

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 22, 1979

EVENING SESSION

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE — CONTINUING EDUCATION — VOTE 5 (continued)

Item 24 continued

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — I believe where we left off I was questioning the minister about the loans written off — the \$5,935. I was wanting to know how many loans this had constituted, and if he could give me some indication of why these loans would be written off.

MR. H.H. ROLFES (Minister of Social Services): — The reasons why they were written off are: (1) accounts uncollectable as a result of death, (2) accounts uncollectable as result of a court decision, (3) bankruptcy, (4) accounts uncollectable when unable to locate or unable to take legal action, (5) some small accounts where the Attorney General's Department has advised no legal action as costs exceed amount outstanding.

MR. TAYLOR: — I can accept that and thought that probably some of them may be due to death and that could be the case with some that are impossible to collect. I do notice, though, that between 1977 and '78 this amount went from \$722 to \$5,935 which is to me a rather drastic increase. You did mention that some of these were hard to track down. Surely, Mr. Minister, you must have a system by which, if you loan money to a person, you can somehow keep track of them. I think that if this happened, that is if they start running off on them, we're in a very dangerous situation.

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Chairman, we have really a fairly good record on collecting debts. I think maybe I should read the percentages. For example, in 1978 the percentage write off was 1.83, in 1977 it was .17, in 1976 it was 3.04, in 1975 it was 4.79, in 1974 it was .51, in 1973 it was .07, for an average of 1.87. That's not bad, you know. We have ways that we do go about collecting them and I think over the years that in some years you're better than others, you know and I don't know the exact reasons. I suppose maybe in some years you may have more deaths or you may have people who have simply taken off and you can't at that particular time locate them. But it goes up and down; some years you're better but it's never out-of-reach, I don't think.

MR. G. TAYLOR: — I would agree that probably you have a bit of an enviable track record there and I congratulate you on that but really we're looking at this year, and as I said before, what's past is past and if it was good behavior you're to be congratulated. I would caution you that percentages — you don't eat percentages — it's dollar bills you know that really count in the long run and to me from \$772 to \$5,000 is a considerable amount of money and I hope that you would keep very close track of this and watch that this trend isn't developing. I would like to then go the next portion, Mr. Minister, which is less allowance for uncollectable loans and that is \$46,510 up from \$38,314. Would you give me some explanation on that please?

MR. ROLFES: — That is there, Mr. Member, my understanding is, at the advice of the auditor to give a real picture of the accumulated amounts that have not been collected. They are doubtful accounts; we're still trying to collect them. He's asked us to put that into our figures, so what you have here is a \$46,510 that are doubtful accounts but

we're still attempting to collect them. They're over a period of six years, so it accumulates.

MR. TAYLOR: — What you're telling me then is that in the figure in '77 of \$38,000 are maybe loans that go back two or three years and that there were only \$8,000 of loans that you might be in doubt of collecting over this last year. Is that a running total — is that what you're trying to say over a number of years?

MR. P. ROUSSEAU (Regina South): — Mr. Chairman. Just to get back on that question — it doesn't make that much sense to me with the accounting principles that I understand. I thought doubtful accounts were those accounts that you were not sure you could collect and you're setting them up, isn't that right?

MR. ROLFES: — That's right.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — What you're saying then is that in '77 you had \$772 that you wrote off. That was lost, you knew you would never collect that?

MR. ROLFES: — Yes, that's right.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — And last year, you had \$5,900 that you knew you would never collect there?

MR. ROLFES: — That's right.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — And now, \$38,000 was accumulated amounts that you knew you would never collect or you doubted that you'd collect. All right, then explain this; why would you . . . Normally a doubtful account would be a percentage of the receivable, that plus other factors . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. ROLFES: — Yes, that's true.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — But it climbs from six per cent to 11 per cent.

MR. ROLFES: — My understanding is we do not do ours like business and I have no idea how business does it, not being a businessman. But the special circumstances here are, as most of you people know, students do not have to pay until six months after they graduate and have a job. Secondly, as long as a student pays \$50 a month, indefinitely, there is no interest attached to it. So a student for example, could, well I don't know how much a student may have — what's the maximum, pardon me? — students could have \$3,000 or \$4,000 and pay \$50 a month. No interest is attached to it. So it could be rather indefinite. Thirdly, when we say these are accumulated ones, it doesn't mean that we are going to collect them; we're going to attempt to collect and as long as they abide by the criteria, some of them will be put into the doubtful account but we will attempt to collect them, and eventually, if we're successful it'll go down. Hopefully it won't continue to accumulate. For this year, as I said, we have \$46,510 that we are attempting to collect, which are in the doubtful category.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I would doubt if a person were paying \$50 a month that you would classify him as being doubtful. I would think that person would be attempting to pay off his loan and I can't see it being doubtful. I would like to know, how much does one renege before he's in the doubtful aspect? The other thing I would like to know is, are there individuals that have more than one loan outstanding that are in

this uncollectable thing? Is there a student, or some students who may have had the knife in for three or four loans and haven't paid in this regard, or is it always the case of one loan? What is the criteria when it becomes doubtful?

MR. ROLFES: — Maybe we should make some clarification here. Are you aware that these are Saskatchewan student loans that we're talking about, not the Canada loans? These are usually made available to people who are upgrading themselves, who are attempting to get a high school education, attempting to get grade 12. Many of them are the ones that were simply not accepted by Canada Manpower and a fair number of them are native people, so this is strictly pertaining to Saskatchewan loans. When we have them in the doubtful category, I want to reiterate again, that means we are actively pursuing the collection of those outstanding loans.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — When they go into that doubtful?

MR. ROLFES: — Maybe if I read you collection procedures that would clarify it. Number one . . . I don't know. There's a fair amount of noise on this side.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — If I just might make one comment, yes I would like the noise on this side to cease. To the members here, if you have a question, unless you rise it is not being taken on the tape. For your own benefit I would like you to rise so that they know who is speaking.

MR. ROLFES: — Procedures then:

1. Individuals are notified one month prior to date when first payment on a loan is due.
2. On accounts where no payment has been received for 30 days a notification is sent, follow-up notification is given at 60 and 90 days. Accounts on which no payment is received following the 90-day letter are notified that the account will be sent to the Attorney-General's department for action.

Collection procedures, including legal action, are followed at the direction of the Attorney-General's department.

3. In cases where the whereabouts of an individual is unknown, the branch follows up with checks at the Motor License Bureau, of the Henderson Directory, of telephone listings, and through contact of next of kin listed on applications. If the address is not obtained the account is sent to the financial collection agency.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know whether he was trying to blame the Attorney General for bad collections here or not, but we'll just assume . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . It's also very amazing how quickly you learn the business procedures and collections. It's exactly what the business world uses for aging accounts, Mr. Minister, so you've just had another lesson tonight . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Your own side's having more trouble with your minister than we are.

