

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 3, 1990 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 90/05/03

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'd like the committee to please come to order.

head: **Main Estimates 1990-91**

Transportation and Utilities

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The estimates are located on page 335 of the main budget book and commencing on page 149 of the elements and details book.

Mr. Minister, do you have some opening remarks?

MR. ADAIR: I sure do. [some applause] Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to introduce for discussion tonight the estimates of the Department of Transportation and Utilities. It's my intention to make a brief statement outlining the responsibilities of the department in each of the major program areas covered by the estimates and then to highlight some of the initiatives that are planned for this fiscal year.

Recognizing the perils of deficit spending, we acknowledge the necessity for constraint and a hold-the-line budget. I believe, and I can say this sincerely, that we can provide an acceptable service with a budget of \$878 million. That represents a decrease of 1.4 percent from last year. At the same time, I must point out that we see a higher level of demand out in the field, and we're going to have to address that as soon as we're able to.

This year will see a continued support for improvements to resource roads started last year, particularly in the forest industry sector, and this includes the completion of the infrastructure to support the Peace River pulp mill, the public land development program, and the Alberta Energy Company infrastructure at Slave Lake.

Secondary highways are another critical link in the transportation network which assists Albertans to deliver farm, forestry, petroleum, and manufactured products to the world on a competitive footing. I should also say that that's part of the three building blocks we have: the secondary highway program, the urban transportation program, the towns and villages and summer villages programs, all of which are very important to the sectors they are involved in. I must also point out the fact that just last Thursday the leader of the Liberal Party said something in Calgary, and I quote from the article. It said, "The government is placing [a high] priority on paving secondary roads like they're going out of style." Now, I'm not sure what was meant, but I'm going to try and explain in the next little while the secondary program for those of you who may have missed my explanation of last year.

Really what we were talking about when we were getting into that is to point out that there are some 140,000-plus kilometres of gravel roads in the province of Alberta, 14,750 of which are in the secondary highway system, with approximately one-half of that already paved as part of the original 20-year program that

was in place. When we were in discussions with the counties, MDs, and IDs to have consideration for accelerating the program, which we did – and that was the announcement that said we would try and do the balance of the existing secondary highways and have them paved in the 10-year period. So what we have done: you'll see in the budget books that we've got a budget of \$101.18 million for the Secondary Highway program, which will see us in the second full year of that program. It means that we've got a \$19 million increase over the budget of two years ago. It was at that time that we were down around the \$82 million, and we brought it up to \$100 million. We're at \$101.18 million. We're working very well with the counties and the MDs and the IDs in that particular program.

Clearly, the issue is, then, that if there's 140,000 kilometres of gravel, 14,750 of that is secondary highways, 50 percent of that is paved, we're talking, in essence, of about 5 percent of the system that was announced, not every gravel road in the province of Alberta. It's important that that distinction be made because that's clearly where we get involved with the counties, MDs, and IDs in the construction of those roads, and then the maintenance of them moves into their operations at that point.

Major work will continue on the widening of Highway 63 from north of Edmonton to Fort McMurray, and that's regardless of the status of the OSLO project. The upgrading program will alleviate concerns expressed by the residents of Fort McMurray about safety on that narrow section of highway that is between Plamondon and the Fort McMurray area. It will assist also in reducing the number of traffic delays that do occur on that particular sector of road. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, \$147.1 million will again be available to the 16 cities in the province of Alberta, and that includes within that the urbanized area of the county of Strathcona. That's part of that three building blocks I talked about a little while ago, with a three-year, \$500 million Alberta partnership program, and then the towns, villages, and summer villages, and I'll get to that in a moment.

The city program is involving \$65 per capita per year to Alberta cities and Sherwood Park to help these cities with the costs of their multiyear capital transportation plans. It provides for projects such as arterial roadway construction, collector roadway rehabilitation, and construction of major transit facilities as well as a safety component for projects such as improved street lighting, pedestrian overpasses, emergency stopping bays on roadways, and emergency telephones. Now, the work resulting from this program will be performed by the private sector and will see approximately 4,000 jobs per year in the private sector as a result of that city program. That's the city program, now, separate from the secondary road program.

We've now got two of those building blocks. Then we move into the other one, which will be the towns, villages, and summer villages.

One of the things that also should be mentioned is that the public transit operating assistance has been increased to \$19.67 million, and that's funding that's available for the maintenance of primary highways within the city limits and funding for the public transit operating program.

In the area of assistance for rural local highways, grants totaling \$10 million will be provided for capital street improvements to 280 towns, villages, and summer villages under the six-year street assistance program for towns and villages. That's the third building block that we were talking about. That one was in place, the cities was in place, the secondary highway program was in place two years ago and will continue. We will again

provide \$30.8 million in rural road grants. These grants assist the rural municipalities with road construction, upgrading, and dust abatement. This grant program includes the hamlet street assistance program, which will continue.

To reflect the growing number of senior citizens in the province, we've increased our seniors' home heating grant program by 4.8 percent, and that means that approximately 100,000 senior citizens' households each year will receive \$100 benefit from that program. The demand for assistance in the municipal water and sewage assistance program is decreasing. A great number of these facilities have been improved, and with this reducing demand we are able to reduce funding by \$33 million, or 93 percent, this year. Nevertheless, it's anticipated that the long-term trend may see program requirements once again increasing as existing design capacity is fully utilized. We will continue to work with the municipal governments to monitor the needs for water and sewage infrastructure.

I should also point out that the agricultural processing industry's grant program is part of that municipal water and sewage program, and it assists communities involved in attracting food processing, dairies, meat packing plants, canneries, and the likes to their communities. We continue to watch that program very closely as well. We would not begin a second subdivision in the community before the first one is completed. I'll just go back for the sake of information to the years from '86-87, '87-88, '88-89, and '89-90. There were six applications in the first two years, '86-87; in '87-88, \$688,000 was provided; in '87-88, \$13 million; in '88-89, \$247,000; in '89-90, \$742,000; for a total of roughly \$3 million that's provided under that program.

The rural gas program was introduced by the government in 1973; probably one of the greatest success stories anywhere on the North American continent, and I almost think we could say in the world too. We had that program introduced to ensure that natural gas service was available to all Albertans at a reasonable cost. To date we have provided over \$350 million for the construction of natural gas facilities, and that covers, if you can believe it, 95,000 kilometres in length. The distribution system really, from the standpoint of a system anywhere in the world, is probably the world's outstanding partnership between government, industry, and the farm community of the province of Alberta. Those of you who don't have it might want to look at purchasing a history book, *Harvesting the Flame*, which is a history of that particular program done by the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops.

I'd like to point out too, Mr. Chairman, that although the department has not introduced any new utility programs for the 1990-91 fiscal year, we are continually alert in this regard to the needs of all Albertans.

One of the more popular programs we've got is the Farm Water Grant program. To date we have assisted over 3,557 individuals and 1,107 groups. This year's allocation of \$5,107,600 is totally committed at this point in time, and that's an increase of 23.4 percent over what we've had in past years. The difficulty, of course: when you've got all those dollars basically committed at this point, it means we've got to do a complete review of that program and see just what the difficulties are, if any, in the sense that it was created for a drought situation that may have cleared up.

I'm pleased, too, Mr. Chairman, that the opportunity is here for me tonight to explain that this weekend, the weekend of May 5, and the day of May 5, will be highway cleanup day. The spring highway cleanup campaign will be on Saturday, May 5, throughout the province. It's the 14th annual. Thousands of

young people from the 4-H clubs, Junior Forest Wardens, and other youth groups will be out on the highways on the weekend. I would ask anyone that's driving on the highways to be very, very careful and to keep in mind that those young people are working in the interests of a cleaner Alberta, and with your help they'll do that. Now, I might say that a year ago they picked up over 60,000 bags of garbage. That's not necessarily something we should be proud of in a sense, because we should be keeping that garbage in our vehicles and putting it in the garbage bags at home or at work or wherever the case may be and not tossing it out the window and then leaving it for that cleanup. We're talking also of primary highway cleanup, not secondary highway cleanup. The RCMP will be out on the highways as well to assist in keeping an eye on the drivers. Make sure that you do that. Honk your horn; let them know that you appreciate what they're doing for you on that particular day. If the day is a wet day, it'll be moved to May 12. We anticipate that there will be about 4,600 adults involved; about 11,000 children from the 4-H, JFW, and other organizations involved. They'll be wearing safety vests, and signs will be posted. So be alert when you're driving on this particular weekend.

Just a small note on seat belts. With the introduction back in July of 1987 we moved from about 27 percent usage to about 86 percent as a high, the highest in the nation. Then we had the court case and saw it drop to as low as 44 percent. We anticipate now that it's back up in the 60 to 70 percent range, but at this particular point in time we haven't got the figures in for me to pass on to you.

The Yellowhead Highway. I just felt that I would maybe give a plug on that one, because the contractors and the engineering staff in the Department of Transportation and Utilities have done just a superb job in the work that's going on on that highway from east to west. All sections west of Edmonton are or will be under contract by the end of this year, a total of 24 projects including carryovers, and the entire length of it will involve about \$47 million this year. I might say that we are on target and on budget. That's contrary to again another report that was given to me that when speaking out in the Hinton area, the leader of the Liberal Party said that he doubts we'll get the twinning done on time. But then being a doubter, one can understand that.

We've just had the Yellowhead Highway Association annual meeting, and the hon. Member for West Yellowhead was at that particular meeting. It was well attended and a very well-received report from the province of Alberta as the leaders on the entire Yellowhead from Manitoba right through to British Columbia . . .

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, the only other item I wanted to talk about for a moment was the fact that the Coopers & Lybrand report on Alberta gravel truckers has been completed. I now have the response from the Gravel Truckers Association, and we'll be working that through probably in the next six weeks to two months to come up with some policies as they relate to whether there are any changes to be made; if there are changes, why; what we intend to do; and how we intend to do that. So we'll be working very closely in that particular area.

The other one is the export highway, which is Highway 2 in the southern part of the province, 16.8 kilometres from Claresholm to north of Stavely. It started last year and will be completed this year. We'll continue on with that particular project as well – very important as a result of free trade – and we'll be working on that one.

One I just wanted to make mention of before I close off my remarks is one that I get a tremendous amount of mail about. It's called the Wagner bog. The Wagner bog is item number four in my other book here, and I can get into a little bit of detail on just exactly what that is. It's an area that borders on the junction of 794 with Highway 16X, that interchange that if it's to be built would go very close to what is the Wagner bog. If the highway was to go straight through, it would go right through it. But there have been a number of things that should be taken into consideration. The Wagner natural area is a nationally recognized 144-hectare site that contains a number of significant habitats. Its dominant feature is a fragile, rich fen or swamp made up of wet meadows, marl ponds, black spruce and birch forests. It's an extremely sensitive area. We have a joint committee that has been doing a great deal of work. To that committee: I congratulate them on the work they've been doing. It involves a number of the departments and the private sector as well, those interested in that particular bog, and hopefully we'll come up with some alternatives as to what we may be able to do should – and I underline that "should" – the interchange go ahead in that area.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I feel confident that although our budget is reduced by 1.4 percent, we can handle that this particular year with the co-operation of all the members of the Legislature, and we look forward to working with you.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In beginning I'd like to congratulate the minister on his hard work and all the endeavours he put into transportation construction last year, especially the twinning of Highway 16. I'd also be remiss if I didn't remind the minister of what a great executive assistant he has in Peter Dawes.* Peter and the staff in the office have been most helpful to me as I make a challenge of the critic position of Transportation and Utilities.

