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Alberta Road Programs

AN ADDRESS BY

Hon. Gordon Taylor

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EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Hon. E. C. Manning:

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Of all the public services provided by the Government of your Province, few matters are of greater public interest than the programs for providing adequate roads and highways and bridges for the use of our people. In these days, when so many people have automobiles, and when people travel so much more than they used to in earlier times, this matter is certainly of great interest and importance to all of you. We have a tremendous program in this Department for the coming year, and I am very pleased tonight to have with me, your Minister of Highways, the Hon. Gordon Taylor. I have asked Mr. Taylor if he will outline to you now something of our program for the coming year. Mr. Taylor . . .

Hon. Gordon Taylor:

Thank you, Mr. Manning. Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In addition to some \$40 million that the Legislature has provided for the construction of main highways and bridges in this Province, there has been provided \$23,700,000 for assistance to our municipalities in the building of roads. There is an excellent relationship between your Provincial Government and the councils of the various municipal bodies throughout the Province. Through the years, we have endeavoured to preserve local autonomy, to assist in essential programs, and to assist in keeping the mill rate and the tax levy low. This year, the Provincial Treasurer will be providing some \$22,600,000 to our municipal councils in this Province in unconditional grants.

This money may be used by the councils for any public purpose in any way the council sees fit. But this only tells part of the story. The Department of Highways, along with other Departments, endeavours also to assist our municipalities, and in the Department of Highways alone this year more than \$23,700,000 is provided; this is earmarked for the improvement of roads and bridges.

To-night I plan to outline some of these programs that help to make up this \$23,700,000.

First of all, there is some \$12,000,000 provided for our Special Areas, our municipalities and councils and our Local Improvement Districts, for the purpose of building main district roads and local roads. Good progress has been made in this program and last year, with the use of this grant, our councils and our engineers were able to improve more than 9,300 miles of road; all of course to help our rural people. Some half of this mileage was new construction and the balance was graveling and re-gravelling.

Our Contingency program in this section, provides for 100% of the construction costs with Provincial money — with the municipalities providing the right-of-way, and looking after the maintenance after the road is constructed. With this vote, we have been able to construct more than 3,000 miles of main trunk roads in our rural municipalities.

But we haven't stopped yet. There is even a more promising thing in connection with roads. This last year we took the initiative in organizing a program and asking our municipalities and counties to prepare an inventory of the roads as they are to-day and to carry out a study of the roads that will be needed for tomorrow.

With this information, our Planning Branch will prepare a blue-print for the Province showing a grid of roads that will serve our people now, and that will meet the traffic needs for years to come. This grid of roads is now under study, and we hope by this time next year, to have evolved new programs that will bring in a new era in connection with roads for the rural people of this Province.

But our work is not confined to the rural areas. A few years ago, we commenced a program, the object of which was to encourage people to use the facilities of our towns and villages. We called this the "access-road" or the "approach-road" program. To date, we have built more than 92 miles of "access-roads" for numerous towns and villages in this Province, and we have paved more than 51 miles of these roads. This year, \$700,000 will be spent on paving some of the "access-roads" and in building new "access-roads" to other towns and villages; improved roads make the weekly or the daily visit of our rural people to the business centres of our towns and villages as well as the trips of the school buses, the trips to church, or to wherever people are going — easy and safe. But there is another purpose, too, in this program and that is to entice the tourist who is going through our Province to go into these towns and villages, and to make use of the facilities that are there.

Another program is designed to help our cities to meet the tremendous need that to-day is so evident in our metropolitan areas. There has been an explosion of population in our major cities, such as Calgary and Edmonton. The number of vehicles in Calgary for example per thousand people, is greater than in any place else in the world,

except Los Angeles, and Edmonton follows closely. To provide freeways and roads that permit easy and safe movement for this many vehicles requires a lot of planning. Over the years, we have had programs to assist in the building of freeways and expressways and by-pass roads and arterials throughout these cities. Originally, it was by-pass roads only. Now, we have moved this program into the construction of freeways and main arteries, which are approved by the Department of Highways, and which are advanced by the local authorities. Last year, \$3½ million was provided for this purpose by the Legislature. Calgary took full advantage of this grant, and used their full share.