A question on your Canada Student Loans and Saskatchewan Student Loans applications. Before I can ask the questions I want to ask, what is the difference between the Canada student loans and the Saskatchewan student loans and who qualifies for what in which department of which government?

MR. ROLFES: — Those eligible for the Canada Student Loan are all full-time post

secondary students, classed as Saskatchewan residents. The minimum length of time for those courses must be 13 weeks. That's Canada. Those for Saskatchewan Student Loans are those who are usually in the upgrading courses to try to get a high school diploma.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, I presume, first of all, that the loan is administered by the Saskatchewan government, through this application. Is it administered by the Saskatchewan government whether it be Canada Student Loan or Saskatchewan Student Loan?

All right, then, I would like to make a remark about it. I find it a very discriminatory type of assistance. Let me explain why. Not having any need of it in the future for myself, other people may benefit from what I am going to tell you. A single student who has gone through school, unless that single student has been away from home for two years or has worked two periods of 12 consecutive months each, or has already completed four years of post secondary education, or has spent 12 consecutive months in the work force, plus three years of post secondary education, cannot qualify for the loan. That puts very many people at a great disadvantage and I will give you some examples. In order to apply, the parent has to submit an income tax form from two years ago. Now, what may I ask, has the parent's income of two years ago got to do with the student's needs of today?

MR. ROLFES: — I think the member is somewhat mistaken there. It's the income tax return previous to your application. In other words, if you apply in September of 1979, you would be required to submit your income tax return of 1979-78. I'm sorry. Of course it can't be '79, you see you haven't done it yet so that would be impossible.

Now secondly, any farmer can ask for reassessment if, for example, he feels that something has gone in his farming and his financial circumstances have changed. He can ask for reassessment at that particular time. The assessment will be done through your department and through appeal.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, just to pursue it a little further. What is the amount of earnings that you would consider the minimum earned by the parent before the student could qualify for the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Okay, what are the qualifying amounts of earnings by the parent before the student can qualify for the loan?

MR. ROLFES: — Let me give you an example. Any parent who has one child and has an income of \$15,000 adjusted salary or adjusted income where you have allowances for the child and you take off the unemployment insurance the regular deductions that are made off the cheque, that parent then would have to contribute. There is a table, it's a graduated table I would assume. Isn't that correct? Yes, a graduate sliding table and as his income increases he would be expected to contribute more.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Well, Mr. Chairman, just to correct the statement the minister made. If the applicant was making an application in January of this year we are talking about the income of two years ago, are we not? So my statement of two years is not incorrect because your income tax filing of 1978 would be referring to the income of 1977, not 1978. So the application made in January for this semester would definitely be going back two years in the earnings of the parent. Am I right?

MR. ROLFES: — Sure, I suppose one could say . . . first of all I wonder, and I have to ask my officials on this, but I wonder who would . . . I was correct. A very, very few people make application in December and January. My understanding is about 6,500 of the people would be making application in September and, therefore, they would be using their previous income tax. So for those very few who make them in January, yes, you would be correct, but the vast majority, no.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — I accept that, Mr. Minister, because I just didn't want to leave it go by. It was a small matter but it is involved. I would like to, before I close on this particular subject, make a recommendation to this government because it is not only the farmer who may have had a good income two years ago or last year, or whatever. It's also the businessman or the worker whose been unemployed, and there are many people who have made the application — there are many people who have made the application and because of the income they were turned down, and did not go back to your department for a review. I would suggest that the qualifications or requirements be changed.

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Chairman, if the opportunity is there for a person to ask for a review and they don't ask for a review, then I think the individual is to blame, you know, and I don't think the program should be blamed. If there was no opportunity for an appeal, or to ask for a review under the current situation, then I would accept your criticism. But not if they have an opportunity and they don't take up that opportunity. So I can't agree with the member on that.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for pointing out that there is an opportunity for a review. To be very honest with you I don't think many people realize this and there's been some information gained, and I thank you for this. Some of this stuff in the book we know though is in pretty fine print. But you didn't answer my question of a few minutes ago and I think it's because you forgot, and that was, I asked you (on these outstanding accounts) if there was a student, or if there was an individual that had more than one loan outstanding, and if so, what was the maximum amount outstanding by an individual, if you have that type of figure handy for me?

MR. ROLFES: — Please don't take it as gospel truth but according to my official there aren't any, but he'd have to check all 800 cases to make absolutely certain. So if you want the specific answer I'd have to get him to check all cases, but he doesn't think there are any.

MR. TAYLOR: — I'll accept your word. I wouldn't expect him to check all 800. I'm sure he's a responsible person and if he knew there were some he would transmit that information to us at this time.

AN HON. MEMBER: — I hope.

MR. TAYLOR: — Yes, so do I. On looking at this again, I think the average loan would be somewhere in the neighborhood for a year of about \$2,000. You see there's \$50,000 there. You know, that's about 25 students and as I say, although your track record may be good, the figures are going up and I would like you and your department to keep a close tab on this because this is public moneys. We want it to be spent with students who are responsible and will repay their loans.

MR. ROLFES: — I think we have the same concern as the member for Indian Head-Wolseley. I can assure you that we are doing everything possible to collect those loans

and we will continue to do so. I appreciate your suggestion.

Item 24 agreed.

Continuing Education Vote 5 agreed.

SUPPLEMENTARY

MR. TAYLOR: — I made a little clarification on this Western College of Veterinary Medicine. Is this a three-way sharing thing; are all of the expenditures shared?

MR. ROLFES: — Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and we have the odd student from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, I believe.

MR. TAYLOR: — Then, am I correct in assuming that the other provinces would be throwing in the same amount of money in this regard?

MR. ROLFES: — First of all, let me make it very clear that the money that is shown in that subvote is money which has been collected from the other provinces. It is put into the consolidated fund and then paid out to the university. That's the only way we can do it. The sums of money we receive from the other provinces are based on the number of students they have at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

MR. TAYLOR: — Could you tell me what amount of that money is from the other provinces?

MR. ROLFES: — All of it.

MR. KATZMAN: — How many students are there in the veterinary college now and what's the formula? For example, it used to be 60 and each of the three provinces were allowed 20 with 5 for B.C. Is there still such a formula?

MR. ROLFES: — There are 251 students at the Western Veterinary Medicine College, Manitoba 37, Saskatchewan 75, Alberta 83 and B.C. 56.

