

Legislative Assembly of AlbertaTitle: **Thursday, May 2, 1991**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 91/05/02

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

head: **Main Estimates 1991-92****Transportation and Utilities**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The estimates are to be found at page 331 of the main book with the elements commencing at page 139 of the elements book. Hon. interim Minister of Transportation and Utilities, do you wish to introduce these estimates for the benefit of the committee? If so, you're very welcome.

MR. KOWALSKI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm standing before you tonight to introduce the estimates of the Department of Transportation and Utilities, and I'm doing them on behalf of my very good friend and colleague the Hon. Al Boomer Adair. I would like all members of the House to know that Mr. Adair has had a successful operation. He's recovering. He's doing very well. He's feeling very well. He was in Edmonton earlier this week and visited with his doctors. He's now walking some mile and a half on a daily basis. I want to repeat that he has dropped a few pounds, but his colour is returning. Hopefully he'll be back in this Assembly, and I know all members of this Assembly look forward to seeing him back. [applause]

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a few overview comments with respect to these estimates and then would be very, very happy to entertain any questions that hon. members might have with respect to the estimates of the Department of Transportation and Utilities. First of all, at the outset I'd like to reiterate to all members that this Saturday, May 4, will be the annual Spring Highway Cleanup Day. I sincerely hope that all members of the Assembly, if they have access to radio programs in their own constituencies and the like, will take an opportunity tomorrow perhaps or Saturday, on the day it is, to make sure that they do wish these young people who are participating in this annual environmental cleanup in the province of Alberta all the very best. If hon. members would have a few minutes perhaps on Saturday to do a little driving about their constituency and if they see these groups of young people along with their adult supervisors, it might be very good to just stop and say hello and say, "You're doing a great job."

During last year's campaign 11,050 youths throughout the province of Alberta collected 64,000 bags of litter along some 9,300 kilometres of highway. This is a program that the government introduced in the late 1970s, Mr. Chairman, and it has worked very, very well. In fact, this year is our 15th year. The real Minister of Transportation and Utilities will be on radio stations throughout the province of Alberta tomorrow and then on Saturday morning advising motorists and the traveling public that these young people will be at work and advising caution with respect to that extremely important day. I would like to point out that in the event of bad weather this Saturday, May 4, the event will go on the following week, May 11, except in those other parts of Alberta where the weather would be much better.

These estimates that hon. members have to look at tonight are difficult estimates for the Department of Transportation and Utilities and difficult estimates for the government. In the Treasury Board process, in the process of working towards a balanced budget there was need to take a look at all departments of government. Transportation and Utilities has over the years been generously supported by the people of Alberta, the taxpayers of Alberta, and a rather substantial infrastructure has been developed and built throughout the province. Roads are more than simply highways or byways; they are connectors. They are connectors for people to visit, connectors for trade, connectors for meeting individuals throughout this province.

I think all citizens of Alberta would take a great deal of pride in knowing that the transportation infrastructure that we have in this province is second to none. I know that there are some members who oftentimes say that we may boast a bit about the achievements of the people of Alberta and the government of the province of Alberta, but I think in the case of our roadways and our highways – and recognize as well that there are few environments in the world where you would have population centres as large as Edmonton this far north in terms of latitude on the globe, and we're still in the southern part of the province here in the city of Edmonton. We recognize that our citizens can go on pavement from the American border to the Northwest Territories border and from the two provinces that we border in comfort and safety. It means a lot.

These estimates, however, see a 12.3 percent reduction in the dollars for 1991-92 as compared to 1989 and '90. We're asking for approval tonight of a budget of \$770,540,600, and I repeat: that's a 12.3 percent reduction from last year's estimates. I'd like to emphasize, Mr. Chairman, that we do have a commitment in these estimates to pave the secondary road system, a commitment that the government announced in 1989, and we intend meeting our target and our objective by the year 2000. The estimates include a level of funding for the secondary road system in the province of Alberta at \$101 million.

Sometimes there's confusion with respect to what is a secondary highway. Essentially there are three types of roadways in the province of Alberta. We have a primary highway system, which is completely and totally under the supervision, the control, the jurisdiction of the province of Alberta. These roadways generally have one number or two numbers attached to them: Highway 1, Highway 33. In terms of the primary highway system there are 13,460 kilometres in the province of Alberta, and some 12,710 of these kilometres are paved, surfaced, and 750 are unsurfaced.

Then we have a secondary highway system. This is a highway system that has three numbers attached: 535, 785, and on the list goes. There are 14,769 kilometres of secondary highways in the province of Alberta; 8,969 kilometres have been surfaced, paved, and 5,800 remain to be surfaced. Some of these 5,800 kilometres of secondary highway system roadways still to have to be built to a standard that would accommodate pavement, but the process is there, and the commitment in this budget is for \$101 million. That's a similar amount to last year.

Then we have essentially a third system of roadways in the province of Alberta, which is local roads. Of the 125,560 kilometres of them, 8,267 kilometres are surfaced, and that means that there are 117,293 kilometres that are not surfaced. Sometimes there's confusion between the secondary roadway system and local roads, but I just want to repeat again for the benefit of all members that the secondary system basically has three numbers attached to it, and that's how you identify what

a secondary road is. It's not every local road, as some people believe.

Mr. Chairman, one of the initiatives that we have in this budget is a new partnership in rural transportation program. We've set aside \$10 million for this partnership program this year. This is the initiation, and we're going to be matching on a dollar-for-dollar basis the construction contributions of our partners, the local governments, with respect to this program. I think it would be a welcomed addition.

I'd also like to point out that the safety of the traveling public remains a primary concern of Alberta Transportation and Utilities. All members will note that a few days ago we issued a statement dated April 17, 1991, that basically indicated that in 1990 Albertans recorded the lowest level of traffic fatalities since 1970. The fatality count from 1990 as compared to 1989 was reduced some 16.2 percent. That is very significant. In fact, in 1990 traffic collisions decreased 2.9 percent over the previous year, and the number of traffic-related injuries decreased 9.8 percent from 1989. In total 408 people unfortunately were killed as a result of traffic collisions, but that was significantly lower than the year before.

Mr. Chairman, we had a great debate in this Assembly several years ago about mandatory seat belt legislation. In the end the decision was that Albertans would enjoy the privilege and the right to have mandatory seat belt legislation. In looking at the statistics the first time they have been accumulated over a 12-month period, I think the impact and the importance of seat belts is there, and there's absolutely no doubt at all in my mind that seat belts do save lives.

I have to stand in this Assembly and let hon. members know that I was one of those who opposed the idea of mandatory seat belt legislation because I thought the invasion of individual rights was paramount and more important, but as I stand here on this particular day in May of 1991, I have to come clean on this matter and basically say without a moment of hesitation in my mind that seat belts do save lives. I'm just very, very pleased as well to indicate that among all of the citizens of Canada, Albertans are among the highest numbers in terms of support and usage of seat belts. I think those statistics from 1990 are very, very clear. The statistics indicate fatalities decreased 16.2 percent, traffic collisions decreased 2.9 percent, and traffic-related injuries decreased 9.8 percent, and that, I think, is very significant.

I say that, Mr. Chairman, because one of the initiatives that we'll be taking in 1991-92, in this particular fiscal year, is increased attention to the whole question of safety. We will be taking new initiatives with respect to maximizing safety in the transportation system in the province of Alberta, and we will be introducing a mandatory inspection program for trucks over 18,000 kilograms, over 40,000 pounds. This initiative is one that has been established on a national basis in Canada, and it will now come to Alberta during this particular fiscal year and be part of the estimates of this department. Safety concerns are very, very important.

8:10

Mr. Chairman, we are going to be continuing pretty dramatically, despite the fact that there is a rather significant reduction in this particular budget, with our commitments in the primary highway system, our commitments in the overlays, the maintenance side of it all. In addition, we are going to be continuing with our partnership program with the cities of the province of Alberta: \$113.4 million is available to assist Alberta cities and Sherwood Park with the costs of their multiyear capital transpor-

tation plans. As well, we've increased the available funding for public transit operations by 6.2 percent. That's a rather significant increase to nearly \$21 million a year in spite of our overall reduced budget. Part of our decision in terms of the utilization of these dollars was a reallocation of these dollars over one additional year rather than over the number of years as originally introduced, but I think our partners, the cities of the province, understand why that has happened. I see no really great negatives with respect to that.

Mr. Chairman, this budget also includes \$21.3 million that we've set aside to assist smaller towns and villages to develop water and sewage treatment facilities in the province of Alberta. All members will know the massive commitment the people of Alberta have made over the last two decades with respect to this very important program. It was a few days ago that I announced the specifics of the municipal wastewater assistance program and the approaches that we were taking. I pointed out in the announcement we gave that we were going to be looking at the environmental importance of water in the province of Alberta and that we in essence were going to ensure that our programs of support would do everything possible to ensure that water conservation would be implemented. In fact, there are incentives and penalties: incentives for those who in fact move towards water conservation methodologies within their own systems and in essence penalties, I guess, if you choose not to do it. That information has all been circulated to all of our partners throughout the province of Alberta, and I'm quite satisfied as we go through 1991-92 that the progress that has been made in the past will continue into the future.

I would like to point out as well, Mr. Chairman, that the rural gas program, which was introduced by this government in 1973, has delivered over \$350 million worth of programs in terms of the construction of natural gas transmission lines and services. Because of the excellent level that we've got now in place throughout the province of Alberta and our consultations with the people in the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, we've basically been able to reduce our funding capability approximately 4.8 percent in this particular area this year.

