard to jurisdiction, the Department of Transportation, the provincial government, has jurisdiction over the primary highway system and is totally responsible for the construction and maintenance of the primary highway system. There may be the odd little section where we have a subagreement with a municipality to maintain a piece of primary highway, if it happens to be in everybody's interest that they do so. But for the most part, the department is responsible for the primary system.

The secondary system is the responsibility of the municipality in which it lies, except in the case of improvement districts. The highway authority for improvement districts is the department. So in effect we have responsibility for the secondary system in improvement districts. Members know where the improvement districts are; for instance, I.D. 1, in southern Alberta. I'll have to get a map to see whether the hon. member is talking about a road that's in I.D. 1. In municipal districts and counties, the authority for secondary highways is the MD or

county.

Let me explain what we do in the case of secondary highways within municipal districts or counties. The county and the municipal district are responsible for maintenance, which includes regravelling and grading and that sort of thing. They are also responsible for construction. But we recognize that many of these roads serve the resource industry and so on and are used by through traffic, and it's just not possible for the municipality to maintain them to the standard they should. So we have an extensive budget that we utilize in terms of construction and reconstruction of the secondary highway system that lies within municipal districts and counties. When we do that kind of work, we require that it come up to a standard of construction that's approved by the department, which is a relatively high standard, probably the highest in Canada, sometimes too high — we go through mountains instead of around them, but we're getting that sorted out. At any rate, we require them to come up to a standard of construction.

When it comes to maintenance, the municipalities are their own jurisdiction. If there's an area on a secondary road in a municipal district or county that seems to be very short of gravel, our regional director or district engineer might go to the county and say: we've had complaints and concerns about this road; can you do something about it? They will say, yes we can or no, because we don't have any money. In that case, we have about \$2 million that we hold back out of the \$27 million in this year's budget. From time to time, particularly in the fall, that goes to MDs and counties as grants for what we call "special projects". A bridge may burn up or break down or there may be excessive traffic on a secondary road, so we allocate funds to help in gravelling and other road work that's necessary in special instances. We may provide a grant for half a mile of road into an historic site that's not considered to be any kind of a priority with the MD or county but is a priority with the citizens of Alberta as a whole and with the tourist industry. So we help them out in that regard.

If the member is talking about secondary highways in improvement districts, the appropriate thing to do, if you're a resident of that area, is to get hold of the district engineer's office, the regional director in the area, or your Member of the Legislative Assembly, or write or telephone my office outlining the concern. We'll have a look at it. There are literally dozens of highways that don't have as much gravel on them as everybody would like, yet many that are brought to my attention are worth looking at. So the member could do that, and I advise other citizens too. I thought it was appropriate to explain the jurisdiction, though.

With regard to the Trans-Canada Highway and funding, the roads are structured so there is flexibility between maintenance and construction. You saw in the votes that the Assembly approved in total last Friday that the department budget is divided into sections that read like this: maintenance and construction of primary highways. That means we can move dollars from construction to maintenance, from maintenance to construction. My understanding is that it was set up that way a number of years ago, because it's oftentimes difficult to know how many maintenance dollars you need. If you

have a real bad winter, you may need more than you might otherwise. So we can move between construction and maintenance. On the other hand, we cannot move primary highway funds to secondary highways.

I should add here that under the primary highway vote, we do all the twinning on highways 1 and 16. We do all the overlay that is required on primary highways, we do new construction, and we do rebuilding of older primary highways. So there's a lot of flexibility in that budget to move from primary highway construction — four-laning, say — to some other primary highway job in some other part of the province. However, we have made a suggestion that we would try to twin highways 1 and 16 by the year 1991. So far, that is on schedule with the allocation the Assembly approved for this construction year. I've said from time to time that I don't know if we can keep it on schedule, because it's a lower priority in terms of traffic volumes than some other highways in the province.

The only other thing I might mention with regard to budgeting and transfer of funds is that we do have one particular vote called resource roads. We expend funds from the resource roads fund, approved by the Legislature, on almost any road in the province that can be justified as being a resource road. It could be a primary highway, a secondary highway, or a local road with no designated status. But if it meets the test of having excessive resource traffic on it — and oftentimes it's gravel haul or something — then we can utilize those funds.