MR. KATZMAN: — Any foreign students?

MR. ROLFES: — No.

Supplementary Vote 5 agreed.

PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE — VOTE 5

ITEM 1

MR. KATZMAN: — Mr. Chairman, are the other provinces matching?

MR. ROLFES: — No. Capital is the responsibility of the host province.

Item 1 agreed.

Item 2 agreed.

MR. KATZMAN: — I'd like to make a statement here before I agree to this. I see that these are funds from the heritage fund. I'd just like to point out that I do believe if we are going to be spending money out of the heritage fund, that education, both the Department of Education and Continuing Education, are valid places to be spending this money. However, I do caution the government that this is a heritage fund and we should be careful on the amounts of money we spend out of the heritage fund.

To sum it up I'd say that education perhaps is a good priority but let's be careful on the amounts of money that we're taking out of the heritage fund so we're not depleting it.

MR. ROLFES: — Mr. Chairman, just a brief comment on that. I appreciate the remarks of the member and simply add by saying, what better legacy can we leave for our young people than a beautiful veterinary medicine college building at the University of Saskatchewan, and a nice engineering building that your children and mine can attend if they so desire.

Provincial Development Expenditure — Vote 5, agreed.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION — VOTE 16

HON. E. KRAMER (Minister of Highways and Transportation): — Mr. Chairman, it's a pleasure to introduce my staff and also a pleasure to be able to bring the estimates in for this year's spending. At my immediate left is our Deputy Minister (Mr. Thomas Gentles), who is back with us this year. Those of you that were here last year will remember that Mr. Gentles was not in the House last year, he was on loan to Indonesia. He spent a little more than a year there setting up a highway administration system for that small country of some 170 million people. We're proud to have loaned Tom to them but are very glad to have him back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I think one of the marks of efficient administration is when you can take the general manager and let him leave on a mission that is one of the most complimentary to Saskatchewan and helpful to another country and have the department run efficiently throughout that year. That is a mark of good organization and I congratulate Tom and our administration staff behind me for the good job they've done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — Tom Gentles has been with the department since the late 1940s. The Associate Deputy Minister is Jack Sutherland, who is in charge of operations. Myron Herasymuik is our engineer in charge of operations, and Al Schwartz is the director of support services. Over on my right, behind me, is Glen Middleton, the director of financial services.

I'd like to tell the House that I haven't done an exact calculation of the combined years of experience of these five engineers but I think you it would probably approach 120 years of combined experience. We're talking about the civil servants. That is distinctly apart from the politicians. One politician has 27 years of experience all to himself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I would like to say, before we go into Item 1, that it was a specially challenging year because we have been faced with serious cutbacks in financial assistance for planned and promised programs. We have been asking the federal government (not only Saskatchewan but all the provinces and especially the western provinces) to reinstitute a sharing program on highways that are of Trans-Canadian nature and carrying a great bulk of trans-Canada traffic. They have failed to do this, Mr. Chairman. They failed very miserably to do this. This was cut back and no former governments can take any pride in this. This program of sharing was cut off way back in about the early 1960s. The only time we ever had any meaningful sharing in our highways system was on Trans-Canada No. 1, which was shared 50-50, dollar for dollar, all the way from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island.

That was a great step forward, but once that was done, that road now is outmoded and certainly deficient in the service that it is giving because it is too narrow in many places throughout Canada and still is in some parts of Saskatchewan. It will not accommodate trans-Canada traffic any more. And yet, in spite of the fact that the federal government has invaded our taxation field three or four years ago with a 10 cent excise tax, unheard of before, we have still had to get along with Saskatchewan resources.

There has been some federal funding. I don't want to mislead the House. There's been a Northlands Agreement that has put some millions of dollars and sharing some highways in the North. There has been an upgrading of asphalt on our primary system across Canada, across Saskatchewan and across Western Canada under the WEOC (Western Economic Opportunities Conference) Agreement which shares the extra surfacing. We called it the Highway Strengthening Program, but it does no grading, no rebuilding, no four-laning or anything else. It simply puts a layer of asphalt on those existing highways in order to accommodate the heavier loads that the Federal Department of Transportation wants to accommodate and in order to accommodate heavier loads and equal loads in the western provinces across Canada. So we're faced with that.

Now even that program they have announced they are not going to continue. We had . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Shame!

MR. KRAMER: — Yes, shame is right! We had anticipated a continuation. In fact it was agreed in the statements they made at the time of the five year agreement said it was the first stage. Well the first stage is also the last stage, Mr. Chairman, because we are going to be \$5 million short in that in the anticipated funding next year, and that would mean, if it continued to grow, several millions of dollars over the next number of years.

So, I want to point that out when we talk about four-laning and the need for four-laning and the need for improvement. The Yellowhead Route Association has asked for federal funding and they have been turned down. The western provinces and all of the provinces have asked for a Trans-Canada policy on transportation. They've been turned down. They have said 'no, no, no' while putting a tremendous amount of money into other programs in Canada that are far less meaningful.

They talk about Canadian unity, Mr. Chairman. They talk about Canadian unity! What

better for Canadian unity than a good four-lane highway across this country or two of them that will allow Canadians to move safely back and forth across this country, to know each other, to meet each other, and to visit with each other.

The United States has a far different arrangement. They pay for 90 to 95 per cent of the inter-state highways. That has been funded for years, way back 40 years ago that fund was in place. It is not a matter of going from one state to another and if a state is poor you have poor roads and if a state is rich you have good roads. It's a case of working it out for the benefit of all Americans.

This policy is long overdue here in Canada. I suggest here to the House, again, it is overdue by many years. Not only the Trans-Canada Highway, the Yellowhead and other roads across Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We must do it. So this is one thing we can still look forward to and I hope all parties will join with me in continuing to press the federal people for that kind of funding.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I could say a great deal more. Our main thrust this year is to improve the secondary highway system; to improve the North-South communication in this country, to expand on our northern service into the North in areas where there were no roads a few years ago; and certainly to make our highways safer. That again would also bear true when you talk about safety. We are far less safe on our highways than they are in the United States as well. I think that is all I care to say at the moment, Mr. Chairman. I'm ready to proceed on Item 1. Thank you.

ITEM 1

MR. D.M. HAM (Swift Current): — Mr. Chairman, before we proceed to question the minister and his official on subvote 1, I would like to take this opportunity to comment briefly on some of the problems in our Saskatchewan highway system.