You all know as well, because this matter has been raised before, that the government allowed the senior citizens' home heating grant program, the \$100 per home per year, to sunset at the end of December 1990. All members will recall that that program was established in 1982, when a gigajoule of fuel cost about \$2.80. That fuel peaked at \$3.00 after 1982 but in December of 1990 was selling at \$2.20 per gigajoule. That original program started in 1982 and went through 1983 and '84. It was not allowed to sunset at that time. It was renewed through 1985, '86, and '87, and it was renewed for one more term to conclude at the end of 1990. It was not cut back; it was sunsetted. It was originally set up as a three-year program. I just want to repeat one more time that the cost of this fuel in December of 1990 was \$2.20 per gigajoule as compared to a cost of \$2.80 per gigajoule in December of 1982. In terms of the consultations that I have had with a number of natural gas co-ops throughout the province of Alberta, a number of them have in fact reduced their rates for heat in 1991, and I'll give you one example. In one annual meeting that I attended not too long ago at the Ste. Anne Gas Co-op, they in fact passed the reduction on to all of their members.

The manpower aspect of this department has been very dutifully looked at by the senior administration of this department, and in fact we've reduced or avoided increases of over \$14 million. Nearly 10 percent of the total payroll of this particular department has been eliminated, and I think that's a good

reflection of the determined administration with respect to all of the people in the Department of Transportation and Utilities. We've done it without sacrificing what we believe is the essence of the programs that we do have.

Perhaps I can just make quick comments with respect to several other policy decisions, programs that we've talked about just recently. One is the position that we've taken with respect to the maintenance of gravel haul rates. All members will recall that there has been debate in the province of Alberta over gravel haul rates in recent years. The Minister of Transportation and Utilities did initiate an independent study of the truck haul payment system and hired an outside consulting group in February of 1989. That report was released in December of 1989, and there were a number of recommendations in there. Well, we have undertaken a major consultation with all of the groups within the province of Alberta. Several weeks ago, Mr. Chairman, I basically issued a release, a statement, that says that the existing system would in essence be maintained. The system essentially says that there will be a prescribed minimum haul rate provided to these entrepreneurs throughout the province. The system also requires that at least 50 percent of the gravel trucks be hired from a defined area local to the project and that not more than three trucks be hired from any single owner. That, I believe, is very important to private enterprise in this province and to small businessmen located throughout the province of Alberta.

We've also decided in the area of truck scales with respect to commercial trucks that it would probably be much wiser today, with the system and the infrastructure that we already have in place, to move away from permanent buildings and basically move to a system of scales that could themselves be moved; in other words, a traveling scale. I announced just a few days ago that this department, the Department of Transportation and Utilities, would be working on this particular matter, and I identified a number of places throughout the province of Alberta where these sites would be completed so that if we choose to move scales to a particular point, that could be done. That is covered in a statement that was made a few days ago.

Mr. Chairman, all in all, it's a determined budget. It's going to cause some real efficiency and effectiveness in terms of administration. The implementation of the programs throughout the province of Alberta is being done on a local regional basis with equity throughout the province, which is the position of this government. I have no doubt at all that hon. members may inquire with respect to the status of certain projects in their part of Alberta, in their constituencies and the like, and I'd be very, very pleased to comment with respect to them.

In 1981 the then Minister of Transportation, the hon. Henry Kroeger, made a statement that by the end of 1991 we would have four lanes essentially done on the two major interprovincial roadways that go through the province: the Yellowhead, which essentially went from the Saskatchewan border to the gate entrance at Jasper national park, and he also indicated that we'd be looking at four lanes on the Trans-Canada Highway from the border in the east of Irvine to the east of Medicine Hat and over to, I guess, the entrance to Banff national park. In essence, we've almost been able to complete it. We'll almost be able to complete it by the end of 1991. Weather permitting, essentially we should have the conclusion of the project done on the Yellowhead Highway, all factors and matters being in place. There's one small section that will exist to the east of the city of Medicine Hat, essentially at the junction of the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 41 and to Irvine. This is a matter that we would want to address ourselves as we go through 1991 to

ensure that, in essence, the division that was established by a predecessor 10 years ago can be met.

Those numbers that I gave with respect to the three road systems throughout the province of Alberta essentially have maintained themselves. We're basically not building too many new roads in addition to the right of ways we currently have in place, but the system is there. It's a very good, functioning one.

8:20

Mr. Chairman, I think I'm going to stop now, and I'm going to respond to any questions that members would have. I would like to just say one little thing. I always wanted to be the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, but I certainly never wanted to be the minister because of the ill health of any colleague. The last real job that I had before becoming an elected person in the fall of 1979 was as the deputy minister of transportation, so I feel really comfortable with it. After 12 years we have seen some great changes within the department itself. They've all been good changes. I think we're very fortunate to have a very good group of very competent senior administrators and managers, as we have at all levels of the Department of Transportation and Utilities. In the last several weeks, when I've had the opportunity to fill in on a very temporary basis for my good friend and colleague Mr. Adair, they've been very responsive to the ideas that we've been bringing forward and very responsive to the concerns that my colleagues have expressed to me and asked for follow-up on.

So that, Mr. Chairman, in an nutshell is an overview. The budget essentially is 12.3 percent lower, fewer in dollars, than it was a year ago, but I think that we'll be able to make the target and we'll be able to provide the service levels that Albertans expect of this government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin by wishing the minister of transportation a speedy recovery on his return to the Legislature. Indeed, those of us on this side of the House have as strong a feeling for the good health of that minister as anybody else in the province, I'm sure.

I also, Mr. Chairman, would like to compliment all the staff of Transportation and Utilities for their commitment to their jobs, especially Brian Hlus, the minister's assistant, for his open-door policy to me and also his quick response to many of my requests. This, of course, could not be done without the help and the very knowledgeable advice of gentlemen like Dave Shillabeer, Tom Brown, and Harvey Alton, who also are great to respond to the requests of constituents throughout this province when it comes to transportation, gas, and utilities. There are many more indeed that I could compliment but especially Roger Oberg in the Edson office and my old friend on the judo mat, of course, who is now in the building here in Edmonton, Frank Perich.

Mr. Chairman, the estimates of Transportation and Utilities indeed have diminished some from last year in order to balance the budget. The budget estimates have been cut by 12.3 percent, or \$108 million. Grants alone were cut by \$60.8 million, a reduction of 23.9 percent. Operating expenditures were cut by 7 percent, or \$13.7 million, while capital expenditures were reduced by 13.9 percent, or \$94.8 million.

Vote 1, Departmental Support Services, received a .3 percent increase. I wonder if the acting minister – and I certainly wish him well as the minister of almost everything – could tell me

why they received such a dribble while the assistant deputy minister's office received such huge increases of 18.4 and 24.3 percent respectively.

Mr. Chairman, vote 2, Construction and Operation of Transportation Systems. The construction of roads, bridges, and ancillary infrastructure like campsites, vehicle inspection stations, and airports has been cut back severely. Votes 2.2, 2.3, and 2.6: while maintenance of the same was given a hold-the-line budget with .3 and .2 percent decreases, votes 2.4, 2.5, and 2.7 – it's noteworthy in vote 2.2 that aside from the two new votes, 2.2.7 and 2.2.8, all votes were given a cut, except 2.2.2, Secondary Highways, no doubt a reflection of Mr. Getty's election promise to pave all secondary roads in the province. Mr. Chairman, perhaps they should look at Highway 40 and continue what they planned to do before the last election. Last year the budget for vote 2.2.2 was increased by .9 percent, or \$950,000, while the previous year, the year of the election, it went up by \$18 million, or 21.9 percent. Does this mean that the construction of all secondary roads in the province – for example, primary highways are down 12.8 percent, and improvement district roads are down 20 percent – is being severely cut back to pay for the election promises of the Premier?

What are the votes, Mr. Chairman? I was curious on votes 2.2.7 and 2.3.5 – the minister raised them briefly – capital principal repayments for resource roads and for resource bridges. I was wondering about vote 2.2.8, Roads Partnership Program: a new \$10 million. I didn't clearly understand that one, but I would believe that this is the money they got off the backs of the senior citizens when they cut Heating Fuel Grants in the amount of 88.3 percent, largely as a result of the cuts to Senior Citizens Home Heating Grants that ended a \$10.9 million program. This program gave the senior citizens, as the minister indicated, a hundred dollar annual rebate on their heating costs. Remote Area Heating Grants was cut by 43.9 percent, and Propane/Fuel Oil Tank Grants ended completely.

Mr. Chairman, votes 2.9 and 2.10: while large and small towns and villages and urban centres were cut back drastically, the grants to counties and municipalities in vote 2.9.2 have not been cut. Vote 2, Construction and Operation of Transportation Systems: that budget indeed needs some looking at.

Then we go to the vote for municipalities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities tried to alert Canadians, especially the federal and provincial governments, of a looming crisis in municipal 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 the provincial governments provide to municipalities for such maintenance. Obviously, Mr. Chairman, something must be done, firstly, to prepare against the possibility that this slow decay will result in much more costly repairs once our municipal infrastructures hit an absolute crisis level of decline and, secondly, to ensure an uninterrupted supply of healthy drinking water and reduce the impact of residential and industrial waste on the environment. I'm pleased that the minister has announced a program that is outside those boundaries of the original request of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that indeed will help in further plans. Thirdly, Mr. Chairman, I'd like them to provide employment for skilled workers in areas, especially rural ones, where such activities have a high spin-off or multiple value.