Okay; rocks now.

Absent in the Lieutenant Governor's address, though, Mr. Chairman, was mention of any new initiatives in Transportation and Utilities. Although the absence of any renewal in the Premier's 1989 election promises on secondary roads in the province in the next 10 years – I was pleased to hear that the minister did address that in his opening statements, because no matter what Albertans think about this program, some were very concerned that it might be thrown out the day after they were elected.

The Department of Transportation and Utilities receives, Mr. Chairman, an overall 6.8 percent of the total General Revenue Fund. The minister pointed out fairly clearly that he has cut it by 1.4 percent on the operating side, but of course the budget has increased by 3.2 percent on the capital side. We could say, I suppose, that the increase in operations and the decrease in capital spending means that the department will be spending more, and we hope it'll not be doing any less.

In vote 1, Mr. Chairman, the increase in this vote is quite moderate but still higher than the current rate of inflation. The Minister's Office receives a small increase of 1.2 percent, and Administration Services went up by 6.2. Planning and Development went up by 6.5 percent, but generally the minister should be commended for keeping these costs in line. Transportation

is a very needed infrastructure in the province as we see good roads as a real leader in the promotion of tourism, because as tourism increases to one of our most positive industries in this province, nobody would return if we had poor roads or highways, and no tourists would promote Alberta as a place to visit if we had poor roads full of potholes, busy, and unsafe. But in Alberta we generally have very good highways. When Highway 16 twinning heads for completion, we'll have even a better and safer system going east and west, and as we head farther into the '90s, we need that system as more and more New Democrats get elected along the Yellowhead.

However, as the completion ends by the year 1991, and Alaska will be celebrating the opening of the Alaska Highway in 1992, virtually no highway in the province needs more attention than Highway 40 between Grande Cache and Grande Prairie. Mr. Chairman, when Highway 2 is completed in the south of the province from Claresholm to Monarch and Lethbridge to the border, this will complete a very important four-lane link. I say this because the people of the eastern United States and eastern Canada who are now planning en masse to travel by car or by motor travel to the celebrations on the Alaska Highway will be able to come from New York City, Detroit, Chicago, or many more areas, southwestern U.S. and Canada, by a total four-lane system right through to Highway 40 at Hinton. Presently there is a narrow two-lane paved road, Highway 40, to Grande Cache from Hinton and gravel from Grande Cache to Grande Prairie. This link of pavement, I believe, could be easily completed by the year 1992 for those traveling to the Alaska Highway. I ask the minister for his support. I hope he will get onto this quickly and complete that link. I also feel, Mr. Chairman, that this link is much more important than the link between Whitecourt and Highway 40 to the resource road that goes through the Caribou country to the west of Knight.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say to the minister: after attending the Yellowhead Highway Association, there is no way that this member will be supporting twinning in Jasper National Park. These parks were built for the future and for the future of our children. They're there to be enjoyed because of their beauty and wilderness and because of the wildlife and the rivers that flow freely. These parks were not established for raceways and freeways but for outdoor beauty and enjoyment. I might say that it really bothers me when I drive through another park to the south when I see those high fences and the animals trapped inside. The parks system encourages people to stop, relax, look around, and even sometimes spend a few dollars. I believe that all the departments – Tourism, Recreation and Parks, forestry, and highways – should work together rather than have Tourism and many of us try to stop these people and have them enjoy and visit while transportation wants to run them right through the province. Safety, of course, is always at the forefront of my mind, Mr. Chairman, but so is good planning and the environment, transportation, tourism, parks and recreation, forestry and wildlife.

Before I move away from my riding of West Yellowhead and these estimates, may I remind the minister that prior to the election in 1989, in a very hurried month Transportation and Utilities surveyed and staked Highway 40 south of Hinton to approximately Cadomin. These stakes have since fallen down, no construction has happened, and very few repairs have been made. Many people were led to believe that the work would be done by now and are very concerned. I wonder what true story the minister could relay to me tonight that I can pass on to

*see page 1006, right col., para. 6, line 4

those concerned citizens as to when Highway 40 south of Hinton will be brought up to standard.

Also, Mr. Chairman, highway 947 between Highway 47 and Knight, which has been in the planning stages since the days of Switzer and Bob Dowling, has now grown back up to brush. This was totally slashed at one time, and the highway was to be built. Highway 947 would be a very popular highway between the Peace River country and the twinned four-lane highway of Highway 16 at the junction of Highway 47. In fact, this highway could be renumbered, and the total highway of Highway 40 could be in place between Fox Creek, Edson, and Robb.

The rural railroad, Mr. Chairman. This vote was cut by 21.4 percent, from \$6.7 million to \$53 million, the fourth year in a row that this vote has been cut. The reductions from the period of '87-89 were 19.9 percent, 10.8 percent, and 4.5 percent. The budget for this item has fallen from \$9.8 million in 1987-88 to \$53 million in this year. Perhaps some of those railroad constructions have been completed, but the minister could probably answer that more clearly.

Vote 4, Mr. Chairman. Overall this vote has incurred a 1.1 percent decrease, equivalent to a cut of about \$800,000. The largest cuts in dollar terms were vote 43.2, Municipal Water and Sewage Grants, cut by 7.4 percent or \$1,920,000; vote 43.4, Regional Utility Program, cut 9.4 percent or \$960,000; vote 4.3.3, Northern Supplementary Fund Grants, cut by 25 percent or \$500,000.

For three years, Mr. Chairman, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has tried to alert Canadians and especially the federal and provincial governments to the looming crisis in municipal and regional infrastructures. Many municipalities are working with water and sewage systems that are more than 40 years old. Many have deteriorated past the point where they can be kept safe and well maintained on the grants that provincial governments provide municipalities for such maintenance. Something needs to be done: firstly, to repair against the possibility that this slow decay will result in much more costly repairs, since our municipal infrastructure has hit an absolutely critical level of decline; secondly, to ensure an uninterrupted supply of healthy drinking water and reduce the impact of residential and industrial waste on to the environment; thirdly, this will provide employment for skilled workers in areas, especially rural ones where such activity has a high spin-off or a multiplied value.

The FCM has estimated the costs to needed repairs of municipal infrastructures at \$15 billion in Canada. Its proposal is to have three levels of government share these costs, along some formula fair to municipalities, over the next five years. Unfortunately, the federal government has been the largest stumbling block. It's not traditionally responsible for these types of infrastructures and has not been persuaded by the municipalities' arguments that infrastructure deterioration is nearing a crisis level. Obviously, municipalities need a commitment from the provincial government, a commitment both to shoulder the provincial share of the repairs and construction and to help convince the federal government that it has an important responsibility to help ensure the future health of municipalities.

The Alberta government's actions do not display a real acceptance of its responsibility for healthy municipalities or a good example to the federal government. It has drastically reduced provincial support for water and sewage systems over the past five years. When you include the rate of inflation to get the real picture, the results are even worse. A number of different times in the Budget Address by the Treasurer he very

often compared expenditures for the fiscal year 1985-86 to indicate that government support has increased in certain votes. However, in those particular grants since the 1985-86 budget year there's been a cut, with inflation included, of 57 percent in water and sewer; 76 percent in northern supplementary, with inflation included; and regional utilities, a cut of 104 percent. Of course, the minister explained the use of these grants, and they have been most beneficial to the communities in the past.

Also, Mr. Chairman, there are still those many truckers that are waiting for the report, I believe it's the Wagner/Brundtland report, the report the minister mentioned, to come down. Some are very concerned about the payments they've had in the last years for gravel hauling and also for log hauling in the communities I represent.

Another link I've had many requests on, Mr. Chairman, is from the city of Fort McMurray. They would like to see a highway put in the area between Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and the town of Fort Smith. A report prepared by the road committees of the city of Fort McMurray, the hamlet of Fort Chipewyan, improvement district 18, and the town of Fort Smith has recently identified a road between Fort Smith and Fort McMurray as a pressing priority. The report also observes that the present time offers a unique opportunity to begin the development of such a roadway due to the fact that Canadian Coast Guard, Parks Canada, and perhaps the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development may be willing to bear part of the cost burden. This would partly alleviate any costs incurred by the province of Alberta in the development of this transportation link.

The so-called Fenco report in 1976 made some crucial errors in estimating the cost of this roadway but has often been relied on as the most authoritative cost estimate for this transportation link. Such a transportation link would provide many benefits. A survey has shown that 98 percent of the residents of Fort Chip are in favour of this new road and 90 percent are in favour of the connection to Fort McMurray.

The Nichols Management report estimates a yearly benefit to Fort Chipewyan of over \$1 million based on reduced transportation costs and a huge growth in tourism. The development of such a road would also help to stem the growing drain of Northwest Territories business activity from Alberta to British Columbia, because the Liard Highway, which was opened in 1983, has been an attraction. The desire for an all-connected road which would create a loop connection with the transportation systems of Alberta and the Northwest Territories has been endorsed by the city of Fort McMurray and by the advisory council of district 18. The council of Fort Smith has endorsed the development of this road, and they would like to see the connection with central Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, rural airports, I believe, come under the minister's portfolio. The province has put some \$95,527,286 into rural airports in the last 10 years. I would like to ask the minister if there are going to be any more airports built this year, or is it just the paving programs that are going on? Of course, the town of Hinton is looking at expansion and needs some very acute dollars to make that expansion and repavement of the Hinton Airport. I would hope the minister would seriously consider their proposal.

Mr. Chairman, the province of Alberta is interested in building a portion of the Sarcree Trail extension along the eastern perimeter and passing through the northeast corner of the Sarcree Reserve. Those negotiations started sometime in the early '80s and broke off in 1986. I understand this is an

important link for the city of Calgary, a very needed highway, and the people in that area would like the minister to pay some particular attention to expand that highway.

Also, Mr. Chairman, I would like to remind the minister that I was in favour of closing down the section of a newly twinned portion of the highway between Edson and Wolf Lake road. I would like to ask the minister when that stretch would possibly be opened, who is bearing the cost for the poor or bad construction, or what the problem was with that particular area.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to compliment the minister for his openness and his achievements in the past year and wish him luck in the years to come.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of areas within Transportation and Utilities that not only concern the Minister of Transportation and Utilities but also bear a relationship to some of the other ministers. With utilities, for example, when the question was asked in the House about the impact or the effect of the high transmission power lines, that was shuffled to the Minister of Energy. Possibly it's something the Minister of Transportation and Utilities could take under advisement.

There was also the question raised by the former speaker about the need for additional expenditure for infrastructure and co-operation between the three levels of government. I agree with those comments, and I believe that's an area that's going to take the co-operation of the Department of Municipal Affairs, very similar to what's happening in the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary with the AMPLE program.