Mr. Chairman, for many years, the public of Saskatchewan has been deceived about the state of our highways and quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, so have I. We have been led to believe that criticism of highways in our province was like criticizing motherhood and apple pie. I believe that our highways could and should be extended and improved upon by this and any other government, specifically by this minister who is not doing enough to see that the highways are improved. However, for the sake of comparison so that the facts are set straight, I would like to take a few moments to compare our neighboring provinces of Alberta and Manitoba to that of Saskatchewan which will disprove the fallacy of our sacred highway system in Saskatchewan. For my part, Mr. Chairman, it is inexcusable that we do not lead construction in the prairie provinces on highway construction. On average, our highways are cheaper to build than the two neighboring provinces.

Construction costs for a paved road in Alberta run between \$280,000 and \$300,000 per mile with fully paved shoulder. Our neighbors to the West in Alberta are faced with far more difficulties than either Saskatchewan or Manitoba with respect to obstacles of mountains and the expense of removing granite that brings construction and high cost to roads and highways. In Manitoba, it costs between \$100,000 and \$175,000 in construction costs per mile. The Manitoba government is faced with a construction of roads and highways through a large lake region and marsh areas. Muskeg covers a great majority of the province. In Saskatchewan even though the Department of Highways propagandizes the construction sites with expensive signs indicating costs, we were told the information was not available unless the deputy minister authorized it,

and he was away.

I would hope the minister would make this information available to this House before estimates are completed.

AN HON. MEMBER: — He will.

MR. HAM: — However, I believe it should be noted that if construction costs are higher than Manitoba then we're not getting value for our money. And if costs are cheaper, then the government should be condemned for not building better highways, bridges, and other services. Listen to the following facts and comparisons, Mr. Chairman. For example, in the 1978-79 fiscal year, the Alberta government budgeted and spent approximately \$338 million in construction on highways in Alberta — \$338 million. In Manitoba for the 1979-1980 year they have budgeted for approximately \$212 million. On the other hand, Saskatchewan is not budgeting for more than \$160 million (approximately) in 1979-1980 and about \$140,000 in the 1978-79 fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take issue with the minister on the following. In a recent news release dated March 14 which stated that Saskatchewan highways will maintain a level of construction activity in 1979-1980 comparable in dollar value to that achieved last year. Mr. Chairman, comparable dollar value, deducting inflation, means that we will have no more construction this year than last. To me, Mr. Chairman, it is inexcusable when our government's own words on so many occasions is that we are living in these well-managed, prosperous times in a province with so much potential and future in the North. This again is unacceptable, and an indication this government has its priorities confused.

The taxpayers' money is being put into risk projects such as potash and mining development when it is completely and absolutely unnecessary.

Now, Mr. Chairman, let us compare total paved miles of our neighboring provinces versus Saskatchewan. Alberta presently has some 7,116 miles of paved roads. Now remember it's more difficult to construct highways in Alberta, much more expensive and much more difficult. Manitoba has some 5,700 paved miles of highways. Now listen to this, Saskatchewan is third with some 5,050 paved miles. What about gravel roads, Mr. Chairman? Alberta has approximately 7,500 miles of gravel roads. Manitoba has some 5,970 miles of gravel roads. Now listen to this, Saskatchewan has approximately 1,700 miles of gravel roads. I believe it is safe to say, Mr. Chairman, it is inexcusable. Our minister should be doing a better job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. HAM: — I believe the minister has not been negotiating at cabinet level for the necessary increases to maintain an excellent road system in Saskatchewan and I think he should begin now.

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to turn to two concerns that have faced my constituency for some years. Since my election in 1975 to this legislature I have repeatedly asked the minister, both by mail and verbally, for consideration in constructing, and I apologize for repeating this for about the ninety-eighth time, either an over-under pass across the Trans-Canada highway freeway section through Swift Current, to connect the new Trail subdivision northeast of the city to the city proper so that students may properly and

safely cross the highway. To date, Mr. Chairman, there has been no indication when construction on this necessary crossing will take place other than highway's department erecting a fence down the centre of the highway to keep the children off the highway. Today, again, I repeat my request, Mr. Minister, that you commit yourself to completing this access before someone is either injured or, heaven forbid, somebody killed.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, a very serious concern I have expressed to the Minister in the past is that of inadequate lighting along the Trans-Canada Highway, freeway section, and in particular at the exit and entries to the freeway at Swift Current. I note in Regina at Highway No. 1 and Albert Street by-pass and Saskatoon highways 11 and 16 that similar lighting is required and I believe even Moose Jaw requires lighting. Perhaps North Battleford is the only city in Saskatchewan with those lights on the highways — I don't know. It is interesting to note that on April 25, 1978 a Government of Saskatchewan news release was titled, Highway Intersection Lights Being Installed, and I would like to quote a portion of that news release, Mr. Chairman. I quote:

A lighting will be installed this year on the provincial highway system at 70 intersections in rural communities in Saskatchewan, Highways Minister Eiling Kramer announced (and I congratulate you for that). Mr. Kramer said that the installations would be completed this fall. These lights would cost Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation about \$3,000. The purpose of the program is to provide lighting at highway intersections to all towns, villages and hamlets where access roads were oiled under the Operation Open-Road Program. In prairie Saskatchewan blizzard conditions often reduce visibility, Mr. Kramer said. In such occasions it could be most difficult for people to see the access junctions to their location communities. These lights will be the traditional light-in-the-window that the pioneer in Saskatchewan used as guides in adverse weather. The Minister went on to say we have had highway illumination program for a number of years but it just did not include providing lights in highway intersections in rural communities (and I think he neglected to say in city communities also). Lighting these intersections will provide traffic flows at night making it safer for motorists.

Well, Mr. Minister, in light of that news release, nearly a year old, and since our province is presently and has for some years faced a tourism deficit and further that businessmen in the area of Swift Current and other major cities in Saskatchewan have faced exceedingly high investments to their facilities along the Trans-Canada and other highways, it would seem to me that our travellers are entitled to find their way off our freeways with some ease and more importantly in a safe fashion. I challenge you, Mr. Minister, even knowing you may be aware of the highway lay-out through Swift Current that you should drive through our city at night and attempt to find your way off the freeway to find a specified location without getting confused or lost. It would seem fair to me, Mr. Minister, that if the small communities in Saskatchewan have received adequate lighting at their exits and entries, that our major cities should also receive the same consideration.

Mr. Chairman, I have travelled personally through most of Western Canada and the United States by car and have found it rare that a freeway exists on entries and exits without proper lighting. Mr. Chairman, I guess this is just another indication of the inadequate funds that are being appropriated for the Department of Highways and the

way this government confuses its priorities and I firmly believe that one of the major priorities, in it and any government, besides health, is its highway system.