The FCM has estimated the cost of needed repairs to municipal infrastructures at some \$15 million. Its proposal is to have the three levels of government share their cost along with some formula that is fair to municipal governments over the next

five to six years. Unfortunately, the federal government has been the largest stumbling block. It is not traditionally responsible for such infrastructures and has not been persuaded by the municipalities' arguments that infrastructure deterioration is nearing a crisis level. Obviously, municipalities need a commitment from this provincial government, a commitment both to shoulder the provincial share of 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 responsibilities 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 six years.

8:30

Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to hear the interim Minister of Transportation and Utilities give his support to seat belts, because indeed seat belts are a benefit to safety for people traveling in the province and for Albertans. When roads are not brought up to standard and they're in heavy use, serious accidents happen. We recently had a serious accident north of the town of Edson in the riding of West Yellowhead where two young women were killed on a road, leaving several young children aged 17, 10, 9, and 11 without mothers. I was hoping that the minister would take a look at that road, 748, which runs north of Edson. It was on schedule some years ago when Mr. Bob Dowling from Jasper was the member of the day for the West Yellowhead riding. He had that on the drawing board. The road was slashed from the branch corner road that goes to the community of Robb for many miles to continue Highway 947 just to the east of Fox Creek. That road was put on hold when the last member of the Legislature decided that he had other priorities, and the trees have since grown back up into shrubbery. It was quite a waste of taxpayers' dollars at that time. There have been more than these two lives lost on that particular piece of road. Although I do understand that a good portion of it is operated by the oil companies, perhaps it's time that the department of transportation looked at upgrading that particular road to save lives in the future and to make it a safer place for the employees.

Mr. Chairman, the minister raised the issue of gas co-ops. Of course, they were cut, not by a large amount, but when the grants were cut to propane and the installation costs were reduced from \$12,000 to \$10,000 in the gas co-op areas, it put a tremendous pressure upon the gas co-ops in rural Alberta. The total system of the gas co-ops, as the minister mentioned, is some \$350 million. That, I would like to say to the urban MLAs, doesn't build very many miles of LRT in the cities. So the benefits of the funding to the gas co-ops over the years has helped many people have a cheaper fuel, a cleaner fuel, and one that does not have to rely on grants.

The co-op in my riding and in the riding of Whitecourt, the Yellowhead Gas Co-op, last year experienced some difficulty with financing because of more people applying for natural gas. They themselves want to get out of using propane. They appreciated the subsidies on propane while they had them, but now even outside the franchised areas I understand that those subsidies to propane have been cut. I wrote a letter to the minister last year supporting the cut of propane grants within the franchised areas. I didn't think they would cut those grants outside the franchised areas, because indeed some of them are hard to reach and very expensive to put in. Perhaps we could have waited a little while until gas lines got a little bit closer.

The Yellowhead Gas Co-op, as I mentioned last year, had some difficulty. At a meeting with Mr. Shillabeer and Mr. Brown and others I was pleased that the minister did prop up their funding. They were allowed to continue with many of the applications. They're getting one to five applications per day since these cuts to propane subsidies have been in place. Indeed, they're going to be in serious problems if in fact they can't get more funding, and I'm sure the same problem is in many of the gas co-ops in this province. They will not be able to expand those facilities that would be there for perpetuity.

I would hope that the minister would seriously take a look at providing some beefed-up funding or supplying more funding to those co-ops that are in a high-population growth area. Some just on the east side of Hinton have waited for some five or six years on an application. This year it appears that they are going to get their gas, but if there's not enough funding there, they'll be struck again this year.

Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity a couple of nights ago in the riding of Whitecourt to meet with the rural electrification area, and we had a great discussion on the grants to REAs over the years and the revolving fund that is in place for rural electrification areas. With my past experience in the electrical business, of course I was involved with many of these grants. The 3 and a half percent that the government supplied on the part 2 loans was a great benefit to farmers, but surprisingly I learned from one of the directors of the federation of REAs and an employee of TransAlta who is the liaison between TransAlta and the rural electrification areas that many REAs in this province in fact will not allow a customer to sign up for more than 10 years. In other words, the 3 and a half percent grant would only be allowed for 10 years. I got the support from that REA that these grants would be much better off if they were only for 10 years and not 25 years. It is kind of a long-term lock in. Although it's a great benefit at most times, in recent years there were no loans out there for more than \$10,000 on these new services. The rest were carried on a part 2 loan that was paid for through a revolving fund. Those revolving funds, of course, are given at no interest to the REAs, and the REAs are allowed to bank those funds and generate several dollars in interest. So it's a very generous donation of moneys to the rural electrification areas.

While on electricity, Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that the minister and members of cabinet have seen the brief from the city of Calgary on the future of electrical energy costs in the province of Alberta. The main gist of their document is in regards to EEMA, which was raised by the Member for Wainwright yesterday. Indeed, EEMA has cost the power consumers in this province a tremendous amount of money to build power plants that are not needed yet by this province, and it's unfortunate that many people in this province are subsidizing those plants that didn't need to be built in the past. I would hope that the government and the minister, before this is transferred to Energy, would look more towards winding down EEMA, as suggested by the power companies and by the major cities in this province and by many power consumers, and we could save the taxpayers of Alberta a lot of money.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that indeed there's a need for upgrading of Highway 40 between Grande Cache and Grande Prairie. As tourists come to the celebrations in Alaska in the next couple of years, they will be able to take a four-lane highway from the south, from the west or the east. From Toronto or from eastern Canada they can take a four-lane highway clear through the U.S. and up south of Lethbridge, where Highway 2, I believe, will be twinned by that particular

time. They'll be able to take a four-lane highway right to Highway 40 just past Hinton, where the twinning of Highway 16 will be completed. They then have a one-and-a-half-hour drive to Grande Cache on their way to Alaska, and lo and behold, they hit gravel until they get just south of Grande Prairie. Now, there's been some federal and provincial money gone into dust abatement on that particular gravel stretch, but I would hope that the minister would try to expedite paving of that highway between Grande Cache and Grande Prairie prior to the celebrations in Alaska. [some applause] Thank you, hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

8:40

The twinning of Highway 16 indeed has been a benefit to the province of Alberta. It was a great venture by the government in the early years, good foresight in twinning that highway. It's getting very close to Jasper park, but it only goes just to the other side of Highway 40, the turn to Grande Cache. I want to go on record this year, Mr. Chairman, as last: some people are in favour of twinning through Jasper national park, but I will not stand by any twinning within Jasper national park. Jasper national park was established for the enjoyment of those of us today and those of us tomorrow. My preference would be that twinning up to the gates is far enough. Jasper park should be a place of enjoyment and a place for people to relax and slow down and enjoy life for a few moments. It's only a short drive to the B.C. border.

MR. DAY: What do your constituents say?

MR. DOYLE: My constituents, Mr. Chairman, in Jasper national park and beyond agree with me that there should be no twinning in Jasper national park. Indeed it's a beautiful place, and I think the animals should be allowed to roam and the birds fly free. They shouldn't be fenced in. I would hope that the government doesn't press too strongly for twinning through that stretch. There's been a lot of money spent on Highway 16, and I think the constituents are very pleased with that and the people of Alberta are pleased with it. There's nothing wrong with slowing down and enjoying a few miles while you're touring through these great parks that were established years ago.

Mr. Chairman, several meetings with Greyhound bus lines over the past year have brought to my attention that there's not too much competition in the bus lines on the highways of Alberta today. In fact, as long as Greyhound serves these municipalities one-day service, they seem to have that right. In fact, I'd like the minister to explain what rights Greyhound actually does have. Where is the free enterprise in this province when it comes to bus service? Are all the routes locked into Greyhound, or are other people allowed to run?

Greyhound does, Mr. Chairman, supply good service to most municipalities. They're going through their cobweb now to try and figure out schedules where people can meet buses more rapidly when they, say, go through the cities like Edmonton. One of my constituents, a young woman who is going to the Lutheran college in Camrose, in order to catch a bus to the community of Edson has to come some four or five hours early, or on the way back she's got to leave in the morning in order to get back to Camrose. They're trying to sort these things out. I'm sure the Member for Red Deer-North doesn't have that problem, because I doubt if he would ride a bus. [interjection] And he can smirk all he wants.

Mr. Chairman, we had the opportunity last night to meet with the central group of chambers of commerce in Calmar, and

indeed the Member for Red Deer-North was there and contributed somewhat to those talks, along with the Member for Stony Plain and the Minister of Tourism. The issue of Howse Pass was raised. Well, I haven't seen any studies on it. Perhaps the minister of transport has some, and perhaps I'll be requesting them to bring myself up to speed. I do know where the particular area is. It's west of Saskatchewan River Crossing in the beautiful riding of West Yellowhead at the very southern tip just north of Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday of course I would have enjoyed getting in on the Energy debate, but I was not given the time. Something that perhaps has to do with energy but certainly has to do with transportation is the fact that coal to the eastern markets is sometimes hauled on our highways in this province and quite often hauled by Northern Alberta Railways. I would like to encourage the transportation department to look at a proposal for purchasing coal cars in the co-operative purchasing agreement with the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario for moving coal from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta – Alberta especially – to the eastern markets: the bituminous coal, the coking coal, and the energy coal that they need for generating electricity for Ontario Hydro.

In Ontario there are some 565 coal cars and 22 locomotives. Their assets are valued at \$13.9 million. If the province were to go into this venture, it would not be a new venture for them. They spent hundreds of millions of dollars on railroad cars; in fact, last year some tens of millions of dollars painting those particular cars. So, Mr. Chairman, I would like the government to take a look at being involved in the ownership of coal cars and engines to haul our coal to the eastern markets. I believe that under the new transportation Act the company can run their own trains on the CN or CP. If the province owned those cars, my question would be: would we have to pay the provincial tax on fuel that was burned in those particular diesels that hauled that coal to the eastern markets? I think not, and the Coal Association of Canada thinks not. It might be an answer for easier transportation and some cost sharing to get our western coal to the eastern markets.