Rest areas, Mr. Chairman, are an important consideration. One of the things we've done recently is create sort of a new category of rest area. We have the rather expensive, elaborate, very, very good rest areas that are typified by Wetaskiwin and Edson, which was opened last year, and one at Crossfield-Airdrie which is now under construction. The one at Crossfield will be the last one done in that manner. What we're doing now is purchasing property that's of sufficient size to accommodate that type of rest area, and then developing it in three stages. The first stage is simply a turnout and paved parking area. The second stage is adequate rest rooms, picnic tables, and that sort of thing. The third stage is the more elaborate sort of tourist information area — grassed, treed lawns, and all that sort of thing. I believe we can accommodate more rest areas by going in this staged sort of way and not providing quite the elaborate facilities that we did in years past.

Those are some comments on some of the questions the hon. member raised.

DR. CARTER: Thank you. The comments were very useful. When the Trans-Canada Highway was originally put in, in 1954-ish, there were substantial funds available from the federal government. Was that just seen as a one-time situation? I know the financial aspect of the federal government isn't all that great. Any possibility of the availability of additional funds from the federal government with respect to the further rebuilding and upgrading or twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway being discussed at your meeting next week?

MR. M. MOORE: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I don't know the history, except as the hon. member

described it. My understanding is that we did receive some funding many years ago. We're not presently receiving any funding with respect to the upgrading or twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway from border to border or from the Saskatchewan border to Calgary. But at the present time, we do have under discussion with the federal government a possible agreement on transportation that might see some cost-sharing of transportation infrastructure within the province. They've been signing these agreements with some other provinces. Frankly, I don't think we should hold our breath, because the amount that might be forthcoming would likely be rather insignificant compared to what the province is spending. But that matter is presently under discussion, with our Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs leading those discussions. They involve a number of other subagreements on such things as northern development, agriculture, transportation, and so on.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Chairman, my questions are somewhat related to Dr. Carter's. First of all, I'd really like to commend the minister and his department for some of the advantages that we as Calgarians have received. The Deerfoot Trail is fabulous; it has made our whole life and business in Calgary much more efficient and helpful. I can't get over how different it has been. Also, your signage program has been most appreciated.

I guess my questions go around the urban transportation financial assistance program. I know these grants are established to provide assistance to the municipalities for their local roads, streets, public transportation systems, and so on. It seems in Calgary we're having so much difficulty in planning how to move people, and it goes back to this planning year. Since you mentioned that 90 percent of the construction of the Deerfoot was provincial funds, my question to the minister is, how much does the province have? Is there an overall long-range plan for moving people both in our cities and between the cities? Is there a long-range plan that is being developed with the cities? It seems to me you must be in a constant battle between local autonomy and the provincial leadership of transportation planning.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, that's an excellent question. The system provides that every city must have in place a transportation plan for that city. That's actually approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I believe that's provided for under the highway development Act; anyway, some piece of legislation we have requires that each city has an approved plan. I've never been too clear what happens if the Lieutenant Governor doesn't want to approve the plan, but in practice what happens is that we go back and sit down with the city and say, we don't want it, we don't agree with this because . . . The reason for that plan is largely to make sure our highways meet with their highways, so there is some continuity in the system as you move from the nonurban area into the urban area. So it's reasonable that somebody — and in this case the province, Executive Council — has some control over what the cities do.

Beyond sort of assuring ourselves that the systems are compatible, we haven't, at least in my experience, been involved in saying, you cannot do

this — like build LRT — because we don't believe it's the appropriate way to go. In fact both our cities proceeded beyond what the province thought they should with the construction of light rail transit, because we weren't convinced the systems had proven efficiency in terms of capital and operating costs. I don't want to get into that debate today, but that's an example of how the local autonomy directed provincial funds to an area we weren't necessarily in agreement with.

I don't think there's too much more I can say beyond that. In the last four or five years both Edmonton's and Calgary's traffic planning departments, particularly Edmonton's, have done an excellent job of looking at their highway systems and improving the existing streets, thoroughfares, and arterial roadways, by putting in additional lanes and making one-ways and so on. That has perhaps been the most cost-effective thing that has been done in the last 25 years in terms of moving traffic in both cities. In other words, rather than building new systems they began looking at their existing system and saying, in what way can it be improved? There have been some fantastic improvements that have occurred over the last few years because of that kind of work. So in general I'm relatively pleased with the expertise that exists within the two metropolitan areas in terms of traffic planning and the kind of work they're doing.