I would now like to take issue with the comments the minister made during question period last Friday, in which he alluded to some misunderstanding that I am supposed to have about the fatalities along the Trans-Canada Highway, through Swift Current.

From Hansard, I quote the minister, saying:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the member that we are continually marking our highway system. We have upgraded our marking system and marked more miles of highway system last year than ever before.

That's good, Mr. Speaker. The minister goes on to say:

We have had reports from this member before about multiple accidents that have never occurred. I wish this member would simply tell us where he would like us. We get these reports all the time. We ask people. We have a management district in Swift Current. He is free to go there any time he chooses and point out to our people where those dangers are, if he accepted his responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, I wish the minister would accept his responsibility. I ask the minister, why is he elected to this House, and I ask the minister, why am I elected to this House? If we are unable to turn to the minister for concerns that he is responsible for, then I ask, who are we supposed to turn to? If we are to deal with officials at the local level, then I guess we don't need a minister of highways.

Mr. Chairman, let me quote a letter from the Minister of Highways, addressed to me on April 6, 1976, after an enquiry was made about deaths on the Trans-Canada Highway, through Swift Current. Let me quote:

Dear Mr. Ham:

Re: Pedestrian accidents — No. 1 Highway, Swift Current

Further to your enquiry on pedestrian accidents, my staff has searched our accident files and provided details as follows:

1. August 24, 1971, 2:00 a.m., dark location in front of Horseshoe Lodge; roadway was dry, weather was clear, pedestrian was killed.
2. April 2, 1975, 11:00 p.m., dark location in front of Bill's Super Shell, roadway dry, weather clear, pedestrian was killed.

Now, Mr. Chairman, are these figments of my imagination or figments of the minister's imagination? The record speaks for itself.

Perhaps it is time to stop playing politics with the safety of the people on our highways and start doing something about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. HAM: — Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to comment on two concerns about safety on our highway systems. Again, with reference to our question period last Friday when the minister was questioned about the use of reflectors on our centre lines and shoulders, and I was asking why we are not using this apparatus. The minister indicated that it was impossible to use the process because of a need to continually move snow and ice from the highways, and to quote the minister, ‘they would be torn up as fast as they were installed’. I don’t totally agree, Mr. Minister.

The minister is, I am sure, aware of the difficulty of driving in winter storms in Saskatchewan, and the advantage of having something other than a white marker line would be of great assistance to the motoring public. I think that goes without argument. As we all know, winter storms all too often are not predicted in Saskatchewan. Although your answer may have some valid reasons for not installing these reflectors, it seems to me that other provinces and states in our general vicinity have similar conditions to ours, I wonder, is the snow, the wind or the cold any different in the bordering states or provinces to that of Saskatchewan?

I would like, Mr. Minister, for you to spell out in some detail, a report or study that I might receive about the use of reflectors on our highways. Secondly, Mr. Chairman, another concern that has been expressed to me and one that I have witnessed myself, is the inadequate way in which our snow removal vehicles are lighted with warning lights, or lit. It is ironic to me that the government of our province forces users of emergency vehicles such as tow trucks and ambulances to be equipped with high beam expensive lighting apparatus and I totally agree with that, but on the other hand our own Department of Highways’ vehicles are involved with far more dangerous work and are equipped with very, very poor insignificant lights. In fact the only time that these lights are visible (and I witness personally again) is when the vehicle is not being used for the purpose of cleaning roads and is driving down a clean highway on a sunny day. I suggest in the strongest of terms that very serious consideration be given now for more adequate lighting so that we may prevent the possibility of more serious injuries happening as a result of inadequate lights on these vehicles.

Now, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, if you would permit me the latitude I would like to ask all of my questions on subvote 1 and I think we can proceed much more quickly that way if it’s fine with you.

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, I don’t think that I can list all the discrepancies in facts that remain by the hon. member. Well intentioned perhaps but first of all I think there was a suggestion that we are far behind in our highway system compared to Manitoba and Alberta. Well, you know, that has to be one of the tall tales of the year. I don’t know where the member gets his statistics, he’s welcome to them. However, Mr. Chairman, let me tell you that he quoted the number of miles of heavy pavement that we have, completely neglecting the 6,000 more miles of oiled, lightly surfaced roads included. The actual mileage, Mr. Chairman, our total highway mileage in Saskatchewan, is 13,000 miles. Of that 11,000 miles are either paved or dust free — 11,000 miles. Then there are approximately 1,900 miles that are gravel. He spoke about Alberta and how tough it is to build in Alberta. He is not aware that there are miles and miles of highway built in Alberta in the park areas completely at federal expenses, a total advantage, a subsidy to that wealthy province. Once you enter the park areas they are totally built and maintained which is not an expense at all and that’s most of the mountainous area. I would, once again, ask the member to seek out and get his facts straight.

Comparing Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and their construction, is again an apple and

orange situation, but not as much of an apple-orange situation as Saskatchewan and Alberta. Manitoba has some fairly adequate four-lane roads. Their northern roads are no tougher to build than ours in the North, and we have literally hundreds of miles of road in our north. So I suggest again there is some discrepancy in the facts.

Getting a little closer to home, and if I overlook some of the questions, I hope the member will ask them again. I hope that he will remind me. Some of things he talks about in his constituency — yes, we know about those two fatalities, but we had a report and if he goes and checks the Hansard, he was talking about accidents and fatalities that occurred besides those two. I have yet to hear from him as to where they were . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . oh yes. We'll take the Hansard and I'll read your speech to you. That's why I wrote you, because we were well aware of those two. I asked you more . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . three. All right . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right and I am just as upset over that because one of those people that was killed in Swift Current happened to be a very good old friend of mine. He was a pioneer from the North Battleford area, an old rancher, and he was pretty fast on his feet, even at 70 some . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . yes, that's bad. The member neglected to say we have spent some hundreds of thousands, I believe, in lighting Swift Current already. I think that Swift Current is probably as adequately lit, on an average, as any other centre of its size. I don't think that it's adequate. I don't suggest for one moment that it's adequate, but we have to move as quickly as we can with the funds at hand.

Now the children, and that's always a very serious subject and certainly one that we're concerned about. I'd like to inform the member that we have been in contact with the Swift Current people. They have not yet requested, they have been at liberty to request, a study on the situation and sharing on a study. We will pay 75 per cent to do a complete survey, and we have informed them of that fact. I am sure there's a letter in the mail to them now, but the last information we have regarding the children is that the separate school board is bussing them across and also carrying the rest of the children across in their bus, and they say they will carry them. They can carry them all now and the public school board will have to look at the situation if there is not adequate room on the separate school bus. That's the information we have. We are prepared, as we have done in other areas, to share in any safety improvements. We have offered urban municipalities safety assistance and actually put a tremendous amount of money into safety assistance in this department. We have also, further, offered rural municipal assistance to provide safety education, and advice from our staff to the urban municipalities of Saskatchewan. I really don't know what more we can do at this point in time.