Mr. Chairman, the towns of Grande Cache and Hinton in the riding of West Yellowhead have requests in for a street assistance grant. I believe this grant comes out of transportation, and with the nice weather coming I would hope that the minister could try to expedite those grants and help those communities like they have helped others in Alberta to beautify their streets and their communities.

The opening of Highway 16 I expect will be sometime this year or early next spring, and of course the municipalities in my riding are competing somewhat, the towns of Edson and Hinton, to hold that opening of Highway 16 on the west end, and I would hope that the minister would choose one of those municipalities.

I would also like to see an escort . . . I have a request from the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to take a little break so that he can introduce some special guests. I would grant him that time, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there consent to revert to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

head: Introduction of Special Guests

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Member for West Yellowhead. We're very fortunate tonight to have a group of ladies in the gallery that treated the government members very well tonight. We have Donna LaRocque, who is president of the Independent Physical Therapists Association of Alberta; Nancy Lambert, the president of the Alberta Physiotherapy Association; Barbara Rothe, the president-elect of the Alberta Physiotherapy Association; Pat Tannant; Karen Jackson; and Gloria Mazloun. They're in the gallery. They were looking for a good time tonight, Mr. Chairman. I welcome them, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of all members.

head: Committee of Supply

head: Main Estimates 1991-92

Transportation and Utilities (*continued*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was saying that I would like to see the government look very seriously at finding an escort system for any toxic wastes that are moving on the highways in the province of Alberta like they have for high loads in this province. I would like to see a high-load route established for big equipment and big, high loads that will have to go to the proposed Al-Pac mill in Athabasca. I was involved for many years with the power company, lifting power lines, and indeed it cuts into an awful lot of a working day and is an awful expense to people who are moving these loads and an expense to the recipients or other people. It ties up police, and it ties up safety on highways. If we had a high-load route from the city of Edmonton to the Al-Pac site or any other large industrial areas that are building up, it would put much more safety on our highways.

I would like to hear the minister's comments on the costs of high-speed rail between Calgary and Edmonton. Indeed, the minister of transportation, Mr. Adair, spoke to the same commission as I did twice in regard to transportation in general in Canada, and high speed rail was mentioned. I would like some figures as to what it costs for another two lanes of highway, for instance, in regards to the cost of upgrading the existing CPR line to accommodate high-speed rail including overpasses. We would have those same pieces of infrastructure, I believe, if we were to widen the highway between Calgary and Edmonton. Indeed, it would help the environment, and it would cut down on expensive road repair and policing on those highways.

8:50

Mr. Chairman, the core lists for truckers. The interim minister of transportation indicated that he has some new rules for truckers. I appreciate that 50 percent will be local truckers, and I believe he said three trucks maximum from each trucking company. Every municipality, I believe, has the fear that truckers are coming from someplace else and grabbing their workload and resources, and I feel that this will address many of their concerns. Indeed, the core system I found was a different system when I was invited to the community of Peace

River, and several truckers are very upset about that core system and feel that they would be better off with a quota system. Perhaps the minister's announcement will accommodate those people in Grimshaw and the Peace River country.

Mr. Chairman, I've talked to the Highway Patrol people like Wayne Larson and staff in the Edson office of the Highway Patrol units. I believe that comes under the transportation budget. There seems to be some problem; the fines seem to be very low for people hauling logs. The fine I believe is \$25 for leaving a strap off, and they say the \$25 doesn't warrant them to bother putting the strap on. Perhaps for the safety of the public on the highways the minister could look at those rates. It does not seem to be a deterrent, to have these truckers haul safe loads. Indeed, when these logs fall off on the highway, it's not a very pleasant sight if some fall off in front of you, at sunset or sunrise especially.

So, Mr. Chairman, the northern Alberta railroad. I see in the Auditor General's report the Alberta Resources Railroad . . .

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I regret to advise the hon. member that his time has expired, notwithstanding the fact that the clock was stopped while the introductions were going on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

MR. WICKMAN: Mr. Chairman, I too want to take the opportunity to extend my best wishes to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities. I've always considered the Hon. Boomer Adair a true gentleman, and I wish him a return to this Assembly in pretty quick order.

I, too, want to pass on my sincere congratulations to the officials in transportation, to the people that work in the department that support the minister. I would appreciate their talents even that much more if they were somehow able to sit down with the officials within the city Transportation Department and work to resolve that mess we now see on the Calgary Trail and the Whitemud Drive, which I consider the heart and soul of Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mr. Chairman, in the budget that we have down here, I have a number of questions; in fact, a fair number of questions as I go through my comments. I don't necessarily expect the acting minister to be in a position to answer them all tonight, but possibly through correspondence the transportation officials in the department may be able to respond in more detail. There are a number of areas that do concern me in addition to the questions I'm going to be asking.

First of all, when I look at vote 1, I see in Assistant Deputy Minister's Office, Administrative Services, an increase of 18.4 percent and in Assistant Deputy Minister's Office, Planning and Development, an increase of 24.3 percent. I would like to know as to whether those are actual increases or if it's a transfer of funds from some other subprogram within that budget. If it is an actual increase in funding in those two particular areas, I'd like an explanation as to why such drastic increases in this time of restraint.

We also see an impact within this budget that by my calculations results in a reduction of jobs to the tune of 293 full-time equivalent positions and another 40 permanent full-time, which in effect means a total job loss of 333. This is an area that I believe all of us have to be concerned about. It's fine to preach fiscal restraint, which we like to preach as well as anybody else, but at the same time we have to recognize that there seems to be a trend, possibly an unhealthy trend, at the present time for some very, very severe cutbacks in manpower leaving many

people high and dry and, I believe, having a very negative impact on spending and therefore affecting the economy. My preference, of course, is always to see downsizing occur through a natural process of attrition so that that impact is not as severe. In other words, it's minimized.

When we look at vote 2, Construction and Operation of Transportation Systems, we see a reduction in total of 10.6 percent. Vote 2.3, Construction and Improvement of Bridges, is down 44.5 percent. I have to assume that that's because there isn't the need for new bridges that may have been required in the past. I also see in the infrastructure, 2.6, a reduction of 36.9 percent. Possibly we should be looking at increasing vehicle inspection stations under this vote. When we look at 2.9 and 2.10, we see Financial Assistance for Rural Transportation reduced by 6.1 percent and urban transportation down by 23.3 percent. The difference between the reduction of 6.1 percent and 23.3 percent could lead one to believe that maybe there is some type of preferential treatment to rural Alberta at the expense of urban Alberta, because the difference between the two reductions is very, very significant. The 6.1 percent in rural Alberta will not be near as difficult to take as the 23.3 percent that we see in the urban areas.

That does create some immediate problems, Mr. Chairman. For example, the reference I made to the Whitemud Drive and the Calgary Trail interchange, the improvements being done along there: it's a mess, a bloody mess that's going to be there for two years longer as a result of this government's failure to live up to a commitment that was made to municipalities throughout Alberta, a commitment that was made and the municipalities were then left high and dry to look out for themselves to a much larger degree. They can't be asked to pass on the burden to their taxpayers because the provincial government decides out of the blue that they're not going to honour the commitment that was made. The commitment is not being honoured. The response could be that well, we're going to give the remaining amounts of money a year down the road, but that's not the original commitment that was made, and that, of course, impacts considerably on the expectations that would have been that year. I think the MLAs representing Calgary should be equally concerned, because there are two major intersections that I can point out there that are going to be impacted. There are two that I'll point out, and there's other similar difficulties there as well. I can look at Glenmore Trail and Elbow Drive; then I can also look at Macleod Trail and Anderson Road.

Mr. Chairman, the difficulty that is created as a result of this broken promise, this breach of good faith, is not only the loss of respect, the loss of credibility that the provincial government has as far as municipalities are concerned but also the fact that they can no longer depend on the provincial government. In other words, they say: "While the provincial government can promise something, what does it mean? Their word is no good. It doesn't mean anything. We can't plan based on what the provincial government is telling us, because they can opt out." Again we see that significant impact that falls down the line. We see the reduction in manpower at the provincial level, but when we see these cutbacks in capital work projects at the municipal level, again there are severe, severe cutbacks, substantial cutbacks in the employment factor at the municipal level as well. That, of course, adds to the spin-off and the negative spiral the economy is going in despite the Provincial Treasurer's assurances all the time that Alberta is booming and the good times roll. The good times roll in his imagination, but in real life the good times aren't rolling, not if one moves around

Alberta and talks to constituents to find out what's happening out there.

9:00

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

I look at vote 4, Mr. Chairman, and I see here the Heating Fuel Grants are down 88.3 percent. Of course, that's a reflection of the provincial government asking seniors to pay the price of blunders that have been created, asking senior citizens to attempt to balance the books while they sit back and they see megagrants being given for economic development, many of those dollars not being able to be recovered. Senior citizens are not happy at all. They felt again that there was a commitment made to them, a promise made to them that they would have better lives in Alberta, a better life-style, not what's happening. The minister stated in *Hansard*, May 3, 1990: "To reflect the growing number of senior citizens in the province, we've increased our seniors' . . ."

Chairman's Ruling Relevance

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please. Hon. member, we are on the transportation estimates this evening.

MR. WICKMAN: Transportation and Utilities.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And utilities.