This year, the Government, in an effort to encourage and to help our local authorities to meet their problems, has provided \$7½ million; and over the next five years, we have made a commitment that there will be \$50 million provided for this program. In some years, because of bridges and freeways and structures and inter-changes, there will be higher expenditures than in others. We are anxious to co-operate fully with our major cities in trying to provide freeways and expressways to do away with the congestion that is now appearing and to provide roadways and freeways over which our traffic can move safely and easily now and in the years to come.

Here is another program — which assists some of our municipalities. It is the "approach-road" program to our ferries. In 1951, we had some 57 ferries in Alberta; now we have 21. Through the years, we have been replacing ferries with major bridges, sometimes eliminating one ferry, sometimes two, and occasionally, three, with modern bridges to span our rapid-flowing

rivers. Previously, the construction of the approach-roads to these bridges was the full responsibility of the rural municipality. Over the last few years, we have taken the responsibility to build these highly-costly, highly-expensive accesses to our new bridges.

The construction of bridges, another program, will cost about \$2,100,000 this year. We have followed this program for many years. Our Bridge Branch looks after the construction of the bridges in our rural municipalities, that are wider than 16 feet. Last year, under this program, 653 projects were carried out. This includes new bridges that are completely constructed; it includes some major repairs to existing structures; and the replacement of bridges entirely with culverts; culverts reduce the maintenance that is normally required on a bridge. This program again this year will be continued.

The grid road program will vitally affect our towns and villages; that is, wherever this grid of roads goes through the main street of a town or a village, then the same assistance will be given to that town or village for that road as is given to the rural municipality. At the same time when we are working out this program (after we have the blueprint in front of us), we will give the matter of traffic within our towns and villages, as well as our smaller cities, attention and careful thought and study.

This year, there will be another new program—again designed to take some of the tax burden off the shoulders of our people at the local level. It is a program to build modern roads to Provincial Parks. In this Province, under our Department of Lands and Forests, we have some 40 Provincial Parks. Some of these are set aside for future use.

Many are already developed, and thousands and thousands of our people, every week-end, every holiday, enjoy these parks. They have their Sunday School picnics, they have their school picnics, they have their family reunions, they have their club reunions. The people go there for recreation, for fun and for relaxation. The roads to these parks have been a matter of concern. The municipal councils, of course, have to give roads that are being used 52 weeks of the year, first consideration, and in many cases, they have been unable to give the necessary attention to the construction of good roads from the highways to our Provincial Parks. This new program will enable us to do this. In the first five years, the Government by using your money to the extent of \$1,000,000 a year, will endeavour to build and pave (or make dust-free by some means or another), good roads to 18 of these parks. We can't do them all at once; we are planning the program so as to get the best value for our money, the best use of our engineers, and the best use of our equipment; I am sure that this program will be welcomed by thousands of the people in our cities and towns and villages, as well as our rural people, who want to relax at the beautiful parks that are looked after by our Department of Lands and Forests. Following the 5-year program, there will remain some 22 parks, and we hope then to continue the program, bringing as many of these as possible up to a modern state as quickly as possible so that our people will have good access to our Provincial Parks.

In conclusion, may I mention that all of these programs, costing in total some \$23,700,000, which is super-imposed over the unconditional grants of \$22,600,000, are designed to provide essential roads and bridges for our people, and to lessen the tax burden on their shoulders at the local

level. By working in close co-operation with our councils — town, village, rural and city — we are trying to provide a modern network of highways and roads that will serve our people well.

Hon. E. C. Manning:

Thank you, Mr. Taylor. You know, Ladies and Gentlemen, when you realize that every one of these thousands and thousands of miles of modern roads have been built in this Province without incurring one single dollar of public debt, you have something of which you, as the citizens of Alberta, can be proud.

Thanks for joining us to-night. Be with us again next week, same time, same channel. Good Night.