The one area in utilities that I'm not clear on and the minister could respond to is vote 43, which shows an overall decrease of 93 percent, but looking at the individual subcategories we see decreases as high as 25 percent.

Just for some general notes, Mr. Chairman, by my calculations this year's expenditure for Transportation and Utilities has decreased by 1.4 percent. The year before the increase was 7.4 percent, so if we average that during the past two years, we're looking at an average increase of 3 percent, which I don't think anybody would find fault with as far as fiscal restraint or fiscal management is concerned.

When we look at the fuel tax increase from 5 cents to 7 cents a litre that was in this year's budget, look at the fact that propane has now been included as a fuel tax base of, I believe, 5 cents per litre, and do those various calculations and look at the impact from a budget point of view, I estimate we're going to see additional revenue of \$125 million as a result of the change of those two measures. If we look at the expected revenues in fuel taxes during 1990-91, we're looking at \$428 million in comparison to \$295 million in 1989-90. Now, we have to look, Mr. Chairman, as to where those additional dollars are going. Are they going directly toward the construction of roads, are they going toward road maintenance, or are they going into some other portions of the budget the minister is responsible for?

Mr. Chairman, reference was made to the study of the Alberta truck haul policy. Again, my understanding is that that report was released in December of last year. Of course, the report was commissioned as a result of allegations of a kickback system. There are at least two organizations, the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association and the Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy

Construction Association, that believe the report didn't find any evidence relating to kickbacks. Their belief was the fear that too many people were scared that they would be blacklisted if they talked too much.

Now, some questions on this particular point, Mr. Chairman. I'd like the minister to respond as to what the government is doing with this report. I'd like to know if the minister or the government is committed to keeping the minimum haul rates, and I'd like to also know what the government is doing about proper monitoring of overweight vehicles. Then, of course, the possibility again of allegations of a kickback system have to be addressed. I'd like the minister to tell the House what the government is doing to ensure that independent gravel haulers are able to make a decent wage. On the subject of trucks, Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the triple trailers or the trailer with the two puppies – in other words, the three units – is becoming a thing of the past. I'm not clear as to whether that's a government measure or something that's been taken on voluntarily by the truckers involved in the various trucking associations. As well, the minister implemented a few months back a system of logging miles and such, and I believe that's a system that's compatible with the other western provinces. I'd like the minister to give some indication as to how the truckers are receiving it, whether there are any problems as to whether it's meeting the original expectations.

Now, there was reference made to the paving of secondary roads. At the same time there was a little shot taken at the leader of the Liberal Party. We do have some concerns, Mr. Chairman, with the figures bandied about as far as the paving of secondary highways is concerned and looking at the actual dollars being spent. Now, if we go back to the previous year's budget, we see that the budget to pave and maintain secondary roads in Alberta increased by 21.9 percent. Looking at the budget figures this year, it appears to be an increase, but less than .9 percent. I'd like the minister to respond as to what the overall projected costs are meant to be in achieving that particular goal of paving all postsecondary roads by the beginning of the new decade, and what the new dollars are. I'm still not clear as to what the new dollars are. I'd like the minister to tell us how many kilometres the province plans to pave this year and how many kilometres they paved last year, and if the government is in fact still committed to its original promise to complete the whole program by the year 2000.

As well, Mr. Chairman, the minister made reference to seat belt legislation. He made reference to percentages of drivers using seat belts prior to the court action being launched and during the period of time the court action was in effect and since the court action, of course, has been dealt with. I'd like the minister to tell me where the particular stats came from, as to whether they're scientific stats or just a kind of estimate of the number of drivers using seat belts; also if there's some indication as to how many lives may have been lost in that period of time when Albertans were not forced to wear seat belts because of the court action that was pending.

Now, when I get into the area of Via Rail, I understand that the responsibility of Via Rail falls under a different department, but there is a connection, of course, between Via Rail and the minister of transportation. Figures we have, Mr. Chairman, would indicate that in Banff last year 92 passengers got on and off the trains; 98 percent of those persons were tourists, injecting an estimated \$15 million to \$20 million into the local economy. I understand there have been some discussions with various parties about an alternative method of allowing some rail

transportation. If the minister could answer a few questions in this area, one is as to why the government was so quiet when the whole question of the Via Rail cancellation or reduction came about, and as to whether the government has looked at involving the private sector in plans to increase rail travel in Alberta.

Another area, Mr. Chairman, is Highway 56 near Stettler heading down south. I've heard various comments about that particular highway. I'm still not clear in my mind if there are plans to go ahead with that highway, the impact it would have on the existing roadway that's used. Possibly the minister could address that: as to whether there is a time frame, as to whether there is something tentative on the books.

The minister addressed very clearly the question of the Yellowhead Highway. However, I do have a couple of questions in that area. I'd like to know if the program is proceeding with the original objectives that were set, the most up-to-date estimate of what the total cost will be, and when the project is scheduled to be completed. One of the obvious questions that comes to mind, too, when we talk in terms of transportation, particularly roadways and how it impacts on the highways and that, is whether the minister – and we commend him for the fiscal restraint he has shown within this year's budget – can realistically achieve the objectives he's talked about in terms of the dollars that are being earmarked.

There are a few other comments I want to make in relation to transportation in the urban centres, Mr. Chairman. One deals with a question I raised here in the House previously, and that's the question of the interchange of Whitemud Drive and the Calgary Trail. From my discussions with city officials and correspondence I've seen and so on, it's very, very clear to me that the city of Edmonton holds that as a number one priority when it comes to funding under the highways corridor program, the primary highways program. Despite that, the department has advised the city that they do not intend to earmark dollars from that particular budget; rather, the city is going to have to continue funding that under the basic capital program. Instead, the province has opted to fund the interchange at the Yellowhead Trail and the outer ringroad.

Now, there are a couple of areas here that bother me with the way this has been handled. One is that when we talk in terms of priorities, I think it's very, very important to allow municipalities to be involved in the decision-making process of those priorities, even if it's a program like this, Mr. Chairman, where clearly – and I don't argue the point – under the existing terms of reference the minister's department has the right to make decisions when it involves that particular program. However, the process of participation by the municipalities in the decision-making process is good. There are a couple of key factors that come to mind with the question of that particular interchange. One is that when it's funded under the basic capital project, it can delay considerably the period of time it's going to take to complete it. That, of course, is not a very safe intersection. If you drive it at all and you see the problems of traffic merging and traffic trying to get off to the Calgary Trail, it is a problem. It's a very severe problem.

The other factor which could delay the period of time it would take to construct it is the competing forces, of course. With this interchange having to compete with other transportation projects within the city of Edmonton, it means it may get a lower priority. If the city, for example, wants to extend the LRT through Belgravia, through McKernan, then those dollars are

competing against each other because they're both coming from the basic capital program. So that is of concern to me.

I recall, Mr. Chairman, in the last session there were questions raised by a government member or a private member relating to the situation on Highway 14 and 23rd Avenue. Could the minister give us an update as to whether that is now deemed to be safe with the improvements and if there are additional improvements? My recollection is that there are additional improvements earmarked at that particular intersection. Also, as to whether there's a time line to extend Whitemud Drive from the existing area, heading east to the city limits.

Mr. Chairman, just a couple more points. One of the areas that I believe is becoming more and more noticeable within the larger cities in Alberta is the question of pedestrian deaths. Figures in the city of Edmonton would indicate that 50 percent of pedestrian deaths are the problem of the pedestrian. That means the other 50 percent of the problem is the fault of the motorists. But regardless of whose fault it is, I think it's a problem the municipalities in conjunction with the province have to attempt to resolve to reduce the number of fatalities there are in the streets in the larger cities in Alberta. I'm sure the minister works very closely now with organizations like the Edmonton Safety Council, the Calgary Safety Council, the Alberta Safety Council. The city of Edmonton has tried the system of putting up signs. But I think by working jointly, by getting all parties involved, there has to be new initiatives, more creative ways, to try and reduce the number of deaths.

The last area I want to touch on, Mr. Chairman, again falls under a different department, but possibly the minister could communicate the concern because the infractions do occur on the highways and the streets, which falls within the department of transportation. I'm still not satisfied that in all instances the fines are severe enough for the infractions that are caused. I've had cases brought to me where there have been fatalities involved. The individuals have gone to court because the minimum fine may be an amount of \$50 – that person is fined \$50, not even required to take a safety defensive driving course. That I find very, very distressing. We, of course, hear of a lot of instances where the reverse may happen if it's a blatant case of impaired driving being involved, but there are other instances where I feel there is room for much, much stiffer penalties.

On that note, Mr. Chairman, I'll conclude. I too want to take this opportunity to commend the minister for his open-door policy, his ability to communicate, and his willingness to work with members of the opposition. It's a refreshing attitude, and I appreciate it very much.

Thank you.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, maybe I can just make a few remarks to start with. I appreciate the note I got from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. My executive assistant is Brian Hlus, not Peter Dawes,* and I apologize for not introducing him earlier so you could have had the correct name to work from. I should also mention that Harvey Alton, the best deputy in government, is up there as well, and Doug Porter from finance. I might even add that my youngest son is here to listen and see what goes on in the evenings in the Legislature.

There was a comment made about no new initiatives by the department, and I might suggest that there are a number, in the sense that Alberta has been a leader in the area of construction design work and the likes of that. Plus I might point out the National Safety Code and the work that's been done in that

*see page 1003, left col., para. 5, line 6

particular area. The hon. Member for West Yellowhead pointed out the 1992 50th anniversary of the Alaska Highway and that Highway 40 was narrow. That is not true. Highway 40 is a very wide, but graveled, road. It had a paving project on it last year. It was rained out in the kind of wet, late summer we had. I guess it gets down to the kind of priorities as to where the dollars are going to come from, whether it's Highway 40 or Highway 16, which has \$47 million on it this year to complete a commitment we made some time ago. The start of that particular one was 10 years ago by the late Hon. Henry Kroeger.

It was interesting to note that the hon. member was not in support of twinning within the park boundaries. We presently have already done that in Elk Island park. It's twinned through, and it hasn't hurt the buffalo or the drivers or whoever else is there. Our point is that you can't get into a program where you twin a road and come up to a sign that says, "You are here, slow down, narrow it down." Because that's exactly what's going on in the present, in the sense that we're twinning from Hinton to the Lloydminster area and will not be doing anything beyond that until we have some idea what the national parks' plans are for twinning within the existing right-of-way, if that's possible. I did say at the Yellowhead Highway Association meeting that if the federal parks people were not prepared to do that, they might consider turning that corridor over to the province of Alberta and allowing us to do the planning, turning the section over to B.C. or whoever it is on the other side and letting them do the planning and getting that road in shape so that we eventually can have that road from the east to the west or the west to the east in a twinned state right across, but particularly the Yellowhead we're all so proud of. But I say there is no apparent damage to the Elk Island National Park that is twinned through right now. So the hon. member might want to reconsider that position.