MR. WICKMAN: I thought we were on both.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's correct, but I haven't heard "utilities" yet. You were talking about other things.

MR. WICKMAN: My understanding is that the heating grants come under utilities.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Correct.

Debate Continued

MR. WICKMAN: Again, the broken promise made to those seniors as far as the \$100 benefit that they had received was referred to as late as 1990, the great benefit that would mean that approximately 100,000 senior citizens' households would benefit from that particular program. Of course, that's gone; that's by the wayside.

We also see a reduction of 29.9 percent in Municipal Services Development and Support, again a significant impact to the municipalities throughout Alberta.

One of the areas that the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon raised in 1989 was the question of the Alberta Resources Railway, as to whether studies had been done to see if another link to the Pacific could be developed, and I would like to know whether any studies have been carried out in that particular area.

Another area that I would like to have responded to – again, it's not necessary to give that response tonight but somewhere down the road – what type of master plan the province has when it comes to the designation of roadways, highways, for the transportation of dangerous goods and as to whether they've fully looked at the impact on the transportation of these dangerous hazardous goods, such as the possibilities of chemicals being transported from other provinces to Swan Hills.

In this particular budget, Mr. Chairman, there was a very, very substantial increase in the fuel tax to truckers. Times are not

that good out there for the trucking industry; they're having an extremely difficult time trying to make ends meet, like so many other people are, and this additional 9-cent fuel tax just adds to the difficulty they have.

I had referred earlier to the transportation partnership program that the acting minister had replied to as well when we talked in terms of the actual cut to Alberta cities of \$34 million. I'm curious as to whether anybody can go on record at this time as saying, because of the delay in that additional funding being carried over one more year, what effect that is going to have on the next five-year transportation program or three-year transportation program, whatever the case may be. In other words, is that going to take some dollars away from that time frame as well? Are the municipalities going to hurt beyond the expectation of hurt that is presently there by the delaying of X number of millions of dollars, or is that going to be compounded by meaning less transportation dollars in the next transportation grant program?

The minister fairly recently made an announcement on the establishment of what's called the first joint U.S./Canada truck inspection station, down south, just north of the border leading into the United States. My understanding is that that facility was to be developed in such a way that we would have American officials in Canada that would be in a position to issue traffic violations for violations that had actually occurred in the United States. I'd like to know as to how far that has advanced, whether that type of thinking is still going on, or if in fact it is just going to be a vehicle inspection station for the purposes of inspecting vehicles.

One of the areas was brought to my attention by a councillor in the county of Parkland, and I raise this at this time because the minister made specific reference to the Yellowhead Highway. That municipal councillor from the county of Parkland pointed out to me that she very recently had the opportunity to attend an association meeting of the Yellowhead Highway group. One of the resolutions that was passed, and possibly the minister has a copy of that resolution, involves the promotion of that particular highway. Specifically that resolution objected to an expenditure by Tourism Canada. I realize it's under a different jurisdiction, but nevertheless we do have the opportunity to make our objections known to the other level of government. That level of government spent \$360,000 to run a 22-page advertisement, a feature-article advertisement, in an American publication that spoke mainly about southern Alberta, said very little about Edmonton, but neglected totally any reference to Yellowhead Highway; referred of course to Highway 2 and such but left out Yellowhead Highway. The minister may want to take the opportunity to take a look at that resolution, draft up a letter, and send that letter off to Tourism Canada voicing our objection to such a very, very severe oversight.

We'll also, of course, be dealing with a couple of pieces of legislation that affect utilities, and that's dealing with the two Bills with rural electrification and such, but I won't get into any great detail on those at this time because the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon will deal with those in further depth when they're dealt with at committee level.

In the last budget I had the opportunity to ask how a number of highways were coming, and the minister was good enough to respond. I'm going to raise those to attempt to again get progress reports. The one is the situation – I think it's referred to as Highway 56 – the question of the highway being realigned, as to whether it's going to go outside of Stettler, whether a compromise has been reached with the native group that was involved with some discussions. Another area is Highway 1, as to whether those improvements have been completed to allow

for the twinning or the doubling of the highway from the B.C. border to the Saskatchewan border. The third point is Highway 63 to Fort McMurray, as to how that particular construction is coming.

The minister spoke on one area that's very, very dear to my heart, and that is seat belts. Seat belts, I believe, are a good illustration of preventative programs when it comes to trying to reduce the amount of fatalities and injuries that are created by accidents. I think we've seen in the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary and some of the other smaller cities some real creativity that has been exercised or utilized when it's come to moving vehicles about, when it comes to increasing the safety of motorists and pedestrians. For example, we can look at the city of Edmonton where we see the signs that are being displayed where fatalities have occurred. Those are good programs for the provincial government, for the minister to be involved with in encouraging municipalities to develop these programs through cost sharing of them: the special projects, innovative ideas, and so on and so forth. We've seen projects, again in Edmonton, Project UNI, which maximized or increased the efficiency of the existing roadway system to a very, very large degree. Those are good. Those are extremely good.

9:10

One of the areas that both Edmonton and Calgary are going to have a great deal of difficulty with, again because of the reduction, the broken promise when it comes to the funding of the province's share towards the construction of roadways and other forms of transportation, is light rail transit. I believe that we all recognize light rail transit as being an alternative to massive roadway expenditures, an alternative that is much more environmentally friendly, an alternative that in the long run reduces operational costs, reduces the risk of death, injury – in other words, the number of accidents – on the roadways. I believe we're all committed to light rail transit as being a very, very viable alternative when it comes to moving people about the two major cities in Alberta, Calgary and Edmonton, but because of the uncertainty now when it comes to commitments from the provincial government, there has been a delay in the development of light rail transit. We see it in Edmonton; we see it when talk is now involved with whether the LRT is even going to extend south of the university, and if so, when is it going to extend, when are those dollars going to be there?

It's fiscally impossible for the municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary to foot those bills on their own. The property tax payer can't be expected to cover those types of massive projects, and it has to be recognized that when we talk in terms of the cities as being hubs, those hubs draw people from all parts of Alberta. It's not just a question of moving Edmontonians about in the city of Edmonton or moving Calgarians about in the city of Calgary. People from other parts of Alberta come into Edmonton, and they utilize the public transit system as well. They'll possibly park their car at a shopping centre, use a bus to come in, or if the LRT extended to places like the Heritage Mall or out to the west end, we would see much greater use. So that becomes very, very important.

One of the areas that I and the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon have raised in the past, and there have been studies done on this matter – I'm not sure what studies have been done from our point of view, within this particular government – is the uncertainty as to what effect hydro transmission lines have when it comes to the possibility of affecting people's health, when it comes to the possibility of affecting livestock. There is growing concern. We've seen court cases in the United States. We've seen some pretty clear evidence that there is real cause

to feel concern, real cause to study that particular matter in much greater depth. I would hope that is being done, that that is being studied so we can ensure that steps are taken to minimize any impact, if there is impact, on the health of individuals because of those lines.

The last issue that I want to raise before I close off here, Mr. Chairman, concerns the gas shutoff as far as Alberta gas companies are concerned. Alberta gas companies have the right to disconnect service to homes in subzero temperatures. In other provinces such as Manitoba that's not allowed to be done during those periods of time when families can suffer as a result of the extreme cold temperatures. I'm wondering if the minister could respond as to whether consideration has been given to changes so that gas shutoffs could not occur during periods of freezing temperatures.

On that point I'm going to conclude. I look forward to the response of the acting minister as to those items that he can respond to tonight, and the items he can't respond to tonight, I would hope that further down the road I'll get some written communication on those.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, there have been a number of questions. I'll attempt to deal with as many of them as I can possibly can. Those that I perhaps miss, I will certainly check the *Hansard* and attempt to provide in written form further information.

First of all, I think I'll begin where we just ended and work my way backwards, Mr. Chairman, right back to the beginning. On the question of gas cutoffs, I think that's certainly a matter that may more appropriately be before the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs than perhaps the Department of Transportation and Utilities. There are some alternatives that the hon. member might want to exercise with respect to this. I think perhaps a motion before the Legislative Assembly, a private member's Bill, or something might bring this matter to debate on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and might in fact be useful.

The member certainly can take comfort in the fact that we have for years reviewed the possible impact of electrical transmission lines on people. I recall when I served as the Minister of the Environment in the province of Alberta before the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud became a member of this Assembly that there certainly were discussions, debates in this Legislative Assembly with it. We're fortunate to have not only the Legislature Library but also the library in the Department of the Environment; perhaps there's a little more research that can be done there.

The comments with respect to LRT are welcomed. I think it has to go without saying that of all the provinces and jurisdictions anywhere, Alberta with a population base of 2.5 million – when this government decided a number of years ago that in fact one of the programs it would initiate for both the two major urban cities of Edmonton and Calgary, that program dealing with light rapid transit systems was most unique. There are very, very few environments, period, in the world where you would find two cities of the size of population that we have within the province of Alberta that would have these kinds of systems. Needless to say, one needs just to go to Los Angeles, as an example by comparison, to look at the megapopulation you would see in that centre of one of the largest states in America, and they don't have any light rapid transit system. You can see the vision that this government initiated a great number of years ago with respect to this program. Of course, as years go by and

as resources allow us those systems, we will work with our partners, those two major cities in this province, to see whether or not funding is available.

One of the things, though, that must be done: almost a plea that the citizens who live in both in Edmonton and Calgary have to use these systems. There is a remarkable amount of money that has to be raised by the taxpayer in the province of Alberta to fund the deficits in both the cities of Edmonton and Calgary with respect to ridership on the light rapid transit systems. It's not a toy; it's a useful mechanism to transport people in an environmentally sound environment, but if the citizens who live in these two cities chose not to use it, then I think, for heaven's sake, those who are elected to govern must ask the question: just how important and how much expansion should be done?

