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Safety! Grid Roads! Freeways!

AN ADDRESS BY

Hon. Gordon Taylor

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Hon. E. C. Manning:

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen:

From your letters it is clear that there are at least four matters in which practically everyone in this Province is interested — Education, Taxation, Public Health and Welfare, and of course, Roads.

In a recent Tele-Facts program, Mr. Aalborg, your Provincial Treasurer, gave you the highlights of the Provincial Budget and pointed out that you, the shareholders of this great Province, pay less taxes, and receive more in public services, than people anywhere else in Canada. This is true because your Government has seen to it that you receive a generous share from the development of your oil and gas, and other natural resources. This year, the development of your resources will pay into your Public Treasury nearly \$250 million, which otherwise, of course, would have to be provided through taxation. Don't let anyone tell you that you are not getting a fair share from your oil and gas resources, or that you would get more if the Government did the developing. Such statements simply are not true, and the people who make them are deliberately trying to mislead you to gain their own political ends. Keep in mind that such people cannot be relied on in anything they say about your Government.

Mr. Colborne, your Minister of Public Works, and Mr. McKinnon, your Minister of Education, on our last two programs, told you what we are doing to provide modern facilities for our Technical and Vocational Schools and our Universities, and of the large increases we are making in operational grants to keep the increased costs from falling on the local taxpayers.

Today, I have with me the Hon. Gordon Taylor, your energetic Minister of Highways, to

talk to you about the program that he has worked out for his Department for the coming year. Mr. Taylor, something that is causing all of us a great deal of concern is the number of highway accidents and injuries and fatalities. Would you like to say a few words about this problem.

Hon. Gordon Taylor:

Yes, Mr. Manning. Last year, almost 5,000 men, women, and boys and girls were killed on the highways and streets of Canada. This problem has become so great that it is now considered one of the worst social problems facing the people of Canada.

There are a great many causes for this, and in our department we have been trying to pinpoint some of the interlocking causes which are at the root of this massacre of human life that is taking place on our highways and streets.

Hon. E. C. Manning:

In this regard, Mr. Taylor, you have developed a program of vehicle testing. Would you like to say something about it at this time.

Hon. Gordon Taylor:

We found last year, in our vehicle testing program, that 70% of the vehicles could not pass the required tests and secure a safety sticker. If this had only been applicable to defects in the windshield, or the horn, or the windshield wiper, it would not have been too serious; but we found that 20% of these defects involved the steering of the vehicle, 18% involved the matter of brakes, and almost 20% involved the alignment of the vehicle. So, in our program, we have been trying to reflect the thinking of the people of the Province in accentuating and emphasizing the importance of keeping a vehicle roadworthy. Under

our legislation, as you are aware, the owner of a vehicle must keep his vehicle roadworthy. He is required to do so by law. Our new program of compulsory vehicle inspection, which we will work out in detail during these coming months, and then make operative in 1968, will be modelled after the vehicular testing program followed by Vancouver for many years. The thinking behind it will be that people will be able to find out exactly what is wrong with the important aspects of their cars and have them fixed, and, while this may cost a few dollars, we do think that it will save thousands of dollars through reducing the number of crippled bodies, and the number of fatalities.

Hon. E. C. Manning:

Mr. Taylor, perhaps we should go into the matter of your program for the coming year in the matter of roads, because certainly everybody in Alberta is interested in roads. The program this year embraces a very far-reaching attempt to provide adequate transportation arteries, not only in the large metropolitan areas, but in the rural areas for district roads and market roads, and so on. I am sure our people would like to have you outline the program as you have developed it for 1967.

Hon. Gordon Taylor:

I would be very happy to, Mr. Manning. Again, our road program is designed to move traffic quickly and freely and safely, and we spare no pains in trying to build safety into our very roadbeds. Our programs today might be divided into four parts:

First of all, there is our assistance to our metropolitan areas and our cities. Our cities are

now facing a problem of trying to handle almost a gallon of traffic with a pint of roads! There is going to be a tremendous amount of work involved in building freeways and expressways and arteries in our metropolitan areas and in our other cities, in order not only to permit traffic to move quickly and safely, but to move freely, to do away with the congestion that has already built up in many of the major cities across the country, and which we see at certain hours of the day in Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge. This year, we are providing approximately \$9 million to assist our cities in this program; and over a five-year period, we have committed \$50 million to help solve these problems.