I just reject out of hand, going back to highways, suggesting that our highway system lacks compared to other highway systems in the prairie provinces. We are recognized. Look at the remarks made by tourists at tourist booths across Saskatchewan and about every fourth statement will say excellent highways, best we've found since we left Ontario. That is at every tourist stop. The general opinion, Mr. Chairman, is completely contrary to what the member for Swift Current suggests. I say we can be mighty proud, and I'm not suggesting for one moment that the amounts we're spending is adequate to do the job we would like to do. But I'm saying that in the total scheme of things, we are doing as well or better than any other jurisdiction. I say mostly better than any other jurisdiction in the West and certainly we equal, even in mileage, the populous and wealthy province of Ontario. It's the only other province that has 13,000 miles of highway under a highway jurisdiction.

MR. HAM: — I would like to make a few comments in rebuttal to the minister. I think, Mr.

Minister, the facts that I quoted will speak for themselves. The statistics were acquired from the Alberta and Manitoba Departments of Highways just recently and I suspect they gave us facts. Perhaps those individuals travelling from Ontario west hadn't got to Alberta so they couldn't report on Alberta's highways. I don't know about the minister, but I've travelled extensively, as I indicated, in western Canada by car and I don't suggest today, maybe some years ago, but today that our highway system is what it should be in this province. I was convinced as most — I'm sure most — of the public are that it's a sacred cow and the highways in Saskatchewan are number one. I don't think they are anymore and I think the facts speak for themselves.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you would, or your officials, forward a copy of the letter to the city of Swift Current with respect to the over-under pass, or whatever proposals are being made. I'd like to keep involved with that if I could. Would you commit that to me?

MR. KRAMER: — I believe that would be possible, yes.

MR. HAM: — I might mention with respect to completion of the discussion in that particular concern is that you may not be aware, and I didn't know, that the students were being bussed. I suspect that it won't be long that they won't have room because that area of the city is still expanding. If you're not aware of it, there's a substantial highway area that they can cross even beyond the fences and I don't know that children will always ride a bus if they can walk home during nice days. I suspect there will be somebody facing exceedingly dangerous conditions by crossing the highway someday.

Do I have the latitude of the Chair to complete all my questions in subvote 1?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — It would probably be better if you asked the questions under the subvote that they deal directly with.

MR. HAM: — That's much easier for me and I can be finished much quicker. Do you mind, Mr. Minister, if I completed all my questions under subvote 1?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Is there anyone else going to be asking questions? I've asked for strong indication if anyone else is going to be asking and they say there are other people going to be asking so it would probably be better if we followed the procedure that is normally used and ask the questions as they pertain to each particular vote.

MR. KRAMER: — There was a question left I think . . . I believe it was a question regarding the bussing. The communication that we've had from Mr. Butterfield of Swift Current is that they feel at this time that they're able to handle the children crossing situation for the next three years. That's what prompted my instruction to our people to reply to say, look anytime you want to make a study or do anything about it, and the study is followed immediately by whatever sharing is necessary under the urban sharing plan.

MR. HAM: — Mr. Minister, to back up on my comments earlier, I indicated in my opening remarks that I would appreciate a copy of or the statistics with respect to cost per mile of constructing a paved highway in Saskatchewan; I'm wondering if you might make that available to me. And secondly, if you would undertake, or your officials would undertake, to either supply me with reasons why, or a study of the need for improved lighting on our highway snow removal vehicles. The one or two little mickey mouse

lights they have up on top just aren't adequate, and I don't know how many times you've attempted to pass a snowplow in the winter but half the time you can't even see it let alone the lights.

MR. KRAMER: — I'm not suggesting for one moment that any lights in a blizzard or fog are pretty difficult to see but let me tell the House, and tell the member, that these are standard, so-called standard, approved lighting across Canada. There's been a request for blue lighting. The police want blue lighting. There is no way, really, other than a very penetrating light that is blinding being used and that is not considered to be safe either when you have one that will pierce a fog, and I don't know whether that could be flashed on and off in a severe blizzard such as we do have across Saskatchewan, and especially in the South. But we are constantly looking for better ways of identifying hazards on the road, and here again I don't think and I don't want to seem to be . . . I try to be modest about this but we were the first. We were the first Department of Highways in Canada to establish a Traffic Safety Division in our Department of Highways in 1972. Since that time all the western provinces at least have got a Traffic Safety Division. You'll have this in your estimates. You'll find an item on that. We have a full-time engineer — one of the best safety engineers in Canada — on the job with a staff continually identifying hazardous areas and trying to build safety into the new roads we're building. I don't know what more we can do.

MR. HAM: — Mr. Chairman, I maybe didn't make it clear that I wasn't specifically referring to the problems these vehicles are creating in storms. I'm talking about when they're just simply ploughing our shoulders. I suggest to you — and I don't think you're wrong in your statement that probably all vehicles in North America are marked with similar type lights. However, let's be first there too. I am certain we can have a better lighting system than those little wee (as I referred to earlier) mickey mouse lights that you can't even see when the vehicle is not ploughing snow.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if I can also . . .

MR. KRAMER: — I tell these fellows right along not to give me anything in kilometres but they've given it to me here. I find it a little difficult to translate. However, we have several sections, sectional diagrams of different types of construction.

Our first-class section of paved highway is 365,000 per km.

SOME HON. MEMBER: — That's four lanes.

MR. KRAMER: — Four lanes. Now, in other words, you could cut that in half and take 182,000 per km. for a single lane. Now if you took a single lane of the new lanes of TransCanada Highway and if I put it into my language, about 275,000 per miles is the last figure I checked on for first class pavement from the ground up. That, incidentally, is the total right-of-way and everything else included in that average.

I think the member said something about not getting the best for our dollars. Well, I'll tell you this. We compare notes at our Roads and Transportation Conferences, which are national in scope, and our Western Road Builders Conference. I say that the Saskatchewan contractors and our engineering advisors are getting us more for our dollars — grading, paving, right through — more for our dollars, our tax dollar, than anywhere else in western Canada and that is due not to going cheap but doing an efficient job and our contractor doing an efficient job and bidding very closely and very tightly for their work.

Now, going on to the lighter pavements, surfacing is \$123,000 and that's 24 feet wide and has a 10 foot shoulder. Mr. Chairman, \$89,900 for grading, that's again per km. You've got \$67,000 for a double seal and that's known as pavement A — light pavement with a 24 foot top, paved top and a 6 foot shoulder — \$67,000 for grading and \$50,500 for surfacing and that again is per kilometre.