With respect to Highway 56 I would like to advise the member that before we can undertake the massive amount of negotiations that we do want to undertake with the Siksika Nation to secure the necessary right-of-way for Highway 56, an environmental assessment must be undertaken. This department is working now on initiating an environmental assessment that's going to be presented to the Siksika Nation in the fall of 1991. If the native people find the assessment to be acceptable, a referendum will then be held to seek approval to proceed with a negotiation for a right-of-way. We are dealing with another one of our partners in the province of Alberta, an Indian nation.

Continuing work will be done on both highways 2 and 63. In fact, there's a fair amount of work programmed for 1991 with respect to those projects.

The comments the hon. member made with respect to Canada tourism – some friend of his in the county of Parkland, and the federal government spending money on tourism advertising – perhaps are matters best addressed to the federal government rather than to the interim Minister of Transportation and Utilities in the province of Alberta. It's the Solicitor General not this interim minister who looks after traffic violations, so perhaps when the estimates of the Solicitor General come up they can be dealt with as well.

9:20

There have been no cuts at all to the cities. I've indicated already what the commitment of the province was with respect to this partnership program. It's a program that is continuing. We basically worked out an arrangement with our partners, the two larger cities and the other cities as well, that in fact the program is simply going to be expended in one year. It's not going to be cut back or anything else. I think it has to be pointed out that there was a point in time that there were dollars left in the bank account in the city of Edmonton that were unexpended and unused, and you can't have a situation where the province of Alberta in this Legislative Assembly votes to provide funds to this major metropolitan area and then that major metropolitan area chooses not to expend those funds, it just lets them sit and grow in accounts. If those dollars are going to sit there, and they're not being utilized, heaven forbid. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud can't come to this Assembly and get mad at this Assembly. He's a resident, a taxpayer in the city of Edmonton and an MLA in the city of Edmonton. Pick up the phone; phone the mayor, phone the council, and say, "Hey, I've been there before; why aren't you doing this?" I think in fairness that that's a point that can be raised.

You know, the city of Calgary just recently wrote a report, put a big report out, and said, "Spend less money on transportation infrastructure or reallocate the infrastructure dollars in the city

of Calgary and put it into social services events." So please, hon. member, don't come in here and say that the thing is in a mess because it's this government. It's not this government that manages urban transportation in the city of Edmonton. It is the city of Edmonton, not this government. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud knows that, and I have to say shame, shame, shame for trying to leave a feeling in here that it's this government. I mean, it's the city of Edmonton; the member's a former member.

The hon. member also said that we added an additional 9-cent fuel tax to truckers. There's no such thing as a 9-cent fuel tax to truckers in this budget. For clarification again, I don't have to send a letter back; I can just make that comment now.

Transportation of dangerous goods routes. We've talked about that time and time and time again. When I go through the kinds of highways and the systems that we have in the province of Alberta, I think there are enough comments in *Hansard*, really, to deal with it.

In terms of a new rail link to the Pacific, of course, we have a major rail link to the Pacific. It goes right through the city of Edmonton. It goes right through Jasper national park. It goes right to Prince Rupert. I'm not so sure that the taxpayer in Alberta in 1991 wants to see another massive investment for another rail link. We do have the Alberta Resources Railroad. Thank heavens we have one of the most distinguished public servants I have ever met, Mr. Charlie Anderson, who I think turned 90 this year, who's still gainfully employed as a member of the public service in the province of Alberta. He looks after the Alberta Resources Railroad. He is an institution unto himself, a man with a remarkable knowledge of railroading. He's a young 90-year-old, and he's our best adviser in the Alberta Resources Railroad. Before too long we're finally going to make that machine pay for itself, and that will be 30 or 40 years later after the original investment.

There have been absolutely no broken promises by this government with respect to any matter dealing with the seniors' home heating program. That program was initiated in 1982 for a three-year program when a gigajoule of fuel cost \$2.80. That program was to go for three years. At the end of three years we extended it for three more years. It was to end at the end of those three years. We extended it again for three more years, and it was sunsetted in December of 1990. Please, please, let's tell it like it is: it wasn't terminated, it was continued for two more terms beyond what it was originally, it was left to sunset as it was, and the price of a gigajoule of fuel in December of 1990 in the province of Alberta was \$2.20: 60 cents per gigajoule less than it was in 1982.

Mr. Chairman, comments were made as well with respect to the urban and rural adjudication and adjustments of dollars. I think it's really important that the explanation given, the partnership that was worked out with our urban partners in the province of Alberta in terms of the Alberta cities transportation partnership program is really well understood. There's been a massive commitment again in this budget of some \$113 million, and it is being worked out very, very much in place.

As well, in terms of the actual manpower reductions in this department I would refer the hon. member to page 332 of the elements book. At the bottom of page 332 of the elements book we'll see that the number of permanent full-time positions in Alberta Transportation and Utilities in this fiscal year is being reduced from 2,576 to 2,536. That's a reduction of 40 in manpower.

Both the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the Member for West Yellowhead asked questions with respect to vote 1 and

dollar figures for some assistant deputy ministers. The Member for West Yellowhead after giving glowing endorsements to senior managers in the Department of Transportation and Utilities then proceeded to ask a question: how come they got such massive increases? Well, I would like to point out to both members that the increase in the assistant deputy ministers' offices are mostly the result of manpower adjustments over a two-year time frame. Each office has two staff – the assistant deputy minister and his secretary – and a manpower adjustment was required to allow for salary settlements and annual merit increments. As well the assistant deputy minister of planning and development, where there was an increase of 24.3 percent, has taken on additional duties as the chairperson of the Western Regional Advisory Council – WRAC – and of course that additional funding was provided in the budget for the department's representation on that particular council. The council, of course, was established to advise the federal Ministry of Transport on matters of interest to Alberta such as west coast ports. That follows through, I guess, in a way with the concern that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had about another access to the Pacific, but both hon. members really dealt with that item.

The Member for West Yellowhead raised a question or two about the ARR, the Alberta Resources Railroad, and I think I, in essence, responded to it. That railroad, which was a vision of the previous Social Credit government, perhaps was a vision well before its time. It certainly runs through a very rugged part of the province of Alberta. The intent and the hope of this government always had been to make it reach a paying proposition, and perhaps one day soon it will happen.

The gentleman from West Yellowhead also made comments about the possibility of a high load route, and that's really an interesting idea. I'm going to have that idea pursued. Perhaps sometime in the future there will be an opportunity to discuss that again.

The question of high-speed rail is really a fascinating one. I know that the mayor of the city of Edmonton wants to build a high-speed rail system from Edmonton to Calgary. I say to Mayor Jan Reimer: good luck. I say to Mayor Jan Reimer: you go for it; you get that billion dollars-plus and you build that high-speed rail system from Edmonton to Calgary and you use it as a functioning utility of both the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. If the taxpayers in those two municipalities can see their way to fund it without asking or requesting provincial government dollars, I say that's wonderful. It was in the late '70s when there were pretty major studies, massive studies perhaps that high, that were done on the concept, and I know it's going to be looked at again in the environment of 1991, but, you know, as a taxpayer in the province of Alberta as well as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, I have to look at some very, very serious questions with respect to that.

First of all, the cost. There isn't one high-speed rail system to my knowledge that exists anywhere in the world, including the runs that come out of Tokyo and go to Yokohama, which is one of the busiest rail systems anywhere in the world – they jam people in; they push people in, and they ride these things – and they still don't break even. But it is not the cost that bothers me as much as the environmental impact of building a high-speed rail system through some of the most sensitive territory in western Canada. To build a high-speed rail transportation system you have to fence off for total safety, with fences on both sides of the rail line, a dead area, a dead zone. It will allow no migration of animals or wildlife as we know them. It will stop such migration. In addition to that you have to build an

enormous number of overpasses. It is that environmental concern that really, really bothers me in addition to the cost factor. I'm sure there are visionaries up there who would say, "Well, it's a nice toy; let's build it, and let's get on with it," but somebody's got to pay for it, and I really believe, as the Member for West Yellowhead said, that we've got to have a lot more questions asked and lot more answers found before anybody could go ahead with that.

I welcomed the comments the member made with respect to the streets assistance program, a program we're going to continue to administer on a course with fairness and equity throughout the whole province of Alberta.

9:30

The Member for West Yellowhead, though, really, really touched on a very, very important subject matter when he started talking about coal from Alberta to Ontario. Well, it was before the time, I guess, of the Member for West Yellowhead when positions were taken by this government, documents were tabled in this Assembly, when not only I served as Alberta's Minister of the Environment but said Ontario must buy low sulphur Alberta coal to feed its enormous power generation systems; Ontario must quit buying coal from the northern United States. It was my predecessor, the Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest, who was the visionary with respect to this. I just happened to come in, after he had moved on to another responsibility, to take that initiative.

Now I want the NDP caucus to get down there to Ontario and Queen's Park and tell that Premier of Ontario to issue the order to Ontario Hydro to buy western Canadian coal, coal from Alberta. It is low sulphur coal. It is environmentally sound coal. Low sulphur coal will reduce acid rain in southern Ontario. It will have a positive impact on the environment of Ontario. It will have a very positive impact on the environment of the northeastern United States of America. It will have a dramatic impact on the Canadian economy. All those dollars that the government of Ontario currently is spending in the United States importing this coal from the United States can stay within the country of Canada. That is important not only from an environmental point of view but from a Canadian economic point of view.