Highway 40 south of Hinton. Again we're back to priorities. The hon. member started off by saying that we've got to pave Highway 40 – and I should go back to that for a minute – from Grande Cache to Grande Prairie and we could do it in time for the 1992 celebrations. If we had all the money to do that, it's not physically possible to do it. What I've said to the various highway associations who have contacted me: as much as I appreciate that there is gravel on that particular road, we would work to the best of our ability with the local authorities to make sure we know when the people are going to be traveling through there, and we'll do what we can to assist in the sense of dust abatement for that period of time. That was provided to the organizing committee from Grande Prairie some months ago in working with the hon. Member for Grande Prairie and with the committee up there as well.

Highway 947 north of Edson – and I believe he referred to the highway as highway 47 – is a road that in my understanding will be some time. Again, it's back to priorities. We will be some time in the completion of it. It's not presently in the plans. It's called dollars.

There was a mention of the Alberta Resources Railway and the fact that reductions had taken place the last number of years. That is a positive thing, in the sense that the reductions that are in the budget are done because two things are happening: the interest expenses on the debt issues have matured and the freight levels have gone up. I wrote down that in fact it's working its way out of debt faster than we had anticipated. That's a plus for all of us, and I think we should remember that.

The northern supplementary program assists communities that do not have water and sewer programs or packages in place,

period: the isolated communities of the northern part of the province. The supplementary fund was a gap fund to assist in those areas. As we move down there, we've reduced it by, I believe, \$500,000, from \$2 million to 1 and a half million dollars. We think we can handle that in the sense of working with the communities. They themselves are ready to, in fact, have some of that work done.

Drastically reduced water and sewage systems: primarily because of the construction of the new regional facilities themselves, Mr. Chairman. Brand-new facilities, state-of-the-art facilities are now constructed and are now in the system and no longer need anything at this particular point in time. I pointed out in my opening remarks that down the road, yes, there was going to have to be some monitoring carried on with the municipalities to ensure we're aware of that. But in the interim we have brand-new . . . As a matter of fact, I believe there is an opening tomorrow afternoon at the capital regional plant at Morinville that I hope to be able to be at as well.

Minimum haul rates in government work. That's certainly an interesting one. What we did do was the Coopers & Lybrand report. That was done in the interests of trying to find a solution for all by an outside organization at the request of the gravel truckers, as well as the Auditor General, as well as our own department. That report is in. We provided it to the public, I believe, in late December. We also suggested to all parties concerned to get back to us, and I can say now that on April 12 of this last month we did receive from the Alberta Gravel Truckers Association themselves their response to that. We now have basically all the responses in from individuals, from associations, from organizations. We will be going through that and will be making some recommendations. I believe I said earlier tonight: six weeks to two months before we would get that done. We, in fact, then take the time to put together some package we can discuss with those that would be affected by that.

Fort Chip-Fort McMurray; Fort Chip-Fort Smith; Fort McMurray-La Loche – I threw that one in there because that's one that's been talked about with the MLA for the area. One of the things that we have in place right now is a really good winter road to Fort Chip from Fort McMurray. Again it comes back to priorities. Again it comes back to deciding just exactly where you're going to put the dollars, how you're going to put the dollars, how you're going to use them.

There was mention about possible assistance from the federal government. Well, having been in this particular position, in transportation, in the position of Minister of Tourism for eight years prior to that, and working with the national parks people about getting right-of-way, I can assure the hon. member that just getting right-of-way within the park was difficult. At one point they said: "Fine. You want it; you build it." We said: "Okay; we'll build it. Give us the right-of-way. We're not going to build it on your land. We'll build it on Alberta land. Give us the right-of-way. We'll take a look at that." I'm getting almost as thin on top as some of the members opposite waiting for that to occur. [interjection] I didn't mention any names, but if the shoe fits, wear it.

I think it's important that we understand that that is an issue the people of Fort Smith certainly are well aware of. I believe it was 1962 when there was what was referred to in the local area, affectionately, as John Diefenbaker's road to resources. There was a right-of-way cleared through that park. In those days I happened to be a little younger than I am today, and I was working with a company providing the food to the camps

that were actually clearing that particular right-of-way on up into Fort Smith, and then, of course, we were even working on the road around to Yellowknife and Prelude Lake and the Great Slave Lake Railway.

The difficulty we have in that particular area is trying to get some decision from the federal government. What we have done in co-operation with the community of Fort Chipewyan was ensure that we had open as early as possible a good quality winter road, and we then have to do some long-term planning in co-operation with the MLA for the area and the communities that are involved, and we can do that.

A question was asked about rural airports. Mainly maintenance, although there is a program that I believe has \$1 million in it, and that's federal funds that are tied into working with us on the Jasper-Hinton study as to what needs to be done. There are a number of things that have been suggested by the people in the area, and one was extension of the runway so there could be some capacity for other aircraft in that particular area. That, of course, is part of the ability of the federal government to assist us through the Hon. Joe Clark and his people, who are working with us on that particular one. So there are some things going on in that area.

Infrastructure. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, three levels. Basically when we were talking about the power lines – that hasn't shifted. That's where the responsibility lies, with the hon. minister, and you certainly have the capacity and ability to possibly ask him. The AMPLE program was Alberta's contribution to infrastructure in the sense of old infrastructure, a program that was created some time ago by this government to assist communities, with very few strings attached, to in fact get into replacement of old infrastructure: steel pipe or iron pipe, the likes of that. Generally the taxes that he referred to I assume, and I could be corrected on this, go to the General Revenue Fund. I know they don't come to me in transportation.

Again we talked about the minimum haul rate and the fact that we had the reports in now. We'll be working on that particular one and working with the idea of getting the review done and getting the recommendations done so that we can come back in six weeks to two months. It'll probably take us that long to go over all of the responses that we have relative to either side. My mind is open. I'm waiting until we go through the entire document.

AN HON. MEMBER: Which one are you talking about now?

MR. ADAIR: That's the minimum haul rates, the Coopers & Lybrand report, gravel truckers, whether they're in Edmonton or the rural parts of Alberta.

The National Safety Code across the nation: basically in place. It covers hours of work, length of trucks, load factors, and the likes of that. We in the province of Alberta are, in fact, very much leaders in the development of that National Safety Code in co-operation with the industry at the national level.

Now, I believe the log book was the one reference that was made. If it's a national truck hauling across the nation province to province, they are obligated to keep the log books going, and basically we have an exemption within – I believe it's 100 kilometres. Do I stand to be corrected on that one? I got the right nod. That means that if they're working within that 100-kilometre area, they don't have to keep the log books.

The secondary highway program. For some reason the remarks that I started out with weren't picked up as well as I had thought, but I'll repeat them. We are committed. We are

committed to the 10-year program to top off a program that was in place for 20 years prior to that, and that's important. It's not a new program; it's an existing program accelerated at the request of the MDs and counties and IDs. I don't have at my fingertips the number of kilometres we did last year and the numbers we hope to do this year, but I will get them for you. That's very important, and I don't want any doubt left in anybody's mind: that commitment was made and will be kept, as we have done with the Yellowhead Highway and Trans-Canada 1, again a 10-year commitment. When you do that, you make a major commitment because that then becomes the priority. We have a commitment to finish the twinning of Highway 1 and Highway 16. We have a commitment to widen Highway 63. Those are commitments, and they will be kept. It poses some difficulty, because if we're going to keep them at their perfect level, then something else takes a bit of a bump somewhere along the way. Again, when you look at them, the totals indicate to you that in fact the dollars are less in the total but not changed in those commitments that we have.

Oh, I have a note just passed to me that says: 580 kilometres base paved and 277 kilometres final paved. That's kilometres of secondary highways which were asphalt surfaced in 1989. Seven hundred and sixty kilometres of secondary highways are planned for asphalt surfacing in the year 1990. You heard it first right here. We anticipate that by the end of this year's season less than 7,200 kilometres will require asphalt surfacing.

There's no question, then, that the clarification that was needed with that program was the fact that albeit there was a newspaper which headlined that we were going to pave all the gravel roads in Alberta, that is not the case. Only 10 percent of them are classified as secondary highways, and basically half of them were already paved in that first 20 years of the program. It's the balance of that that we're working on right now. As I said, that amounts to, within a point or two, 5 percent of the gravel roads in the province.

Highway 56, the route that goes through the Stettler community: what are we going to do with it? I guess, then, in a simple form the question by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is: is it going to be completed? Two things I need to point out. The area that needs to be completed is 160 kilometres south of the town of Stettler. It basically is the area that comes up from Lethbridge to Lomond and then potentially has the possibility of crossing one of the Indian reserves – I believe it's the Blackfoot; I stand to be corrected on that one – and then would join up as it crosses Trans-Canada 1, in that particular area. We anticipate trying to work with the groups in the area to see if we can get access across the reserve. If not, we've been asked to look at alternatives, to go around, and we're prepared to do that too. That is something that certainly will be in the works for discussion this year. I don't anticipate any work being done on it until we get the right-of-way cleared so we know which way it's going to be. I think the question was asked of me earlier: how many kilometres might that be if we go around? My understanding is that it's 20 to 25 kilometres additional than if it came straight through the reserve. Certainly we are prepared to sit down with the chief and his council and go through that again, look at what options there are there, what advantages there are for the band as well as ourselves.

So in essence, to answer your question, yes, we're prepared to look at making that completion that has been requested of the department of highways, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Transportation and Utilities over the years. It's been a request that's been going on for many, many years by

the chambers and by the communities along that particular route.

The Yellowhead is on target; it's on budget. If 24 projects this year and \$47 million isn't a commitment, I don't really know what is. I think that's the best way of putting it. That's in year nine of a 10-year commitment. So I think it's important that that be recognized. I'll just say it again: if there are 24 contracts out and if there's \$47 million, there sure is no lack of commitment on the part of this government to the Yellowhead Highway and the commitment we gave through the late hon. Henry Kroeger some nine years ago.

Basic capital grants for the cities, particularly the city of Edmonton. Right now the city is working in the area of Whitemud and Calgary Trail, using the basic capital grant funding which has been on all of the Whitemud from day one: the basic capital grant over the last 10 years. None of it has come from special funding for ring roads or continuous corridors. They've been using the basic capital grant. I think it's important to know that if the council here in the city of Edmonton or any of the cities – for example, using the Whitemud and Calgary Trail intersection as a priority, if they choose to, they could do it all basically in one year, if they choose to put all their money in there. It's roughly a \$33 million project. They're eligible for \$37,951,000 if they choose to put it there. But if they choose to put that toward LRT or to other work, that is the choice of the municipal authority.

We provide \$65 per capita under that basic capital grant program. It's there and everybody understands that or at least I thought everybody did in that sense. That really is an issue that appears to be resolved in the sense that the city is working there. There's a lot of work going on at that particular intersection, and it's work that started this year and is scheduled for completion in 1993. As I said, we understand that that work could cost roughly \$33 million before it's finished. But there are – and I have to say that very clearly – no cuts in the program itself. There was an inference that there were cuts and that's why funds weren't put into that particular project. They were turned down because they had the right and they still have the right to use the basic capital grant program.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I'll sit down and await more questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

Could we have order in the committee before we go to Banff-Cochrane, please. There are some very loud subcommittee meetings.