MR. HAM: — Apparently the minister seems to have information I don't have with respect to comparisons. Statistics I have was indicate the miles in Alberta with paved shoulders. I think of our Trans-Canada Highway, which is comparable, and I also bring into thoughts the highway between here and Saskatoon. I don't know how many miles of highway there are without shoulders on the returning lane. I wonder if the minister might comment briefly on my statement that based on inflation we probably won't have any more highways built this year than last.

MR. KRAMER: — That would be pretty close to correct. That's right.

MR. HAM: — That concerns me and I spelled it out in my comments, Mr. Minister. If what we hear is true with the potential development in the North and all the increased activity of exploration, how do you justify not increasing at least roads in the North, as much as we need them repaired in the south and, if so, if you are in fact increasing your development of roads in the North, who is paying for the great bulk of the construction to the mine sites or to the potential mining areas?

MR. KRAMER: — I would beg to inform the member that we are getting the job done. We built several miles of highway this winter in the dead of winter. I think by spring we will have constructed about 100 miles from La Loche to Cluff Lake and we will continue there. That road will be completed. That is partly shared, incidentally, by Amox. We are also constructing the road to the Key Lake mine site which is again going to Key Lake but not necessarily for Key Lake but even at that the Key Lake people will pay a portion of that. We are not short-changing anyone in the need for roads. That is not saying for one moment (and my colleagues are well aware of this) that I think this is enough but I would like to point out to the House, Mr. Chairman, that when the federal government went on its so-called austerity binge the things that were necessary in western Canada were the first to be cut. Our total forward planning suffered by \$60 million — \$60 million in shared programs went down the drain in just one announcement. Now you just don't pick up \$60 million in your forward planning in three months. I'm sure that we'll be adjusting and moving on in another year but that's a bit of a shock. I mentioned \$5 million that we will not get in highway strengthening because there's about half of next year's portion left. It really means \$10 million cut annually if you're looking at 1980. This is money that was more or less, well, it was promised. It was indicated that it was the first stage. Now, when you say this is a first stage, you anticipate a second stage. The second stage has been washed out. I don't know whether a future federal government will reconsider, not only the highway strengthening program, but a complete sharing which is very necessary for Canada of a total Trans-Canada highway system. This is because it's trans-Canadian traffic that runs on those roads and it ought to be paid for at least partly by Canadians.

MR. HAM: — I would like, very much, Mr. Minister, for you to either now, or within a short period of time — the next several days — supply me or our caucus with the details of the roads in the North with respect to who's paying for them. I'm speaking of the resource development roads. You mentioned Amok sharing one road. I'd like to know who's paying for all of the others and I understand there's many and projected future

construction costs of those areas in the North. I would like to join you in condemning the federal government. However, I wonder — you said \$5 million was cut on the highway strengthening program. Was it not \$5 million that we wasted on CPN (Co-operative Programming Network)? I question whether or not — we talk about the resource investment — far more than \$60 million was sunk in some used holes in the ground in potash purchases.

MR. KRAMER: — I would like to suggest to the member that is not on the subject of estimates. Our budget estimates have nothing whatever to do with mineral development. I'm not going to get into the cable argument. That was being debated the other day and it can be debated again in its proper context so I will not comment on that. I might, while I'm on my feet, however, talk about things that are within my purview and just so that you don't run off with the idea that we're not proceeding with construction. Do I have the floor, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order! We have had decorum (and very good decorum) all afternoon and I give credit to the hon. members that questioned and answered this afternoon. I would hope that would mean we could keep that same decorum throughout the day.

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, and I took my nice pills before I came down here tonight. My wife cooked a beautiful supper for me and I feel fine. She's a good cook. Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that in the total program that we're talking about that has been suggested is deficient we will be grading, and new grading 554 miles in Saskatchewan. Re-cap 1 and paving 65 miles, or kilometres, well take some dockage off that . . . here again it's KM. You know somebody is going to get their neck rung for this because I have asked specifically to give me these things in miles and you know, it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks. Well, all right, kilometres or miles, it's still a darn good program, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HAM: — Maybe you'd better send one of those fellow to Indonesia too for some mileage instructions. I just want to take issue with one statement you made, Mr. Minister. You said we're not talking about mineral development. Well, as I asked you a moment ago, first of all will you supply me with the northern program? We then are talking about mineral development, and I'm not going to get back into that, but I tell you that if the government of Saskatchewan is spending I don't know how many hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to build roads in the North to mineral development, then we are talking about mineral development.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I was asking earlier when you were out when your replacement was in the Chair if I had latitude. The minister agreed that I might ask all my questions under subvote 1. I can run it through quickly that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I'm in the hands of the committee. I would rather proceed and keep in the same manner that we've been doing before and that is giving you the fair leniency in subvote 1 to ask general questions but then there are many subvotes which pertain to the actual districts, and so forth, that I think we should be dealing with that at that time, and accordingly. My own ruling right now is that we continue in that manner. If it is the pleasure of the Assembly that we change that ruling I suppose that I have to change, but I would like to stick with the manner in which we've been doing it.

MR. HAM: — Mr. Minister, could you spell out the details verbally for us or supply me with the statistics in written form as to what it cost your department to complete metrification under review?

MR. KRAMER: — Metrification. Yes, I'm sure that that estimate is around and once again, Mr. Chairman, I certainly accept no responsibility. I believe that in the long run we will probably all benefit . . . if I was going to talk about metrification. I'm getting out of order. Sorry! We'll talk about that another day.

Now, the Cluff Lake Road is our responsibility. We will be spending \$11 million on approximately 160 miles from La Loche to Cluff Lake, and I'm talking miles this time, not kilometres. That's approximately 160.

The Department of Northern Saskatchewan is in charge of the road north of Pinehouse to Key Lake and you'll be able to ask that question about the Key Lake Road on the northern Saskatchewan estimates. My seat mate brings those in.

The Gulf Mine Road, built some years ago, was a road that was finished in '73 and the prices have gone up a lot since then. I'll give you a seat-of-the-pants estimate, not absolutely correct, but it would have run close from the bridge at Otter Rapids north to Gulf, to probably \$50,000 a mile.

MR. HAM: — Mr. Minister, if you could supply it in written form I'd have the details. Again, if you could also supply me with, in the year under review, the cost of metrification for this, it would help. I don't happen to disagree with your attitude toward metrification either, but I would like to know.

MR. KRAMER: — The bottom line is \$780,000, and I'll pass that across to the member right now.