There is another aspect of road problems, and this is in our rural areas. While we have been providing from \$12 million to \$18 million a year to assist our rural municipalities, counties, L.I.D.'s and Special Areas to build a network of roads; and while we have made very excellent progress, we found when we analyzed this program, that we had now reached the stage where many counties and municipalities wanted to go into a black-topping program. Black-topping costs a lot of money. We all wanted to make sure that they were putting the roads in the right places. The Department of Highways, in conjunction with our local authorities, worked out what we call a "grid-road program", and studies have been carried out on a regional basis with the object in mind of reducing the number of roads by eliminating those that would be carrying hardly any traffic, and accentuating those that will be carrying a great deal of traffic, and preparing the roadbed so that it can take black-top and give a lifetime of service. These studies are now being completed and are being forwarded to our

planning branch in the Department of Highways, and there we co-ordinate a framework or blueprint of a "grid-road program" that will cover the Province of Alberta and place this new type of rural road within reasonable reach of our people. A program will then be worked out with our Municipal people for the building and black-topping. This will be progressive, because possibly some 10,000 miles of road will be involved.

Again, in our road program, we are assisting our towns and villages. This year, we launch on a second five-year program and \$1 million is being provided for 1967. We are going to work out the details of this program, in association with the officers of the towns and villages, in an effort to make sure that we not only build safe and good roads in our towns and villages, but that we also build them so that there will be a minimum of dust and a maximum of service.

On our main highways network, we plan to continue the building of freeways throughout the entire Province, and the building of arteries and expressways. Our program today will touch from the southern part of Alberta into the far north. We are trying to improve the sub-grades and build safety into them and then progressively black-top them; and, while we can't cover every road that we would like to in the Province, we are making very substantial progress.

There are two other programs also that I should mention which I don't believe any other Province in Canada has. One is called our "access road program", in which we provide approximately \$700,000 a year for building and black-topping roads from the main highways to the limits of our towns and villages. The purpose behind this program is to encourage our tourists and our people to use the facilities of our towns

and villages. We have made good progress in this and will be continuing this program this year.

Another program which we started just last year is again of assistance to our rural municipalities, and I am sure is welcomed by the people in our cities as well; that is the program of improving the roads to our Provincial Parks. There are some 40 Provincial Parks in the Province. We have undertaken, over a five-year period, to build modern roads and to dust-proof them, to some 18. This work started last year and we are going to continue it this year, and expect to make very good progress.

Altogether, our road program is second-to-none in Canada. We are building to excellent specifications and are endeavouring to get full value for every dollar spent; and we are trying, Mr. Manning, to build safety into the very fibres of the road.

Hon. E. C. Manning:

I am sure our people are most interested in what you have outlined to them, Mr. Taylor, because the matter of transportation in our modern age is so vital to everybody. We have talked a little about motor vehicles, we have spoken about the roads that you are building for the vehicles to travel on. Perhaps we should conclude our talk tonight by having you say a few words on the driver — the man in the car who is responsible for its safe operation.

Hon. Gordon Taylor:

Yes, the driver is certainly a most important cog in this whole study of safety. As a matter of fact, it is upon the driver that the responsibility of controlling the vehicle falls, and where a driver keeps full control of his vehicle, there

is seldom an accident. Accidents happen normally when the driver loses control of the vehicle, for some reason or other, or because he breaks a law. In an analysis which we have made, it seems almost impossible (perhaps one chance in a million) for an accident to happen where a driver does not break a law. Sometimes drivers who are usually good and excellent drivers, impair their ability, and then accidents happen. Some impair their ability by getting too tired. They can't stay awake at the wheel. Some impair their ability by drinking alcohol or by taking drugs. When they do this, they are not only gambling with their own lives, but they are gambling with the lives of others. If every man and woman who drives a vehicle in Alberta and in Canada today would resolve to remain alert at the wheel, if each would resolve not to impair his or her ability with alcohol or drugs, and would do their utmost to drive within the laws of their Province and of their municipalities, then we could drastically reduce the massacre of human life that is taking place on our highways and streets.