MRS. KOPER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. My second question has to do with federal/provincial relations and the decision-making that goes into the building of highways, specifically the stretch of highway through from the Banff park gates. I've been in a traffic jam that went 25 miles — frequently, not just once in a while. Sometimes it gets to be dreadful when you want to go home on a Sunday night. Nevertheless, I must say that there are some passing lanes that have recently been put in between Lake Louise and Eisenhower Junction that have made a great difference in the roadway. I believe that was something that was accomplished just last year.

I wonder if there had been any discussion with federal personnel regarding further upgrading this stretch of highway in a way that will not mean further use of the land. There are already several roadways there, and it seems a shame to cut down stands of trees and build bridges where there are presently other roads that could perhaps be extended. I wonder to what lengths our Department of Transportation, and you as minister, would go to protect the environment in that area.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, first of all, the province of Alberta has no jurisdiction whatever with respect to the highway system in the national parks. I should have mentioned that earlier in commenting about jurisdiction. The construction and operation and maintenance of those highways is totally the responsibility of Parks Canada.

I'm not aware that we've had any discussions recently with the federal authorities with regard to what they might do in that area. It's an interesting comment, though, and perhaps we should be having some. I know that in years past, we encouraged them to twin that portion of the highway from the park boundary into Banff, and it's quite possible it should be twinned further as well, up as far as Lake Louise.

Again, we would have to look at the traffic counts before ascertaining whether or not we'd urge that.

The member mentioned the provision of passing lanes. We've done some studies on some of our other highways, notably Highway 16 between Entwistle and Edson, where we concluded that we could improve traffic flow by some 30 percent by the construction of passing lanes at regular intervals in both directions. So it could well be that the addition of further passing lanes in the national parks, as opposed to twinning, might be a more appropriate way to go for at least some years.

Mr. Chairman, I'd undertake to enquire of department officials whether they've had any recent discussions with federal people on highway systems in any of the national parks in Alberta, and perhaps get back to the hon. member.

MRS. KOPER: May I ask a supplementary, Mr. Chairman? This is related, and again it's a federal problem. It's regarding the railways and safety of railways for passenger travel in Alberta particularly. I'm thinking of long-range planning regarding the moving of people, and I wonder if that could be a possibility. When we look at public transportation systems serving intra- and inter-regional needs, I wonder if there is any drive on the part of your department to work with federal people to look at our railways and improve their safety and the number of people they can transport.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, when we're talking about VIA Rail service, say, from Edmonton through to Jasper and that sort of thing, it is an area where the Minister of Tourism and Small Business has been working very effectively with federal and other authorities to try to get that service restored. We're strongly supportive of that kind of service, which serves the tourist industry as well as the citizens of our province in some of those longer term trips.

Mr. Chairman, the member commented a little earlier with respect to the travel between Edmonton and Calgary, and that's a subject that has to be discussed in a different light. First of all, we have traffic counts as high as 30,000 vehicles a day on sections of Highway 2 between Calgary and Edmonton. They are the highest where there's the highest level of commuter traffic travelling in an out of the cities, just south of Edmonton and just north of Calgary. They're the second highest just south and north of Red Deer. They increase when you get close to towns like Airdrie, Ponoka, and Wetaskiwin.

The facts of the matter are that of those 30,000 vehicles a day, there are not more than 4,000 or 5,000 vehicles a day that actually go straight through from one city to the other. Of that number, there are a significant number that are trucks hauling produce. There are others that are passenger cars that are pulling trailers when people are on holidays or something. There is another significant number of vehicles that make the full trip between Edmonton and Calgary, whose departure point or destination is somewhere other than Edmonton or Calgary. They might have come from Brooks or from Whitecourt and be going through Edmonton to Calgary. The balance of the traffic that travels on that roadway that's available for some other means of transportation is rather small. Then you have to consider how you're going to get them out of their

cars and into a train or some other mode of transportation.

The end result of any subjective analysis of this whole situation of how traffic moves between Edmonton and Calgary is that the existing train system, with the multitude of level crossings, is not likely going to be made safe enough to travel at speeds that are high enough to make it a viable option to either air travel or travel by bus or car on our existing four-lane highway — six lanes in some places. So as a system of hauling people, I don't view the existing railroad as having a future of taking over a lot of the traffic that's presently on the highway or travelling by air.