The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the Transportation and Utilities estimates tonight. I'll try to keep my comments short, because I know that most of the members in the House are anxious to ask a few questions of the minister, and I know how much the minister likes to answer those questions. [some applause] Thank you, colleagues.

I would like to begin by congratulating the minister, and this congratulation goes down to his staff as well for both the very effective and responsive manner in which they operate the department. Having known the minister quite well only for the last year, I'm simply amazed at his breadth of knowledge of roadways in this province. On literally any road you mention, this minister has knowledge at hand. He doesn't have to refer to his notes; he's got that knowledge at hand.

While I'm complimenting the department, I want to specifically compliment the regional director that I have the pleasure of dealing with on a regular basis, and that's Harry Protopappas, who is out of the Airdrie office. Specifically I want to thank Harry and the department for some initiatives with respect to Highway 1, the upgrading that began last year from just east of the rock cut outside of Seebe and is proceeding towards the city of Calgary. I think we're just about at the Scott Lake hill this year, and we'll be going towards Jumping Pound. Even more so, I want to thank Harry and the rest of his staff for all the help he's giving me in working with my two reserves, specifically regarding Highway 22, which comes off the number one and moves south through Redwood Meadows, Bragg Creek, and then into the entry points to Kananaskis Country. We've had a number of negotiations with Chief Roy Whitney and the Sarcee on that piece of property.

While I'm talking about Chief Roy Whitney and the Sarcee, I must take issue with the comments from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead when he indicated that the negotiations for the Sarcee Trail in Calgary had broken down about 1986, I think, if my memory serves me correctly. Well, I know personally from talking with Chief Whitney and also from correspondence from the department that there are negotiations continuing between the city of Calgary and the Sarcee and our Department of Transportation and Utilities to reach a consensus on the area to be utilized for extension of that roadway. I know further that Chief Roy Whitney is reluctant to enter into any finalized negotiations for any of the roadways near the reserve until such time as a comprehensive agreement has been reached. So I thank Harry for keeping me up to date on that.

Moving on to Highway 1A, this piece of roadway through the Stoney Reserve requires upgrading, certainly from the Morley reserve all the way into the IX turnoff that would lead into Seebe. The reason it needs some upgrading is because it's a very narrow roadway and it's prone to having wildlife on it. It's a very scenic road, and it will be improved through the negotiations that are ongoing between the department and the Stoney. I am working very hard with the Stoney Indians to be sure that we all understand where we're coming from and we can get that roadway improved just as quickly as possible.

I found the comments from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead concerning twinning in the national park to be quite interesting, and I'd welcome the member to come down to my constituency of Banff-Cochrane and take a look at the roadway from the park gates up to the Sunshine turnoff. Now, there was a great deal of concern when those plans to twin that roadway were going on, and the concerns were for the wildlife and what was going to happen, but I think virtually everyone – and I'm including in that Parks Canada and their biologists – is very, very pleased with the results and the safety factor both for the animals and for the humans that are traveling along that highway.

I'm again very pleased that in my discussions with the hon. minister, he's confirmed to me his support for the extension of that twinning from the turnoff to Sunshine all the way up to Lake Louise, because again the traffic flow in that area is quite extensive. The same factors that justified twinning the highway from the park gates to Sunshine are just as relevant all the way up to Lake Louise. I know very well that the Parks Canada people locally and certainly the parks transportation people are very much in favour of that twinning. As I understand it, the sole issue yet to be gotten around is the issue of financing for that project. I know very well that the minister continues to

discuss this with his federal counterpart, as I continue to do with Louise Feltham, the MP for Wild Rose. I hope that in the near future we'll get a commitment of funds to make sure that we twin that roadway all the way up to Lake Louise.

So, again, I'd encourage the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to come down to Banff-Cochrane. We'll show you that the twinning does make sense, hon. member. Of course it can't be forgotten, as the minister said, that you just can't have a twinned highway and then cut it down into a two-lane road. It just creates chaos, especially in heavily traveled areas. Perhaps the fact that my area is somewhat more heavily traveled than the hon. member's area is the reason for his comments.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

I would like to make just a couple of comments, Mr. Minister, about some of the elements, and then, as I say, I will be pleased to give other members an opportunity to make their comments. I'd refer you first, Mr. Minister, to page 151 in the elements. Looking, firstly, at reference 2.6.2, I see that Vehicle Inspection Stations have had an increase in budget this year of almost 100 percent, 97.6 percent. I wonder if the minister could advise the committee of the reasons for that increase. Moving on to another aspect of this issue, I'm curious as to why these stations aren't being built by Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services, and perhaps the minister could answer that question as well.

Moving along to 2.11.1, Rail Lines to Resources, I see that that element has been eliminated, received no funding this year whatsoever, whereas last year it was at \$5.5 million. I'd appreciate advice from the minister as to the reasons for that.

One other reference on this page. Under Motor Transport Services, 2.8.3, there is a 7.3 percent increase in that element over the previous year, and I'd ask the minister why that manpower increase has occurred.

Just a couple of other questions, Mr. Minister. On page 153 I'm looking at vote 4 and referring to last year's estimates. I notice that there's no reference to utilities policy development or to small power research and development and also the electric energy marketing element that was in vote 5. I wonder if I could get some comments from the minister on those matters. Finally, with respect to 4.53, Rural Electrification Grants, I see that they've increased almost \$2 million, from a relatively small budget of \$280,000 last year to over \$2 million this year, and I'd appreciate the minister's comments on that.

With those questions and those comments, again I'd just like to end by congratulating the minister and the department for a very well run, effective, efficient, and responsive department.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make a few remarks and ask a few questions of the hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities; first of all, to congratulate the minister and to make special mention of his cheerful, co-operative, and competent staff: a joy to work with.

Highways are such an important issue in most rural areas. The secondary highway system is doubly important in my area, as the minister well knows. Perhaps a few city people aren't quite as aware that secondary roads are, in fact, major market roads. These are the means by which grain, livestock, crude oil, gravel, lumber, sand, gasoline, sulphur, forage products, even

tourists, ambulance, fire service vehicles, and school buses make connections between major highways and between villages and towns in the rural area. It's important that these roads be hard-surfaced and made all-weather secondary roads. I'm pleased with the progress of this program in the Highwood area.

We do have in our area some concern about primary Highway 40, that it is still closed to the middle of June, and hope that sometime we'll see that it can be opened approximately at the beginning of the Victoria Day long weekend in May, particularly to serve the tourists from the city of Calgary.

We also look forward to some determination in the twinning of Highway 2 south from the Okotoks overpass to the High River overpass, determination in the sense of finding and locating the different overpasses. There's twinning for a very short distance between the Sheep River bridge and Aldersyde, but we're looking for some dates when that might be completed.

Another issue relates to that. As you know, Mr. Minister, success breeds its own set of problems. Increased traffic in our area, particularly occasioned by the MagCan plant and the Cargill plant, calls out for at least one, if not two, and perhaps even three overpasses to handle the increased commuter traffic and the increased truck traffic occasioned by those two plants.

I want to thank the minister and his department for the rather speedy resolution to the several problems on Highway 22 and for helping those landowners in the area who were impacted by the long-term projects, particularly roads that are extended 10, 15, and 25 years into the future as the city of Calgary expands.

I would request the minister to consider the issue of lengthening the north-south runway on the High River airport, as the increased traffic in the area demands.

I'd like to commend the minister for grants to the MDs, villages, towns, and IDs. They are very much appreciated by all of those municipal governments, and the rural water program has proven to be most helpful in all aspects of the area as there is a tremendous growth in acreages and small farms in our area.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Vegreville.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate on the budget estimates for the department of transportation. I, too, would like to extend my thanks to the minister and to the people who work for him. Again, my contact with officials in the department of transportation is frequent as a rural member bringing concerns of my constituents to their attention, and I really do appreciate the help I get from the people who work in the regional offices, both in Vermilion and St. Paul, and any contact that I have with the minister's office. I believe I have an undertaking from the minister for an appointment soon. I'm looking forward to having a chance to sit down with him when his agenda clears a little bit to discuss some road projects that are of concern to me in the Vegreville constituency. There are a number of them that I would like to address over time.

I should bring to his attention that there are people who write letters to local papers in my area who suggest that roads will not be built, roads will not be paved in the Vegreville constituency because we're represented by an MLA who is not on the government side. I have done my best over the years to convince these loyal Conservatives who like to write letters like that that that's not the way the minister prioritizes his project, that's not the way the department of transportation works. I'm

hoping that I can, from time to time, get some proof I can show that substantiates the claim. So I look forward to having those discussions with the minister when we get the opportunity.

In terms of secondary road projects the minister is, I think, quite familiar with many of the needs in the Vegreville constituency. He's had many opportunities to discuss them with me and to discuss them with the representatives of the four counties that are in part in the Vegreville constituency. I know that these county officials do an effective job of lobbying, presenting their road priorities to the minister and to his officials every year and sending letters.

The first road I would like to discuss with the minister is secondary 637, running east and west from the town of Lamont; secondary road 831, from the town of Lamont through to secondary road 855, which is the road that runs north and south between Mundare and Andrew. Now, there was a project announced by the minister last year that would see 10 miles of that road running east from the town of Lamont paved this year with a four-mile access road into the hamlet of St. Michael paved as well, and for that we're most appreciative. The project didn't get under way last year. I believe the contractor, Western Bitulithic, was mired in the mud somewhere for a good part of the summer. Some projects didn't get as far along as was hoped. But the project is, I understand, going ahead this spring. We're looking forward to its early completion. There are two miles of that road that are in the hon. Member for Redwater-Andrew's constituency, and then eight miles in my constituency. Then in terms of the four-mile access into St. Michael, we share that road half and half. Na piw, as we would say out in that area: half and half.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

But there is, hon. minister, a portion of the road in between that is left unpaved. There are eight miles of 637 between the easternmost edge of that paving project and 855 that are unpaved. It was rebuilt to modern gravel standards in 1986-87 and, I submit, is desperately in need of pavement. I've brought this to the attention of the deputy minister as well during meetings we've had in the past, and he's agreed with me that when a road is almost completely paved, there is extra pressure and extra justification for completing the paving of it. I should note that this road is a very busy thoroughfare. It not only handles local traffic but it's a major route for people traveling from Edmonton to the Lakeland, the beautiful northeastern region of the province, again part of the tourism strategy that seems to be a part of the government's economic development plan. This is a very busy road, and what we will have by the middle of summer is a 10-mile section from Lamont that's paved, then an eight-mile section that isn't, and then an 11- or 12-mile section to the village of Hairy Hill that's completely paved. I think in the interests of safety we've got to move very quickly to get that road paved. I'm glad to see the Member for Vermilion-Viking agrees with me. I'm not sure if he drives on the road or not.