There'll be absolute co-operation from the government of Alberta in any petition that would go to the government of Ontario to make it happen. I've got to believe in a co-operative partnership in this Assembly. We didn't get it from the Liberals. Uh uh, they didn't want to do it; no way. But there's now an opportunity for the NDP in Alberta to work hand in hand with the government of Alberta in making sure that Premier Rae and the people in the government of Ontario buy that coal from the province of Alberta. It's environmentally sound for Canada, will reduce the deficit of the Canadian government, will increase employment within the country of Canada, and the money stays in this country. So let's get with it. Bang, bang; let's get those letters going, let's get that position out there, and let's improve the economy and the environment of Canada. What it will do for employment in Alberta and the rest of Canada I can only envision. I really want to thank the hon. member for just getting it, being right there, understanding the importance of it, and I wish they would have been there more co-operatively with the government of Alberta several years ago when that was happening.

Howse Pass. Well, I'm glad the hon. member found out where it is. You just go down the old David Thompson Highway there, just straight west of Rocky Mountain House, and you keep

going. There have been lots of studies with respect to the Howse Pass, to build that road through the Rocky Mountains of the David Thompson Highway into British Columbia, but it's kind of costly. It's kind of costly, and we've got to work this one out with the government of British Columbia. If you're talking about another highway, remember that we have some pretty dramatic accesses from Alberta into British Columbia. Of course, you've got that beautiful highway in the Crowsnest Pass, a beautiful, beautiful highway. You've got the Trans-Canada Highway, you've got the David Thompson Highway, you've got the Yellowhead Highway, and of course you've got the highways in the northwestern part of the province of Alberta. So it's a vision; it's a vision. We have to keep studying it. There's a lot of environmental concerns if you're going to build a new highway through the Rocky Mountains now. The venue is 1991, and we have to be really concerned about the environment. It may be nice to build another road, but let's make sure that the routes we currently do have are in place and everything is working.

The bus routes and Greyhound is a very, very timely question as well, because it was just recently that the federal government of Canada in fact initiated a royal commission with respect to public transportation in the country of Canada. The chairman of that royal commission happens to be an Edmontonian, the hon. Lou Hyndman. An interim report was just recently, recently made public, and it asked some pretty significant questions with respect to public transportation. Now, the focus, of course, was to a great degree on Via Rail, but it was also focusing on other aspects of transportation. I just – in fact, in the last couple of days – read the interim report with respect to this matter, and I would draw it to the attention of the hon. member. I will pursue the questions the hon. member raised with respect to Greyhound and get back to him on that one.

Highway 40. Of course, now the hon. member is focusing on his own constituency, and he basically said that there was a great event in 1992 in Alaska. Well, that great event in 1992 in Alaska is the 50th anniversary of the commemoration of the Alaska Highway. It's also the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus discovering North America. It's also the 125th anniversary of Canada becoming a country, but the focus in Rendezvous '92 is to bring attention to the Alaska Highway.

Now, the hon. member has to answer this question for me. My understanding of Alberta history, Canadian history, and North American history is that the Alaska Highway never went through the hon. member's constituency. The Alaska Highway, in fact, went from Edmonton north via Westlock, via Slave Lake, via McLennan. Now, it takes some degree of imagination for the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to say that if you're going to commemorate the Alaska Highway in 1992, we should pave the highway from Grande Cache to Grande Prairie. It would seem to me that we shouldn't try and rewrite history in the environment of 1992. What we should try and do is make sure we maximize those places along the Alaska Highway and give them the chance, because I think they might be a little perturbed to hear that the Member for West Yellowhead is trying to take their thunder away from them and trying to rewrite history in 1992. I get the same thing, by the way, from those folks who live on Highway 33, the Grizzly Trail, which goes through the constituency that I represent. I have to say: "Hey, come on now. Yeah, okay, but let's make sure that we know history." The Alaska Highway did not go through Grande Cache to Grande Prairie. That's a great argument, and I respect the imagination of the hon. gentleman to say, "Hey, you know, I can get my highway paved because we're going to go to Alaska

to commemorate the Alaska Highway," but it is stretching just a bit. But, you know, all points for the enthusiasm given to the debate.

EEMA. I appreciate knowing the position of the hon. member with respect to it, and I welcome the comments with respect to secondary roads 748 and 947 north of Edson. I welcome those.

The member made one other comment that I think is worthy of just a bit more explanation, and that is the dealing of, I guess, the Canadian council of municipalities of several years ago, the position taken that they should have all the municipalities of Canada join with a number of provincial governments, go gang up on the federal government, and ask the federal government to provide a significant amount of dollars to upgrade decaying or derelict infrastructure throughout the country of Canada. That sounds like an admirable motive at first, but I would really raise caution with respect to that, and I would raise caution for some very basic reasons. This government and the previous government in the province of Alberta recognized and understood its responsibilities with respect to infrastructure in a provincial base. Enormous amounts of public dollars in Alberta have been spent and expended on building a transportation system in this province. Enormous amounts of dollars have been provided to our partners, our municipalities, in this province to build their water and sewer systems, to build the bridges. We did it in a partnership.

I put it in this context. More than half of the municipalities in Ontario and well beyond half of the municipalities in Quebec still do not have mandatory treatment of sewage and allow raw sewage to go into their lakes and their rivers untreated. That is not the case in the province of Alberta. The laws of Alberta require complete cleanup and taking care of it. If we were to go to the federal government and ask the federal government to create a massive program to repair decaying infrastructure, the very, very massive amounts of dollars would go to Ontario and Quebec, and the taxpayer of Alberta would one more time subsidize some other province in this country because their provincial government in the past had not done what Alberta had done.

On the one hand, it sounds like a pretty, pretty good thing to do: let's everybody gang up on the federal government. But I think we have to be very, very cautious. We have to be very, very cognizant of the fact that we have got an infrastructure in this province. We've got concerns with it, and as long as we continue to maintain the systems, upgrade the systems, and take care of the systems, we will not have the decaying problems that other jurisdictions in Canada have. If the feds create a program in this regard, the one province that will get the least benefit from it will be Alberta, and the ones that will have to pay the most for it will be the taxpayers of Alberta. I think there's got to be a better way than simply getting together in a mob scene and ganging up on the federal government on this one.

The questions with respect to votes 2.2.7 and 2.3.5, dealing with capital repayment, are questions that are worthy of a bit of an explanation. In both cases they deal with capital principal repayments. Under the Capital Fund, which is also a vote of the Legislative Assembly, which will come back at a later date, the investments for resource roads and the investment for resource bridges for Al-Pac are being financed over a period of time. The total cost for those projects will be paid for, and then they will be repaid through the Capital Fund. So what you've got in the case of both of them is the annual repayment for the investment that will come with respect to resource roads and the bridge infrastructure for the Al-Pac scenario.

9:40

Mr. Chairman, there were comments with respect to secondary roads, and I thought that in my overview comments I had pointed out with some degree of clarity the difference between a secondary road or highway and a local road. I just want to quickly repeat one more time that the secondary system in the province of Alberta has numbers attached to it. Local roads do not have numbers attached to them.

The member also raised the suggestion that perhaps we're spending more money on secondary roads and neglecting primary highways, but I just want to repeat the figures again. There are 13,460 kilometres of primary highways in Alberta; 12,710 are paved, surfaced; 750 are not. There are 14,769 kilometres in the province of Alberta; 8,969 are paved, surfaced; 5,800 are not. So we've got most of the primary highway system paved. There are some pretty big gaps in some parts of the province of Alberta, but until we have greater usage of travel patterns, I think we're going to have to go at the pace that we are going with respect to it. As an example, north of Slave Lake going up to Fort Vermilion, you've got a primary highway system in there, and we're doing some work on an annual basis. But the travel patterns on Highway 88 are such that you wouldn't really want to warrant massive investments at this time compared to situations in other parts of the province of Alberta where there is a pretty substantial traffic movement of people on roads that have several numbers. We of course know them, and they're all over the province of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, that basically is a quick, nutshell response to the questions, and I will study *Hansard* to make sure that I have in fact responded to the questions. There were quite a few questions that were coming here. I don't want to avoid any, and I will follow through on the ones that I may have missed with a greater degree of clarity.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?
The Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to speak tonight on the estimates of the acting and the real minister. First of all, let me congratulate what the acting minister calls the real minister, because that minister and his staff have provided superb service to Albertans. The acting minister is carrying on in the same tradition, and it's really very much appreciated. That service not only extends to providing assistance in Transportation and Utilities but also in the entertainment field. We've got a lot of talent there.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to maybe discuss and zero in on some of the more specific items in the constituency and some that are more generally located throughout the province. Now, one of the concerns that I have in the constituency is the Highway 14 and 23rd Avenue intersection. That question was raised in the House some time ago, and it appeared only a couple of days after the question was raised in the House that the minister's department was out there and actually doing something about that intersection where some fatalities had occurred, which is very unfortunate. They were actually doing something constructive to alleviate those safety concerns that exist in that particular area. It has helped significantly. There haven't been any major fatalities at that intersection, but it hasn't solved the problem completely, and I would ask the minister to have a look at that, particularly with the consider-

ation of a future bypass road around Beaumont. That might impact that intersection again, and I would suggest that such a bypass road probably should not be considered until an interchange is actually located at the Highway 14 and 23rd Avenue intersection. That is in the ultimate plans, but it is, I understand, quite some time away.