The second question is, can a high-speed train track be built, with overpasses, et cetera, between Edmonton and Calgary that will go straight through and make it in two hours? The answer is, yes it can. A second question is, is it feasible? The answer is, not at this time. There isn't any economic feasibility whatever in building a high-speed train track between the two cities. If you had \$600 million and nothing else to do with it and built the track and put the trains on it, you might get enough people to use it to cover the operating costs, if you didn't have to think about the capital. But we already have in place a highway system that's got room for lots more buses, and with two cities this size, there isn't any economic possibility. Aside from that, studies are still going on with respect to a high-speed train track, and perhaps it's appropriate to study the matter. But in my view it won't happen, at least not in the near future.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I think what we need to look for between Edmonton and Calgary is continuation of the upgrading and improving of the existing highway, in terms of overpasses and that sort of thing, to avoid accident-prone locations, a continuation of our efforts to ensure that the bus industry in this province is able to compete freely without having to go through too many regulatory reforms so that we can have good competition in the motor bus industry between the two cities — assuredly, there are some coaches being built now and service provided that's second to none. Their safety record is so much better than anything that exists on the railway that one would be well advised to get on the bus. So I see bus and automobile by highway as the major mode, and the airport mode.

In my view there isn't any question that if we get into a situation where the Edmonton Municipal Airport is determined not to be an appropriate place for larger jets to land, we will see one of two things happen to accommodate air travellers between Edmonton and Calgary. We will move farther north to someplace like Namao to land those aircraft, or we will have aircraft like the Dash 7, and perhaps a version of the Dash 7 that carries a hundred people — short takeoff and landing turboprop planes that can get in with more safety and are much quieter than the jets. I don't envision a situation where the Edmonton Municipal in fact would not allow jet traffic in the near future. I think it's many years away. They've had a good safety record.

MR. PAPROSKI: I've been waiting patiently, Mr. Chairman, wanting to ask a question about the high-speed train to Calgary. You've alluded to a number of areas, and I'm really interested in this particular area. It's still evidently at the conceptual stage. It's

still an idea. But I'd be curious if the minister could comment as to what types of investigations have occurred with respect to whether it is feasible or not; in other words, is it just in the planning area, or have there been engineers involved extensively? Could the minister comment as to whether there's anything on the drawing board at all, or is it just primarily discussion stage at this time?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, there's been a preliminary study done by the Department of Economic Development — it wasn't the Department of Transportation — on the concept of a high-speed train between Edmonton and Calgary. Many of the figures I was just quoting with regard to traffic volumes and so on were provided by the Department of Transportation in assisting with that particular study. I believe the Department of Economic Development is continuing their studies, and perhaps it's appropriate they should do so. At least we should know with more certainty what the capital costs of such a facility would be.

I can only repeat what I said earlier. If the member just thinks about my comments of the traffic volumes and what's left that you could put on a train, most of the traffic volumes would have to come off the airplane and the buses. If we've got 4,000 vehicles a day running between Edmonton and Calgary for the total length, and you have to disregard half of them because they're trucks or cars pulling trailers and disregard another 10 percent because they're going to destinations beyond the two cities, you may wind up with not more than 1,000 vehicles a day where it's conceivable that the occupants could take a high-speed train as opposed to a vehicle. Then figure out how to get those 1,000 cars off the road. It's likely that about 800 of them would tell you they have another reason for taking their car. They want to drive around the city when they get here or whatever. So there just isn't much feasibility of getting traffic off the road.

In addition to that, the highway is constructed to carry that volume of traffic. I hope you wouldn't go over and spend another \$600 million building a high-speed train track to take traffic off a facility, which you already paid \$600 million for, that can handle it. My comments are not made on the basis of any conclusion that the study reached. It's only a conclusion I reached, being sort of a pragmatic person that values a dollar.

MR. PAPROSKI: My second question deals with the Yellowhead Trail. First of all, I'd like to commend the minister for the support in having this trail completed through the Edmonton area. It's done a tremendous amount to move vehicles. I just wonder if the minister could comment as to what impact it has had on the city of Edmonton, if indeed the minister has any statistics or has had feedback from the trucking industry or from the city of Edmonton about its impact on the city.