The Member for Redwater-Andrew has apparently told the local paper and some local officials, I gather, that that eight-mile section is not going to be paved this year. I hope he'll join with me in lobbying the minister to see that it is. It is a very busy road, and I think it's important that we look at paving it. I will send the minister a copy of an editorial in the local paper where they express very deep concern on behalf of the residents of the area about the safety of travelers who would be on this

road: the safety problems that would occur if this eight-mile section is left unpaved. I think it makes sense, if we can, to kind of join those two projects together. There are going to be trucks working in the area, Western Bitulithic. Maybe they're not busy later on this summer, and they can do the other eight miles. That seems like a practical consideration. I know it's a matter of priorities, hon. minister, but I suggest this is a very busy road and one that needs attention.

Another road in the county of Lamont that I would like to bring to the minister's attention again is 834. The Member for Vermilion-Viking will have his opportunity to speak, I'm sure. Eighty-four, the secondary road that runs from the town of Chipman south to Highway 16, in fact joins highways 15 and 16, is a road that was built and ready to be paved a number of years ago. It's still not paved. I want a commitment from the minister that the road will be paved and some indication of when he's planning on doing it, because it, too, is a very important road. We've got a number of communities that are close to the Yellowhead Highway. The government has put a major amount of money into twinning the Yellowhead Highway, a project which we've been very supportive of in terms of the general economy of the province but also in terms of that being an important tourist artery through the central part of the province of Alberta, and it's more important now than ever that communities that are close to the Yellowhead Highway have paved access from that highway. It would be a great benefit to these communities. Many of them have it already, but there are a few who do not, Chipman being one of them. I would like to raise that concern with the minister and get some indication from him of when he's planning on paving 834. The region itself is much busier than it used to be.

The minister referred to Elk Island National Park. This road runs close to the eastern boundary of Elk Island National Park. There's a substantial recreation area out in the Blackfoot area there. There's more development going on through the Minister of Recreation and Parks' department at Beaverhill Lake, which is south of Highway 16 again and very close to 834. So this road is an important artery not just to the people of Chipman but, I submit, to the traveling public in the province of Alberta, and something that I hope the minister would be able to make a commitment on soon.

Secondary road 855 south of the town of Mundare in the county of Beaver. It is paved. It's due for its final paving project there, and I'm wondering if the minister can give us some indication of whether that's going to go ahead in the next year or two. The road conditions in the county of Beaver are something the minister and I have discussed on frequent occasions. I encouraged the county of Beaver to do a survey last year, to aid in their lobbying efforts, to determine just how many kilometres of secondary road they have relative to adjacent counties and to determine in real terms what percentage of those kilometres of secondary roads are paved, either base pavement or final pavement. What we find with the county of Beaver, I submit, is a very serious situation. It has more kilometres of secondary road than any of the adjacent counties. There are 260 kilometres of secondary road in the county of Beaver, which is more than any of the adjacent counties of Camrose, Lamont, Wainwright, Minburn, Flagstaff. They've got more roads, but they also have a far smaller percentage of those roads paved. It's right around 18 percent of the secondary roads in the county of Beaver that are paved. The other counties are generally at least 40 percent or more. I know there are technical reasons for that, that there's a history to that, but I think we

need to move beyond that history and just recognize that the county of Beaver has some . . . I should point out that that statistic was compiled in July of last year. There may have been some further miles.

I'm happy to stick up for the Member for Vermilion-Viking, who, too, wants to see some projects in the county of Beaver. But just in terms of overall performance there aren't as many miles of paved secondary road in the county of Beaver. I submit that that's a problem that needs to be addressed, and I'm confident the minister wants to do something about that.

The number one priority in terms of roads in the county of Beaver that are in my constituency is secondary road 857 north of the hamlet of Bruce, and I'd like to get some indication from the minister of when this project would go ahead. I believe tests were done, and it's been determined that the road is suitable for base paving.

MR. ADAIR: Is that north of Bruce?

MR. FOX: North of Bruce, 857 north of Bruce.

I'm sorry. The Member for Vermilion-Viking is communicating in American Sign Language to me, and it's hard to understand what he's saying.

Anyway, this road north of the hamlet of Bruce, 857, goes into Vegreville. The minister's been gracious enough to do base paving and final paving on the section that goes into Vegreville, but we've still got this Bruce road that needs paving. The county of Beaver sent the minister a letter that contains a very good idea, I submit, and I'd just like to remind him of it. They're asking that when 857 is paved north of the hamlet of Bruce, the access road receive a lift of asphalt as well. It is a good idea. I think it fits in with the mandate of the hamlet access program. There are some safety concerns that are brought to the minister's attention in that letter as well. In terms of the county of Beaver that's their number one priority, and I'm hoping it can be done soon. I'd like an indication from the minister whether or not that's a project that we can expect some action on this year.

Secondary road 855 north and south of the village of the Holden. That road has been completely rebuilt to modern graveled standards over the last four years, and for that we're grateful. However, there is a need for pavement on that road too. You know, I referred earlier to the number of communities that are close to the Yellowhead Highway that need paved access from that highway. Chipman was the first one I mentioned, but certainly Bruce and Holden and Ryley fit into that category. Road 855 north of the village of Holden is paved eventually, when it gets close to going into Mundare. I referred to that road earlier in talking about the county of Lamont. That road needs to be paved. It, too, is a busy road. The minister is well aware of the problems that are caused by dust on roads like this, and I'm wondering if he can give us some indication of the department's plans. I know that the department does a lot of advance planning. They're not cast in stone, because certain things change over time, but I'm sure he can give us an indication of the plans with regards to 855.

I'd like to ask him the same questions about 854, the road that goes north and south of the town of Ryley. I would have to say that the portion that seems to be most pressing in terms of priority would be the portion north of the village of Ryley, because when you look at paving north of Holden, north of Ryley, then you can be looking at paving 626, which is the secondary road running along the correction line. They'd all

hook up with 857 and provide good transportation links between the communities on or adjacent to the Yellowhead Highway. I'm talking about Vegreville, Mundare, Holden, Ryley, Tofield, Bruce, and Chipman.

I understand there are plans to proceed with the final paving on 834 south of Tofield. I'd like to know what the dates on that project are.

A project that was approved some time ago by the department was to provide turning lanes and overhead lights at the entrance off Highway 14 into the town of Ryley. My understanding was that the department was willing to do that. They put some very positive effort, I submit, into trying to convince the CN to allow some access there so that the entrance to the village of Ryley could be moved and lined up with secondary road 854. It would have been a much better alignment, but apparently there was some difficulty in obtaining that right-of-way; the CN wasn't willing to play ball. The department did its job and tried to come up with something that would be very beneficial to the town, and I'd like to thank them for that, but that option, as I understand it, is no longer open to us. Because there'll be hot mix in the area when they're putting the final lift on 834 south of Tofield, I'm wondering if that's the time the turning lane into Ryley along with the lights would be provided.

The county of Beaver has also made a request to the minister recently for a special grant to assist with the costs of reoiling the Black Nugget Lake road. Black Nugget Lake is a tourist destination of some significance. It's a project that the county initiated to make use of an abandoned strip mine, and they've turned it into a remarkably beautiful area. These old coal mines, abandoned pits, if you will, filled with water are very deep, cool ponds that provide excellent fishing, a good recreation area. A lot of people are going there, and it's very difficult for a county that has so many kilometres – well, with the number of kilometres of secondary roads I brought to the minister's attention, he can well imagine how many kilometres of regular roads they have, and they're making a request to him for some assistance under the special grants that his department provides to look at reoiling the Black Nugget Lake road for the benefit of the tourist traffic in the area.

As well, there's a project in the county of Beaver that I'm hoping I can get some indication of timing on from the minister, and that is 630. The extension of the Wye Road comes through the Clover Bar constituency and will eventually pass the Lindbrook store, joining up with Highway 14. My understanding from discussions with the deputy minister in the past is that the small portion of that road that exists in the county of Beaver would be going ahead at the same time it goes ahead in the county of Strathcona. I'd just like that to be confirmed with the minister and get some indication again of what the time line is on that project. That's a very busy road. The rural area west of the town of Tofield is very densely settled, with a lot of traffic there, and people that have chosen to live out in rural Alberta but continue to work in the city use roads like that as their access. I'm wondering if we can find out when that's going to happen.

In terms of the county of Minburn there are relatively few pending projects in the county of Minburn that are also in my constituency. I believe there's a few in the Vermilion-Viking constituency, but 631 – the minister had a project there last year that was completed and done very well. The road is in great shape, and that's 631 running west from secondary 857 into Royal Park. It joins up with the Yellowhead Highway there. The job's well done. The county is lobbying for paving along the

portion of 631 that is between secondary 857 and Highway 36, and I'd like to get some indication of the minister's plans for that road. When does he envision that being done? [interjection] The Member for Vermilion-Viking seems to get the impression that I'm asking for all of these projects tomorrow. There's some that I'm lobbying for because they're very important now, but the other thing I'm doing is asking the minister when – when – he's planning on doing them. That doesn't mean that they're all going to get done this year, Vermilion-Viking. So don't get your shirt in a knot.

I already thanked the minister for . . .

DR. WEST: Twinning Highway 16 around Vegreville – when is that planned to . . .

MR. FOX: Well, be patient. We'll talk about primary highways in a moment.

Anyway, I've taken the opportunity to thank the minister for the project on 857 south of the town of Vegreville, the final paving there. Again, the job's well done, and it fits in with the twinning of the Yellowhead Highway through the Vegreville constituency. That is completed and, I believe, moving on now into that constituency to the east there. Vermilion-Viking's got some projects on the Yellowhead Highway, but it's completed through the Vegreville constituency, and for that we're thankful.

There are two lanes going south of the town of Vegreville, the express route south of Vegreville. It's my understanding that the department would look at twinning the express route south of Vegreville after the twinning of the balance of the Yellowhead Highway is complete.

DR. WEST: You agree with that?

MR. FOX: Well, yes, I agree with that. There's certainly no problem with adding a couple of additional lanes south of the town of Vegreville. The important thing to Vegreville was that the overpass structures be provided so that we could get access into the town, and I think the statistics have borne out the decision made by the minister, in spite of opposition from the Member for Vermilion-Viking, who didn't want those overpass structures built. I think the statistics have vindicated the minister's decision and proved the town of Vegreville officials correct. At least half of the traffic on the Yellowhead Highway is either coming from or going to the town of Vegreville, and that will likely increase as Vegreville grows in popularity. It's a great tourist destination. [interjection] Yeah, you'll get your chance.

In terms of the county of Two Hills, most of the secondary roads in that county in the area that I represent are done, and for that we're thankful.

I'd just like to quickly remind the minister of some priorities in terms of primary highways. Yellowhead Highway 16 is completely twinned. However, there is some work to be done on Highway 15. The minister did approve a project repaving the portion between Lamont and Chipman. I believe it was back in 1986. But the section between Chipman and the town of Mundare is breaking down quite a bit, and I'd like to get some indication of the department's plans for repaving that section of the road.