The assurance that was given to me by the Hon. Boomer Adair in questions was that with the extension of the Whitemud freeway eastward, that would alleviate some of the concerns that exist on the southern intersection. What has happened here, though, Mr. Chairman, is that that extension eastward which was planned, I believe, for '92-'93 off the Whitemud freeway has been delayed again. It will create an impact because the traffic volumes at both of those intersections are increasing dramatically, and I still have the safety concern. I know that the grants we provide to the city of Edmonton for their road system are unconditional moneys that we provide – we do not specify which stretch of road needs to be done – but I almost would urge that in certain instances there should be some conditions attached, particularly for that section of the Whitemud freeway. My understanding is that the moneys are going to the Highway 2 and Whitemud freeway interchange construction rather than to the extension.

Now, the argument by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was made that there was more of a reduction in the urban program. I need to put that a little bit in perspective. Sure, there are some delays on the Highway 2 and Whitemud intersection because they have volumes of traffic, but a 10-minute delay for a commuter is a different thing than a fatality on 23rd Avenue and Highway 14, and I think I want the hon. member to keep that in perspective as well.

I appreciate that we have to be cautious, and with the 12.3 percent reduction that the acting minister has referenced, we do have limited resources to undertake some of these projects. But there is, I believe, on Highway 14 – and I will elaborate a little bit more – considerable traffic on that main road, and it will increase. As a matter of fact, it is the high haul route for the equipment that is going out to the upgrader. I see every day some very heavy loads moving along that road. Not only that; I've had representation from municipalities along Highway 14 that are proposing that there should be more recognition and importance placed on that particular highway, Mr. Minister, because it serves as an alternate route. You've referenced the Yellowhead, Highway 16, in your comments, but Highway 14 is taking on importance as well. The representation that has been made calls for some recognition that it is an alternate route, and it does connect North Battleford with Edmonton. It may be appropriate to recognize that route with appropriate signage and distances along the highway on our end, on the Highway 14 end, as well as the Saskatchewan side of that system, Highway 40, as it changes in number when it crosses the Saskatchewan-Alberta boundary.

That Highway 14 road will increase in importance, Mr. Chairman, because the commitment that the minister has made to the regional water line, or as it's also known, the Highway 14 water line, will obviously, and that's a distinct possibility – and our commitment of \$4.9 million toward that regional water line system is very much appreciated. It will serve not only the Ardrossan hamlet in my constituency and the acreages along that route, but it also extends out to Tofield and Ryley, outside of my constituency, and serves those communities. Tofield has a severe problem with their water treatment. They either have to build a treatment plant at substantial cost, capital and operating, which we participate in, or the alternative is this

regional water line. The commitment is very much appreciated, Mr. Minister.

9:50

That regional water line: when that type of infrastructure goes into place, it also has an impact. It creates opportunities for development along that route. That development in turn will generate more traffic along that highway, and it will increase importance. It will not only increase traffic along Highway 14, but it will increase the traffic along Wye Road. That secondary road 630 also needs to have some very special consideration. We're basically starting construction and have completed a significant portion of that secondary road. The construction is actually proceeding from two ends of the road, from Highway 14 northward to the Strathcona boundary in the county of Beaver and also from the Sherwood Park freeway, extending eastward through Sherwood Park all the way to the Cooking Lake-Blackfoot recreation area and connecting eventually through Lindbrook with the Highway 14 primary road.

I must say, Mr. Chairman, that the municipalities in this area have done an admirable job of looking at a co-ordinated approach to their secondary program. I've recently attended the rural roads study area No. 13, which included a significant number of the municipalities. I believe that there's another rural road study area group that is doing this and has been doing this actively. It's a co-ordinated approach by those municipalities to look at their secondary road program and to develop it to serve the rural area effectively. That road program is the lifeline of the rural area. It is essential. I resent the comments by members in opposition and the Liberal Party that that could be perhaps reduced to some degree to the benefit of perhaps more moneys to the urban areas.

The thing that needs to be considered with respect to secondary 630 is the first priority the county of Beaver has placed on the eastward end portion of that road for reconstruction, not paving this year but reconstruction. I fully support that, and I would encourage that because of the traffic volumes that exist on that road right now and the traffic volumes that will be expected with the items that I've listed as far as recreation and development related to the water line.

The county of Strathcona also has as their first priority a portion of that secondary road. Now, I know that the normal process for acquisition of the right-of-way for the secondary road is the responsibility of the municipality, and properly so. However, in this particular instance, because of the extension of acreages in that general area, that cost becomes quite substantial. As a matter of fact, because of those acquisitions and the gas line relocations that were required, that cost for the county of Strathcona has gone over some \$2 million. I think those things need to be considered when looking at the secondary road program.

The resource road question I believe the minister has addressed. He indicated that the annual repayment occurs and that the Capital Fund votes deal with those ones specifically.

As a result of the rural road study area No. 13 discussion, I would encourage that that type of evaluation on a network basis for secondary roads be undertaken. I think it's essential. I'm not suggesting that there be more secondary roads designated. As a matter of fact, I'm suggesting that perhaps they can be more effectively designated in certain areas so that the remaining 5,800 kilometres may be paved more expeditiously.

There are, however, some trade-offs that may need to be achieved. The counties of Leduc and Strathcona have asked for

consideration of the Joseph Lake road for secondary status, and they've made some representation in that respect.

Perhaps before I leave the secondary roads, I would suggest a pilot project to the minister. There has been some recent research done by a microbiologist in Mississippi state with respect to potholes, and perhaps this could be applied to the secondary and primary highways. His research finds that because of the composition of pavement the large percentage is really gravel and fines and a smaller percentage deals with asphalt. His findings indicate that the micro-organism washes off the asphalt from the gravel, and that basically creates potholes because the mixture falls apart. He's suggested that silane, a chemical, be used to bond the asphalt more effectively to the gravel.

I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that maybe we should pilot a two-mile section on a well-traveled road, testing this particular chemical to see if we can extend the life expectancy of some of our roads. I think it would be beneficial. The laboratory tests on this particular chemical have shown that for pavement of sections that have not been treated with this particular chemical, the stripping of the asphalt from the gravel occurs within 10 days, whereas the chemically-treated mixture extends for over 137 days. So there's a considerable increase in the life expectancy of that particular hard surfacing.

On water and wastewater, I wanted to comment about a couple of hamlets that I have in my constituency but also make some general comments. The minister has raised the point that in Ontario the majority of the municipalities there do not treat their sewage, and we've got considerable investment in some of the hamlets, which I very much appreciate. Just to give some examples, Antler Lake, Callingwood Cove, and Ardrossan hamlets in my constituency are small hamlets. They all have sewage systems, so they effectively treat their sewage with primary and secondary treatment before discharging it. There's considerable commitment of government funds to those hamlets.

I also note that under the designation of eligible hamlets for municipal water and wastewater assistance, there are two that are not included, and I would bring those to the minister's attention: the South Cooking Lake hamlet and the Hastings Lake hamlet. Both of those have a sufficient number of permanent residents in the area and also the requirements with respect to the sizes of parcels and the number of parcels. Again, also in assisting those hamlets, we've expended some considerable amounts of moneys on the street improvement for those areas. The last numbers I have here are some \$340,000 that were expended for a number of these small hamlets, a very generous contribution to those small hamlets, very much appreciated by the residents within those hamlets.

10:00

Let me go on to the bridge over the North Saskatchewan River at Fort Saskatchewan. There's a commitment to do some major upgrading this fall. It's a major connector between Fort Saskatchewan and the city of Edmonton, and the bridge will actually be closed in the fall. Notification has been sent to constituents. However, there is a difficulty here with interim repairs of some nature that require the closure of the bridge from about 10:30 or 11 o'clock at night. I know it's being scheduled so that it does not inconvenience the traveling public, or to a lesser degree, but I understand also there are six more of these closures planned, and it would be appreciated if the constituents were to be made aware when those things might occur so that they can travel the alternate route right from the start. It becomes a little bit more difficult when they arrive at

the bridge, the bridge is closed, and they have to detour some 30 or 40 kilometres to make it to their home.

Heating grants. [interjections] I gather you want me to stop. Well, just one small point I've got to make to balance that situation off. The question was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. He indicated that yes, there's a reduction in the grant of that \$100 within the natural gas franchise areas. [interjections]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That needs to be balanced off. Yes, there's a reduction in that heating program grant, and I've had some constituents call me about that, but, at the same time, if the concern is valid, there is also an increase in home care by 30 percent that offsets that, and I need to say that in order to keep that a little bit in perspective and balance.

On that note I will stop, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. KOWALSKI: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it goes without saying that the overview just provided by the Member for Clover Bar is certainly one of the most exhaustive overviews that I've heard and certainly covered a fair number of very important points. I think in fairness to the hon. member, the points that were raised were so important that I would want to study *Hansard* and take the necessary time in ensuring that I do have just the most factual kind of information that I can respond with. I would think that would be an appropriate manner of dealing with these very important questions.

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

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Having heard the motion of the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

10:10

For the motion:

Ady	Elzinga	Nelson
Betkowski	Evans	Oldring
Black	Fjordbotten	Severtson
Bradley	Gagnon	Shrake
Cardinal	Gesell	Tannas
Clegg	Horsman	Thurber
Day	Kowalski	West
Drobot	Lund	Zarusky
Elliott	Moore	

Against the motion:

Doyle	Roberts	Wickman
Hawkesworth	Sigurdson	Woloshyn
McEachern		

Totals	For - 26	Against - 7
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[Motion carried]

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

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

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you agreed with the report of the Member for Lacombe?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Carried.
Hon. Government House Leader.

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning it is proposed to deal with Executive Council estimates. I think information of course has been supplied to the opposition to that effect.

[At 10:14 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