MR. M. MOORE: The feedback you get on the Yellowhead Trail from anybody that has a requirement to move through the north end of the city, one end to the other, is simply that it should have been done years ago. Everybody is just delighted with the fact that you can travel that quickly along that route. As far as I'm concerned,

the city officials and the council are too. It's the same as the Deerfoot Trail in Calgary. I think both projects were not quite as highly thought of before they were constructed as they are now that they've been completed and our citizens can move as quickly as they do on them. They're extremely good projects.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Chairman, getting back to the rest stop areas, I understand there's been some interchange of responsibility between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Recreation and Parks over these rest stops. Could the minister elaborate on what portion of the responsibility now is Transportation's and where the Recreation and Parks department fits into the rest stop areas?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, the member raises a good question. For clarification, the member is talking about overnight campsites. We actually have two different facilities: a rest area, where there is no overnight camping, and an overnight campsite. Under the new policy where we're establishing more rest areas at a lower level of capital construction, I've asked the department in some cases to consider existing campsites as possible rest stop areas. One of the differences is that we provide better deceleration and acceleration lanes and off-highway ramps in a rest area so that a higher volume of traffic can get in and out. In the case of a campsite, there's usually just one road in and one road out and there's not that much traffic in and out, because it's overnight. But we're trying to combine the two in some places.

We have over a hundred highway campsites, if you like, that are still the responsibility of the department. We transferred a good number to the Department of Recreation and Parks about three years ago. The hon. Member for Chinook was the Minister of Transportation at the time. My recollection is that we transferred them on the basis of transferring to the parks department those that had a higher level of use and were actually destination centres, to a larger extent, than just places for highway travellers to stay overnight. Many of those were in the northeast part of the province, in the Bonnyville and St. Paul constituencies and the lake country, where people were using highway campsites to stay for the weekend and go fishing and that sort of thing. So there were a good number transferred. It presently isn't the intention to transfer any more, at least not a large volume. There may be a few that could be considered for transfer to the parks department.

I've insisted that our staff try to improve their maintenance of the existing campsites we are responsible for. In that regard we began last year, and will complete this year, the pretty well total farming out, if you like, of the maintenance of the highway campsites to the private sector. We called tenders and had some good experience last year with private-sector people maintaining our campsites. It's continuing in 1984, and I believe that eventually we'll have all or almost all of the campsites being maintained by private-sector people, on a contract basis.

In addition to that, I've asked the department this year in particular to provide programs and plans whereby we might have some of the students who are working on STEP for the department involved in some

maintenance and minor rebuilding and repair of our existing campsites. I think there's an awful lot that can be done by a good foreman with half a dozen STEP students going into those campsites, reworking the grounds, painting, and fixing up. It's just excellent kind of work for those people to be involved in.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I have two areas I'd like to ask some questions about; first of all, the rest areas. I'm familiar with the one near Wetaskiwin. I notice there is a little trailer setup, offering coffee and sandwiches I guess. It started out as a little trailer, and I think it became a truck much like the trucks that go into worksites and provide coffee at coffee breaks. Now it seems to be a more permanent facility, a trailer. I think offering this in the rest areas is a very good idea. I am wondering what the arrangements are for this. Is this operated by the department, or is this a rental setup? Just how is that type of thing being offered?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, some of these things happen by accident, and that's the case here. I say that with some degree of concern. First of all, about a year ago, or a little more, I was approached on the basis of: why can't I as an individual take a little two-wheel trailer selling hot dogs and coffee, and stop at that rest area and sell hot dogs and coffee during the day when the tourists are coming by, like they do down on River Road here in Edmonton, where they sell fruit, flowers, and hot dogs? I said to my staff, that's reasonable. They said, well, we don't want to spoil the beauty of our rest area. I said, it won't if we tell these people they have to be mobile, and they can come and go during the day. As far as I'm concerned, any number — there is room for three or four to set up, and competition will dictate how many stay there, so we don't have to bother going to tender or anything. It seemed like a neat little arrangement. So I gave my approval as Minister of Transportation.

The next thing I knew, some months later somebody phoned me and said, why have you got a permanent restaurant set up here and no tenders have been called? The facts of the matter are that the jurisdiction of those rest areas, in terms of maintenance and operation, rests with the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services. Unbeknownst to me, they had signed a three-year lease with this individual to put a permanent facility there, which doesn't conform with the rest of the rest area, which doesn't have a sewage disposal facility. There is nothing wrong with the individual. He was adept enough to be able to get around the bureaucracy and get a lease for three years in an area where, quite frankly, we should have put it out to public tender.