Another thing I was interested in inquiring about. Highway 14 running southeast of Edmonton is twinned to just past Highway 21. I'm wondering if the department has any plans for

twinning Highway 14 beyond that in the future, and perhaps the question would be: what guidelines does the department use in determining whether or not there's sufficient traffic volumes on a highway to warrant twinning? I'm sure there are some numbers there, and I'd be interest in knowing what the minister's comments on that would be.

There was a project on Highway 45, repaving Highway 45 from Two Hills to Morecambe. Again on behalf of my constituents I'd like to thank the minister for that. There was, as well, near the town of Two Hills, a project on Highway 36 to relocate and widen the bridge across the Vermilion River, which I think is done partially in preparation for widening of Highway 36 south of the town of Two Hills. That's a particularly dangerous stretch of highway, going south from Two Hills, because it's built to the old standards. It's very narrow, and, you know, it's up and down, over hill, over dale, and lots of corners on that highway. I believe Highway 36 is paved throughout its length in the province of Alberta now. There may be some sections left, but I think it's close to being completely paved, and I'm wondering if it's now time to turn the attention to straightening out or widening some sections of the road where there's . . . [interjection] Okay, but perhaps the minister could give us some indication of the time lines on that.

If I could ask the minister some questions about his responsibilities as minister of utilities. I understand that he's given approval in principle to a water line that would provide water from the treatment plants in the city of Edmonton to residents of the county of Strathcona, including Ardrossan, moving on through Tofield and Ryley and hopefully in the future to Holden and Viking. I believe approval in principle is given, and for that I'd like to thank him for his vision. I think this is a project that's much appreciated by the people out in the area. There's still some discussion that has to go on about the costs and the number of users and a lot of details to be worked out, but in principle I think it would be an important economic boost for the communities out there to be able to assure not only their residents but prospective businesses that they have not only an adequate and secure supply of water but a supply of good quality water, which is often a problem out in rural areas. If the minister has any updates on information for that project, I'd appreciate hearing about it. But I believe approval in principle has been granted, and I'd like to thank him for that.

If I could ask the minister another question, and this is based on a concern raised by a constituent of mine. I believe the department of transportation establishes government equipment rates that they pay to people whom they hire to do work on projects locally: a certain rate for backhoes that are a certain size and Cats and trucks. The rates established by the government tend to set the standard in the industry. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us who sets the rates, when they were mostly recently set, if there are any plans to update them, and what kind of guidelines are used. I'm not intimately familiar with them, but this gentleman who brought his concerns to me indicated that the rate hadn't gone up for years. From his experience, he was faced with a lot of increased expenses, some of which he agrees with but has no way of coping with when there aren't any increases in the rates that he's paid by the department or by private industry who hires him but bases the rates they pay on the rate set by the Department of Transportation and Utilities. So I'd like, on behalf of that constituent in particular, to bring that to the attention to the minister, but I'm sure it's a concern for other people in the industry as well.

I know there are other members who want to get in. The night is young; there's lots of time yet. But I just wanted to leave those concerns with the minister and await his response.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Member for Edmonton-Beverly.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of brief comments I'd like to make to the minister. First of all, on behalf of the Member for Stony Plain, he asked me to pass along to the minister his compliments, in fact, on the proposed draft environment assessment for the interchange at the junction of Highway 16X and highway 794. We have a copy of the draft proposal, and he wanted me to let the minister know that he appreciates it being supplied and the work that's been going into that area. So I wanted to do that first.

Secondly, I'd like to just make a couple of comments to the minister regarding the Yellowhead, and indeed I think all of us in this part of the province are proud and pleased at the progress that's been made on the Yellowhead. Just a couple of points that I want to make. The interchanges – they're in the city, I admit – at 50th Street and 66th Street and the Yellowhead, both of those. Sixty-sixth Street is a particularly bad intersection; we have a continual rash of accidents. I'm sure if we checked with the city police department, we'd find out that there's at least one accident a day, if not more, at that particular interchange and also at 50th Street, which is really compounded with the railroad there as well. I know there has been pressure put on the city for years that there needs to be an interchange there that would encompass the railroad and 50th Street and the Yellowhead. I would hope that that's in the works in the near future so that we can accommodate that. As alluded to earlier by other speakers, this is a busy street. Both of these intersections are busy intersections. They do require interchanges. I know when the city extends the Capilano Freeway into the Yellowhead, it'll certainly add pressure to both of those intersections. So I just wonder if the minister could indicate to us whether there's any possible action in those two areas.

The other thing I did want to say about 66th Street was that I understand there might have been some difficulty in acquiring easements from Gainers, because they border the Yellowhead and 66th. Now that we own Gainers, we should be able to establish the necessary easements ourselves so that when we do proceed with the interchanges there, in fact we will have sufficient roadway to do that.

Those are the comments I wanted to make, because if the Yellowhead is really going to be truly a freeway, then I think we have to eliminate those kinds of things. At 50th Street, when people arrive there, you stop, and then you go perhaps a mile or less than a mile and you have another major stop. I think that's not what the Yellowhead was meant to be. So hopefully he can address those – at least the minister could perhaps indicate to me what the plans are for those intersections.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. McEACHERN: I thought I beat him up.

AN HON. MEMBER: You beat him up? Come on now.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. The Member for Edmonton-Kingsway well knows that a lot of attention is given to providing a list, and that is what we're following.

MR. LUND: Can I proceed now, Mr. Chairman? Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't beat him up.

MR. LUND: Oh no. We'll leave him alone now.

It certainly gives me a great deal of pleasure to give a few comments tonight on the estimates of the Department of Transportation and Utilities. I've heard many complimentary remarks tonight about the minister, and I would echo those. I also want to mention his staff and how I appreciate the co-operation we get from them as well. To the deputy minister, who's been around, I think, since they started grading roads, or just about, anyway . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: That old?

MR. LUND: Well, no, that would put him the same as the minister.

Anyway, when we talk about someone that knows the roads in the province, he certainly does, and it's a pleasure to work with him. I also want to mention the regional director that I've had the opportunity of working with, Mr. Jim Bussard in Red Deer. It's certainly a pleasure to work with him, and when I say "work with," that's exactly what happens, and that is really great.

I want to bring to your attention a couple of roads that are under way in my constituency of Rocky Mountain House. The construction of Highway 12: part of that was done last year, and I understand the rest of the highway will be completed this summer. I just urge that we look at putting a surface on that road just as soon as we can. It's being built to a very wide standard, and left in a gravel condition, it gets very expensive to maintain. Also, from Highway 22 east of the Caroline intersection and west at Ricinus, that portion of Highway 54 has been identified for upgrading this year, I hope, and we thank the department for that. There's certainly a lot of traffic on there that needs it. Mind you, the whole of Highway 54 from there on east, with the traffic count that's on that road now, certainly needs some upgrading, and I hope we will find the dollars to look at that.

I want to thank the department as well for the surfacing of secondary 766 that is going to happen this summer. That's one road that has been, I believe, a priority for a number of years in both the counties of Red Deer and Lacombe, and this year we are going to see that one surfaced. I know the Liberals don't like to hear us talk about paving secondaries, but that one handles a tremendous amount of traffic, both oil and tourist, and the agricultural industry as well in that area.

The secondary road program is one that I want to mention that certainly is very important to the municipalities. This partnership that has been developed with the municipalities and the department to accomplish that great goal of having them surfaced within the 10 years I think is working very well. I know the municipalities are very appreciative of the effort the department is making to see that this happens. I also want to mention with appreciation the overlay that's going to occur on Highway 22 south from Highway 54, on 22 north of Rocky, and also on the Crimson Lake/Buster Creek road. That's going to be very much appreciated.

When we look at a couple of items in the budget that I wanted to specifically mention, in vote 2.6.2, Vehicle Inspection Stations, I see a dramatic increase, a 97.6 percent increase there. I would appreciate a little explanation of exactly what's going on there. I'd also like to bring to the attention of the minister provincial airports. At Rocky Mountain House we seem to have a bit of a problem with some vandalism of the aircraft that are tied down at that airport. I don't know if there would be some way that we could do something with that. I'm very pleased to see in the urban transportation vote, vote 2.1, that there is a slight increase in the budget there as well. Of course, not only are roads important in the rural; they're also important in the city, and we appreciate that.

A couple of other general questions. I'm wondering how the truckers are taking to the National Safety Code that has been implemented. I've had some concern and some questions asked about the rating that's going on and exactly why that is going on. [interjection] The rating. Under the code there's a rating process, and there's some concern. What's it going to be used for? What's the purpose of it? Why are we doing that?

Also, I had a situation in my constituency where the contractor has had great difficulty in getting his final payments on a number of projects. There's been about five projects where he has either never gotten his total amount or has had trouble collecting it. In the latest incident the contractor went broke and the bonding company took over and then turned around and hired the contractor to finish the job. Well, everything went along fine until nearly the end, and then suddenly the cheques stopped coming. The gentleman that is in the Rocky constituency, plus some others that are from Rocky Mountain House, have ended up with a fair amount of money outstanding, and there seems to be some major problem in collecting it. I think the problem really relates back to the fact that the project was bid way under what it could be done for in the first place. There was no hope that that person could possibly do that project at that price. I'm wondering if there isn't some way that we could be looking at not necessarily taking the lowest bid. I know it's a tough one, but when you see one come in that's way under . . .

I understand that in B.C. they use a slightly different process. They knock off the top and the bottom, take the average in the middle, and that's the bid. It might be something we could look at to get these bids to come in at a realistic price instead of something way below.

The Treasurer in his speeches tells us that he's going to use strict controls to maintain internal government operations, and he also tells us that he will be doing more with fewer people. In fact, he states that the department's core staff has been reduced by one-third since '85-86. I notice that while votes 2, 3, and 4 are reduced from '89-90, vote 1, support services, has in fact increased by 5.7 percent. In addition, the manpower authorized has increased by 43 percent. I wonder: could the minister make some comments on that one?

Of course, the overall budget for Alberta Transportation has a major impact on the availability of jobs for summer students and the like. I see that we're pretty well the same. I'm wondering: what really is going to be the impact on summer jobs with the budget having this slight decrease? Is it going to have a major impact?

Also the Provincial Treasurer in his budget speeches tells us that he will be strictly limiting the purchase of equipment and fixed assets, yet I notice that in vote 4 we have an increase of 153 percent. Mind you, those are small dollars, but I'm wonder-

ing, really, what's going on there. Why are we increasing by that amount of money?

Mr. Chairman, in view of the hour I will cut it off there. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Redwater-Andrew.

MR. ZARUSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, have many highways in my constituency, because the Redwater-Andrew constituency is the transportation hub for connections between Athabasca, Lac La Biche, and then on to the city of Edmonton. At this time I just want to thank the minister for the co-operation and lending ear he's given in the past to some requests from the Redwater-Andrew constituency, and also his staff, Brian and Harvey and others, that have been very helpful in areas of transportation and others.