So I've said to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services that in Crossfield and Edson, we certainly don't want that to occur. When the lease expires in Wetaskiwin, we need to do one of two things — and perhaps I might have some guidance from members in this regard. In my view we either need to revert to only allowing the mobile unit there during the day or nothing at all, or we have to construct a proper little facility that conforms with the rest of the rest area and then call competitively for tenders for someone to operate it, the same way

the parks department does in their provincial parks. That would be the only fair way to go. The fact of this individual having entered into the lease is one that I would not want to disturb at this time.

The member raises a good question, and I'm being completely up front on how it happened. It wasn't well planned.

MR. HARLE: I just observe that I think it is a useful addition to the rest areas and is appreciated by the truckers and others who stop at these rest areas. Because it is a developing thing, it obviously goes through a period of development and growth and is a learning experience as we go along. I'm certainly not being critical of the service. I think it's a very useful one.

The second area I would like to ask a question about is the problem of supplies of gravel. I don't know what the overall picture would be across the province, but certainly the experience I would be familiar with in my own constituency would be that we're getting very, very short of gravel supplies. They're getting harder to find and more expensive in the sense of longer hauls. It becomes a question, I guess, as to what is the alternative to a gravel road — expensive pavement or some other alternatives of stabilization of the surface. Is this a concern for the department? What new ideas are coming out of research that might be carried on to provide some alternatives to gravel roads, which I think are a problem in the sense that they have to be maintained and more and more gravel has to be found?

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, a good question. First of all, I'll briefly comment on gravel supplies. We probably need to direct more resources to the business of exploring for gravel supplies — drilling, testing, and knowing where they are — particularly on Crown lands. In years past, we've probably too often allowed good gravel supplies on Crown land to become deeded land. In years past, I mean 40, 50, or 60 years ago. For example, around the two major cities most of the gravel sources are owned by private-sector people. They know what the traffic will bear when it comes to selling it. But I think we as legislators in government have a responsibility to ensure that the public purse doesn't have to buy back gravel that was on Crown land that has been let go for a homestead or something else. In that regard, even in areas where we're not short of gravel now, I think we could be spending more time making sure we know where the gravel supplies are, and we are doing that.

The largest users of gravel of course are the municipalities — both the cities, the MDs and counties — and the provincial Department of Transportation. Beyond that, gravel supplies for construction are not nearly as extensive, although important as well.

The only thing I'm aware that we've been able to do, or that sort of bodes well for our future, is on our primary highway system. Where we've had one or two overlays of pavement on top of the original construction, we're getting up to maybe eight to 12 inches of asphalt and there is no longer a requirement to strengthen that asphalt with additional layers of asphalt. So we can now come in and reclaim that top four inches and lay it down again. What happens is that we have already developed some pretty good



expertise in the industry of coming in and tearing up the top four inches of asphalt, grinding it up, if you like, loading it on trucks, hauling it back to an asphalt plant, mixing a little more asphalt with it, bringing it back, and putting it down.

In years to come, I expect you will see private-sector forces develop equipment, much as the railways use right now for laying new track, that will be several hundred feet long, where that entire operation will be carried out on the highway. The asphalt plant and everything will move along as you redo the road. So it's important for the members to know that there comes a point when we don't need very much or any more gravel on our existing paved system, unless we want to widen it or something.

The only other comment members may not be fully aware of is that you've all heard of soil cement. What we're really talking about there is mixing cement with very poor gravel or sand, or sand that has a lot of dirt in it. The cement acts the same as a larger rock does in good gravel, in terms of giving you a good base upon which to lay an asphalt road. We do have good supplies of cement in Alberta, and the companies that supply us now are very competitive. So as years go by, I'm sure we will increase the utilization of soil cement a great deal more, because we have abundant supplies of rather poor gravel and sand located throughout the province that we are presently not using.

The only other thing we've been involved in over the years is the utilization of sulphur, but that's really as a replacement for asphalt and we still have a gravel requirement. But there are some suggestions that building roads out of sulphur as a top coat might stand up longer and be better than asphalt, although we haven't experienced enough evidence yet to move in any wholesale way in Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, I think those are about the only comments I can make about gravel supplies, except to conclude by saying that in one particular year it doesn't matter much, but over the longer term it's something we need to be really concerned about.

MR. HARLE: Could I ask a supplementary question? I notice on some of the resource roads, for example, that they've been experimenting with various techniques as an alternative to pavement, but necessary because of the heavy truck traffic. I can't say they've been that successful. Is that a correct assessment?

MR. M. MOORE: We really haven't experimented with any substitute for pavement except sulphur, except on occasions when the department and certainly municipalities are involved in various kinds of road oiling, where you mix a little of the top gravel, a couple of inches of crushed gravel, with good quality bunker oil. There are various grades of that, and various jobs that are done — some good, some bad. Oil has gotten so expensive that as a matter of policy we're trying not to oil any new roads. We are re-oiling some existing ones. For dust control we have now gone to the utilization of calcium chloride, which is much cheaper but it's not black, and the citizens don't call it pavement. In addition to that, when it's wet it gets slippery, and if you blade it you lose the dust control properties of the calcium chloride rather quickly. So if we put

calcium chloride on a primary or secondary highway we avoid blading it, because we'll lose the dust control properties; hence you have some holes in it. When it's wet it's slippery.

Members may recall that earlier in the session, the Member for Drumheller was questioning me about Highway 56 south of Drumheller. That's exactly the situation with that highway. We put calcium chloride on it, so when it rained it was slippery and people thought, my God, it doesn't have any gravel on it. But it was calcium chloride. Then it had holes in it, because we were avoiding blading it as much as possible to save the calcium chloride. That's the one experiment, and I'm not sure where we're going with it yet. It certainly keeps the dust down, but it has those disadvantages.

MR. NELSON: Just a couple of quick ones to the minister, Mr. Chairman. Of course in Calgary there is always the one about LRT, I guess. I'll bypass that one today.

One of the major concerns in Calgary is the Trans-Canada Highway, in particular the area just west of the Deerfoot Trail to approximately the area of Bowness. That's the area that travels through a very large, built-up commercial area, a lot of traffic lights, and visitors to the city aren't extremely complimentary about that stretch of the the Trans-Canada Highway through the city of Calgary. I hope the minister is relatively familiar with it.

I wonder what funding could be made available to the city by the province and/or the federal government — although I understand the feds have opted out, or their portion of this upgrading has been concluded — to assist the city in developing this road differently, bypassing it or whatever, so that not only those people in Calgary but people who are travelling through the city can travel through with some reasonableness on the Trans-Canada Highway.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I don't know the answer to that. As the member has indicated, Trans-Canada is pretty well upgraded east of the Deerfoot Trail and west of the city where we get the Sarcee Trail. There's a distance there of about 10 or 11 miles really, and I've no idea what the cost would be to upgrade it similar to the balance of the highway and to four-lane it so you would have a route similar to the Deerfoot or the Yellowhead in Edmonton. I imagine it would be very expensive, not because of the construction of the highway but because of the property you'd have to acquire.

The only comment I might make is that if at some point in time — it would be several years from now, because the priorities in Calgary are on LRT and other roadways — the province were in a position to develop a new major continuous corridor program and say to each of the two metropolitan areas, you may now have a second major continuous corridor through your city that we would fund, obviously that would be the Trans-Canada in Calgary and Highway No. 2 in Edmonton. I think that's a long way down the road in terms of the possibility of the province funding it, and I don't see the cities having funds to develop that length of roadway.

So, Mr. Chairman, probably the only thing that could be done over the short term is to see what improvements might be made, as I spoke about earlier in terms of the kinds of things traffic

engineers do with one-ways, some widening, and taking out boulevards and that sort of thing. I don't know to what extent there may be some improvement in the flow of traffic on the existing roadways with some minor expenditures, but that's about all I can see that would alleviate that situation at the present time.

On the other hand, let me make one concluding comment. You know, it's not all that bad if tourists that come to Alberta on the Trans-Canada Highway have to slow down, maybe stop and have an ice cream cone and have a look at the city. We sometimes tend to think it's an absolute must that we provide an opportunity for everybody to drive through our province at 100 kilometres per hour. When you get into British Columbia, I notice you have to slow down a fair bit and spend some money, because it takes a little longer to get from point A to point B.

**MR. NELSON:** Being a retailer I appreciate that comment, because I for one bypass 16th Avenue.

I have one other question, related to page 23 of the Auditor General's report on the Department of Transportation. I wonder if the minister has that handy. I wonder if the minister is familiar with Recommendation No. 4. What compliance is taking place, and what comments does the minister have relevant to this recommendation? If he doesn't have his book, he could report back at some future date. It's a fairly lengthy recommendation.