I'm just going to touch on a few highways in the constituency. Some of them do border other constituencies, mainly Vegreville. I know the Member for Vegreville has been indicating that part of secondary highway 637 should be done all the way. I agree with that, with keeping the public safety in mind. I've been working very closely with the county of Lamont and the reeve of the county, who's also the councillor for that area, and 637 is going to be paved from Lamont 10 miles and then on into St. Michael. The community of St. Michael I think deserves some good roads. That'll connect the network and will leave, as the hon. Member for Vegreville said, eight miles which is not in the Redwater-Andrew constituency, but because of connections and the close working relationship I have with the county of Lamont, as I said, I naturally would support something like that. Whether it'll be done this summer or not, I don't know. That's probably up to the minister, but I know usually stretches of roads are done in sections of 10 miles or so. So that's what I sort of go by, the past experience of how roads are built. I think the minister is very aware of that need there and the public safety, because coming off a paved highway from both ends and hitting some gravel could be fairly dangerous. So I think that should be looked at.

I just want to thank the minister on other areas that are going to be resurfaced. There is an area which is going to be very helpful to the connection of passengers and vehicles from the east end of the constituency, in the Willingdon area, and that's a section of road connecting 857 from Highway 45 to secondary 637. Again, half of it is in the Redwater-Andrew constituency and half in the Vegreville constituency, and again working with the county of Two Hills. I've also got a very good working relationship with that county, and they've asked me on many occasions to try to get them some funding for this section of road. I think it was done this spring, and driving there yesterday, I know construction has started already. So I'm glad to see that I could help in that connection, make it convenient for passengers in that area to connect to a good road network. As I said, Redwater-Andrew is the hub of transportation for heavy vehicles and others. Again, I just want to thank the minister for that consideration.

Another area was highway 652. That's from Shandro bridge going east to St. Brides and covering the Redwater-Andrew and St. Paul constituencies. I know the hon. Member for St. Paul and myself worked very hard to make sure that connection was done. I'd just like to ask the minister what is happening with the connection on the Saddle Lake Indian Reserve, on 652.

What progress has been made there with the reserve, if any? I'd be curious to know that.

Other areas in the county of Thorhild and the MD of Sturgeon and even the MD of Westlock. Work is progressing, I see, on the Lily Lake road, which is a very important connection. That's from the Red Barn to Halfmoon Lake, which is a great tourist attraction: the game farm there and going on to a lake. So that's an area where some construction was done, and I wonder if the minister could indicate when, in fact, some of that area could be hard-surfaced for the convenience of the people living in that area – again, working closely with the MD of Sturgeon, the MD of Westlock, and the councillor in that area.

Another area that's of importance in the constituency is the access from highway 855 to a place called Victoria settlement. It's a museum of the first settlement where a hospital was built and where all the trade was done in the area in the beginning, in the early 1900s. I think that road is scheduled for construction this summer. Maybe the minister could also indicate whether it will be rebuilt and hard-surfaced or just fixed up and left in its natural state and maybe some oil put on it. So that's about all the concerns there would be in the constituency as far as road networks go.

There's another area in which I guess there's been some misunderstanding, and that's in the utilities area, utilities into processing facilities. It's mainly food processing facilities, and I would like clarification from the minister on this. I think I heard him mention that if one subdivision gets started with granting for food processing facilities, does that mean that other areas would get it at the same time, or does it mean the completion of one area and then on to another? So I'd like some clarification on that.

Another area that there are some concerns on in the constituency is natural gas. I know we've got some instances with the Lambco co-operative in the Bruderheim-Lamont area. I guess because of the sparsity of people living in some areas, they are a couple of miles or so away from the main gas lines, and sometimes it's very costly for these people to get gas lines put into their homes. They've been quoted high figures of cost, and they basically can't afford it. I know we are trying to get all of rural Alberta on natural gas, so maybe the minister could comment. Maybe there is some other area where these people can get some help in regard to natural gas connections and make their homes and lives convenient just like their brothers or cousins in the cities. I think they deserve the same life-style.

So other than that, Mr. Chairman, I think in view of the hour, these are the concerns I have. Thank you.

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Chairman, I've got a fair amount of notes here. If I can start, I'll try and be as short as I can. The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane talked about the need to do something with 1A, and I don't think there's any doubt that that has to be looked at. It's a heavily used road. It's also a heavily used road by cyclists, and we've had some identification of that particular situation and are prepared to work with you and with the proponents along the way to try and see what we can come up with.

Without question I've been very strong in the support for the continuation of twinning in Banff National Park, recognizing that it's the responsibility of the national parks. There's no question that traffic volumes play a very important part, not just there but also in the Jasper area as well. The volumes of traffic have a bearing on when twinning probably could be done in the park

from the park's point of view, but we'd like to know what that planning would be.

The next question was relative to vehicle inspection stations – I've just got to take a moment here – in the elements section 2.6.2, Vehicle Inspection Stations. The construction of two new facilities is under way. At Balzac we've got two new buildings and other works that are going on, at Cochrane one new building and other works, also at Slave Lake the new inspection station, plus a new building and a garage at Leduc. That's why the heavy increases in the facility area there for the inspection stations. Not a major problem; certainly something that's necessary and needed if we're going to be able to enforce the rules of the road and the National Safety Code and the likes of that.

The next one was, I believe, 2.11. It'll take me a moment here. I'm not sure just what I did with that particular one.

I'll move to 2.8.3. In the motor transport services area it's primarily the increase of 73 as a result of employee benefits plus three full-time equivalents that were added into the department at that particular point. That's for our motor transport services branch, who are involved in the National Safety Code and the works that are being done in that particular area.

The other, I believe, was: where is small power and where is EEMA? On March 1 they were transferred to Energy, and as a result the Minister of Energy will handle any of the areas there. We were finished in the one sense with our responsibilities for that and moved them over to the Minister of Energy, where they should probably rightly be for the operations and administration. Vote 4.53, I believe that was. Now, I'll just have to take a moment here and see if I can find it. I had it at one point.

The one reference to 2.11 was the Rail Infrastructure Development. That was the completion of the construction of the Alberta Energy Company and the Alberta Newsprint Company rail spurs for their projects. They're basically finished now, and as a result of that, we don't need additional money. Any carryover funding required for the Energy Company would be in the Resource Roads element, which is in the budget. So that covers that particular one.

Vote 2.8.3: I still can't find that one. If I may, in the interests of time I'll get the answer for you and respond to you in writing, and I'll do that to all of the members that we have.

For the hon. Member for Highwood. I believe it's Highway 2A that he was referring to, and I'm not just sure of the completion date. I'll have to follow through and get the answer for you on that one as well as when the overpasses that you referred to would be done. I don't have those specifics with me right now, but I can get them for you.

Yes, on Highway 22 we had an excellent meeting with the mayors of the community, and I want to thank the hon. member for arranging that, because I think it was important that the landowners and the community plus the MLA and the minister fully understood the concerns that were being raised and presented to us. With the co-operation of my deputy and the two mayors of the communities we were able to work something out on that.

The Member for Vegreville had a long list of roads. I guess the best thing I can say to the hon. member is that one of the things we have to take into consideration is working out, as we had indicated a year ago, the priorities for the secondary road system that the 10-year project was involved with, and that we would be sitting down and talking with all of the municipal districts and counties as to priorities, as to dollars available, as

to type of project that would be done. In other words, we're looking at not continuing with the same kinds of projects as we maybe had in the past. We might be looking at a single seal coat. We might be looking at a double seal coat. We might be looking at the heavy final lift, which would be where the heavier traffic is. All of those will be taken into consideration when we're sitting and talking with them. In the interests of time I'll take the list and get back to you in writing on all of those that you did have for me. As I've said, we're working with all of the various officials through the department to in fact get their priorities and get a full understanding of what it is we're attempting to do.

The question about Highway 14 and the twinning based primarily on volumes. I assume some of the other things we look at are economic changes that may occur in the region as well, either some major development; i.e., as the hon. Member for Highwood had, the Cargill plant coming into an area. That changes the traffic patterns and the likes of that. Those are all taken into consideration.

Yes, there was mentioned the Highway 14 water line, and in co-operation with the hon. Member for Clover Bar we were working with the county of Strathcona particularly and the other communities along the way. There has been an approval in principle to look at the water line to Ardrossan, Tofield, and Ryley. I would suggest that at some point that will probably be going beyond that, but dollars at the moment have a major part to play. That's a very interesting project. It's one where there's been a fair amount of involvement by pretty well everybody along the way, and we'll continue to watch that one.

Rates on equipment are handled by the deputy minister, who's sitting right up in the gallery. Keep in mind that they are minimum rates. Industry, private sector, municipalities can and do pay higher or lower rates. Rates are established based on purchase price, operating costs, fuel, horsepower capacity, production rates. They're adjusted annually – that's probably the most important part – to reflect the specific changes in individual machine rates, and there are no general rate increases planned for 1990.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly, on the Yellowhead an interchange is planned at the junction of the Capilano freeway and the Yellowhead, and funds have already been provided to the city for that particular one. At this point we do not have any application from the city relative to 50th Street and 66th Street, so no work is planned at the moment. I guess if an application is received, we've got to look at that, then, in the sense of your questions as to when that might be going. So at this moment in time we do not have any applications from the city for 50th or 66th, and no work is currently planned.

There was mention earlier – I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud – of the fact that we the government had pointed to an interchange at 184th Street and the Yellowhead. That is not right at all. There was a suggestion at one point that if they wanted to apply – if they wanted to apply – that might be considered, but that was not a do this instead of that particular issue that related to the Calgary Trail and the likes of that. There's no question that it's a city responsibility. The city will be building the interchange at the Yellowhead and 184th Street if they want to. If they do, they have the opportunity to apply, and we'll have to deal with that when it in fact comes. Right at

the moment, if they were to apply, we don't have any moneys for it, so it would not be in the immediate future.

I missed a question earlier and want to respond to it from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, and that was in relation to that Edson east/Wolf Lake road. The surfacing was completed in the late fall during snow conditions. It was the last asphalt laid in the province of Alberta. It was open to traffic for the winter during the frozen conditions. For safety reasons, to make use of the four lanes, we opened it. When the frost came out this spring, it was necessary to close it. We agreed totally, and we understand you did too, I think the RCMP as well, in the interests of safety. The contractors will be working on that. It's expected to be done this summer and open again for four-lane. I think the other question was: who's paying for it? At this particular point I don't know exactly until we've had some discussion with the officials and with the contractors, but it was the last piece of asphalt that was put down. We had, if you recall, that warm weather, laid down the asphalt, it turned 30 below, and then a little later it turned warm, which allowed us to cover up – if I can use that – that bad asphalt so that we could use it through the winter. That, of course, was done in the interests of safety for the skiing public.

The point on reconstruction of Highway 14 at 23rd Avenue. That intersection was completed. We did make adjustments in the period of 1989 after a couple of those unfortunate accidents at that point, and we'll be working with the city relative to the 45th Avenue and Highway 14 intersection at some point in the future, not right at this immediate time.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think I've responded to most of them, and I will indicate to those that I haven't responded to specifically that I'll get back to them in writing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ready for the question?

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

MR. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of Transportation and Utilities, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you agreed on the report from the Member for Lacombe?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the business of the House tomorrow will be Committee of Supply, dealing with Executive Council.

[At 10:30 p.m. the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