**MR. M. MOORE:** Mr. Chairman, I was just discussing this with Mr. Rogers. I don't believe we've officially responded to his recommendation. As far as I'm aware, the matter is still under consideration. Perhaps there are two answers to it. Either we alter the requirements of the program, in terms of broadening the ability of cities to expend funds in areas that aren't presently considered appropriate, or, as I understand Mr. Roger's recommendation, we ensure by further auditing that the cities are spending urban transportation grants for the purposes for which they were given. I don't believe — perhaps Mr. Rogers could comment — that there's any suggestion that there's any misuse of funds or that they've been used outside of transportation, but just that we have no conclusive proof they were used in accordance with the purposes for which they were provided.

**MR. ROGERS:** Mr. Chairman, if I could comment on that. There was no suggestion that there be further auditing by the department. It is the form of reporting by the auditors of the municipality that was inadequate, in that it really wasn't giving the department the assurance the department was taking from the report. Consequently the recommendation is with respect to the form of the report of the auditor of the municipality, in this case.

I believe there have been discussions with the department, and we are anticipating that that will be cleared up. As the minister says, there is the choice of changing the grant to have less to comply with — in other words, fewer conditions; simplify the grant — or to look to this recommendation.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** If it would be acceptable to Mr. Nelson, when that has been considered and a response given, maybe the minister wouldn't mind sending it to

me as the chairman; I'll make sure the other members get it. Is that okay with you, Mr. Nelson?

I have one more on the list: Mr. Stiles.

**MR. STILES:** Mr. Chairman, just briefly to follow up on the questions put to the minister by Mrs. Koper and Mr. Paproski, relative to utilizing or developing some kind of rail system between Calgary and Edmonton. I was interested in your statistics regarding the present use of Highway 2 and, in particular, the substantial numbers of people who are commuting from a relatively short distance out of the two major centres.

I'm curious to know what studies or what may be going on within your department in considering some form of commuter rail service as opposed to this idea of a high-speed train between the two cities. It seems to me that there is a great deal more sense in developing a commuter system that would operate to take people in and out of the cities, where there are large numbers of people, one person to an automobile, utilizing the highway at the present time.

**MR. M. MOORE:** Mr. Chairman, the member makes a good point. My Department of Transportation, however, hasn't been involved in any studies regarding commuter service in and out of the cities. First of all, I think one has to consider the extent to which we expend public funds in our province to ensure that people can travel from their home in Wetaskiwin to a job in Edmonton or from their home in Olds to a job in Calgary. Our approach has been that industrial development in this province ought to be dispersed and that we ought to have more than two places where people live. I think we've been fairly successful in the last 10 or 12 years in doing that. In some respects, it would actually be counterproductive to develop commuter systems and say that all the industries are going to be in the two metropolitan areas and people are going to move in and out. That's one comment.

The second one is that we've got the primary highway system constructed now, and it's adequate to carry the commuter traffic that exists. There's still tremendous scope for commuters, by forming car pools or utilizing bus services, to get back and forth and dramatically reduce the number of vehicles on the highway. In addition to that, another important thing that members may not have noted is the wide area between the two lanes, the division in the divided highway between Edmonton and Calgary. In many parts of it — for example, from inside the Edmonton city limits to the International Airport — the median between the two highways is wide because it's planned on the basis of being able to construct additional lanes to the inside. We already own the property, so we have a rather inexpensive opportunity to construct more travel lanes there.

So I guess in general, while the idea of commuter trains well serves a lot of European countries and Japan and so on, where you're dealing with much larger populations without the opportunity to have the road system we have because the planning wasn't there and they're developed so much, I think we'd be some years away from commuter trains coming into Edmonton or Calgary from any direction. Again, Mr. Chairman, that's a personal opinion about how things are developing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't have any more people on the list. I don't see anybody raising their hand, so I guess we'll bring this to a close. Just to conclude, I'd like to again thank the minister for taking time out to come here. We do appreciate it. Thank you.

I gather, even with what Mr. Moore says, that we probably won't see you till the fall. As soon as I know the session dates, we'll set up the schedule. What I will try to do is bring Mr. Johnston in, relatively at the first one, because that was our next choice. Then we'll decide the fall schedule at that point, if that's okay.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If there are no other comments ...

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, is there a transcript of the proceedings?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, there is.

MR. M. MOORE: If I could get one, so I can remember what I committed to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think that's automatic. When people come, they get copies.

MR. HARLE: I move that we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

[The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.]

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