MR. HAM: — I wonder if at the same time you could supply us with (I asked this in my opening remarks) detailed report as to why, and I'm not disputing that there may be some difficulty, we're not using reflectors on centre lines. Shoulders I can understand. Do you want to make a note of that?

I would like to ask you and your officials how you determine, and this maybe sounds like an obvious answer, where you place guard rails? I'll tell you why now. I'm referring to the No. 4 Highway north of Swift Current at the Saskatchewan Landing. There's at least a half mile curve down into the valley that would have at least a 50 or 60 foot drop, if not more, and there isn't a guard rail. I've seen other areas such as that that are not presently using guard rails. It's not like No. 4 South; there is room on the shoulders there.

MR. KRAMER: — We try to put guard rails at as many dangerous spots as possible. I keep asking for guard rails as far as we can get it and at dangerous spots. Then every once in a while I drive through those mountains and I wonder what the sam hill we're putting up guard rails for when I travel those hundreds of miles with not 50-60 feet but the Fraser River way down below. It's a matter of comparison. But I'm not deprecating what you're saying. We'll make note of it. If it's possible to get some guard rails up, if we can prevent a serious accident, by all means.

MR. HAM: — No doubt, I know, you're officially trying to do what's correct and safe, but when one is driving a flat straight paved highway in Saskatchewan and all of a sudden is

faced with a drop and a curve, that's versus the mountains where you're probably psyched up for that kind of driving. I refer to a trip I made recently south through Montana, Idaho, and parts of Nevada, through mountains, and they were very, very well-protected with guard rails, even mountain roads, and I was quite impressed.

I noted there is an increase in fatalities on municipal roads in 1977, and I wondering if you have any comments as to why?

MR. KRAMER: — Well, there's always been a terrible increase, a terrible death toll and accident toll, on our municipal roads. The only place it's higher is within our cities. I can give you the statistics. There are 60 per cent of accidents occurring, urban areas, 28 per cent of the accidents in this province — (and that's per million miles travelled, because that's an accurate measurement, it isn't apples and oranges) — 28 per cent on the rural roads, and 12 per cent on our highways. That is a rather sad commentary. I spoke to the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) just last week and pointed out to them that it's six times as dangerous in Saskatchewan to travel on a rural road than it is on a highway, and about 10 or 11 times as dangerous to drive in the city. Don't think for one moment that fatalities don't occur at 25, 30 and 35 miles an hour in the city. They do. So we had just better remember that, and this is one thing we're trying to do. That is why our safety assistance program is being extended to rurals. We have offered help. We have suggested that they have at least one safety director for the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, full time, and that's only a drop in the bucket, but at least it's a start. We have counter-measures programs for all cities. Our traffic safety division will assist them in identifying their hazards and try to provide assistance as well financially, to assist them in correcting them.

MR. HAM: — I appreciate what you're saying, but you didn't answer my question. I am wondering if your department can identify why there was an increase in that particular year. There must have been a reason.

MR. KRAMER: — I would have answered that if it had come under our jurisdiction. This is the Department of Rural Affairs. They have a measurement and that question, I'm sure, they can answer. I don't have the figures here. They are rural affairs and rural affairs has a safety program. I'm sure they will provide that answer when they're bringing forward the rural road programs, the grid roads and so on. Once again, it's another little matter, take a look at that highways budget for Manitoba. You might just check on that. You mentioned over \$212 million. I think you will find that the moneys we are spending on grid road assistance, municipal road assistance is lumped into the highway budget. It's all under the Department of Highways. I believe this to be a fact. That's the information two years ago and I think it's still true. So please check that out if you want accurate information. Our \$160 million program is entirely for the highways, urban assistance and airports.

MR. HAM: — O.K. Probably in relationship to that, you indicate in your annual report that September is the highest fatality month and I was very curious to find out why that would happen. Have you had a reason or study on that?

MR. KRAMER: — I have a theory. I think that we know, unfortunately, that 16 year olds, 17 year olds, 18 year olds are the most accident prone people. The chances of a young man having an accident, somewhere between the age of 16 and 20, is far greater than having one during the rest of his life. These young people are back to school, they've probably got a car, they're in there full of ginger and one thing and another and they're taking a lot more chances unfortunately. I think some of the teachers in here would

probably agree with me. I think if that statistic was explored, you would find that during that first month or two of back to school, there's a bit of rebellion going on in the young roosters and a lot of other things that are psychological and they all happen to make them, in my opinion, more accident prone. I've raised eight kids myself and I've seen this phenomenon occur. It's a sort of madness that occurs once in a while.

MR. HAM: — Perhaps SGIO should review that age group and charge those that are causing the accidents. Maybe the rest of us would pay less.

MR. KRAMER: — I've been fighting with Mr. Whelan and SGIO for some years, I don't mind saying, but I don't agree with you. I say that there are a lot of young men who drive very well, much better than I do and probably better than you do. I say that nobody should be guilty as long as they're innocent. But when that accident occurs, when I see young people that have had one, two and three accidents, I think the leather should be laid on them and their bloody cars should be taken away from them, if they are to blame. You bet! As far as damning all of them simply because they are young — I think the move the minister has made this year is the right one. Don't condemn people until they have caused an accident.

I have two sons and one of them has never had an accident and he is 21. He has driven a lot. I have another son who had a couple of accidents when he was 16 or 17 but I'll tell you, he is a good driver right now.

MR. HAM: — Perhaps the SGIO (Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office) needs extra money for those new gold windows in its downtown building. I don't know. (That wasn't nice) . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I will, we don't mind that either.

MR. KRAMER: — We will deal with the other Crown corporations in their proper place.

MR. HAM: — My other perennial question, Mr. Minister, does the government have any plans in the next few years or now, or did they have any plans for the year under review to institute mandatory rear seat belts?

MR. KRAMER: — If I have my way, Mr. Chairman, they certainly will, and the sooner, the better. We have, for the information of the House (and I don't squirm, I am very proud of our record) reduced fatalities in Saskatchewan during the last year by 20 per cent. Injuries have been reduced by 8 per cent — serious injuries. There are fewer paraplegics, and that is with only some 65 per cent or so of people buckling up.

I suggest to the people over here who are opposing (and the member for Swift Current is one of them), that if this is not a good way to go, he had better re-examine his philosophy, if he is serious about not playing politics with people's lives.

Mr. Chairman, let me give them another statistic. The last statistic from Alberta is that while we dropped 20 per cent, Alberta went up 11 per cent, with no law. That is 11 per cent in their fatalities. Oh yes. Those are the figures. This is per million miles of travel. That is accurate. I don't deal in folly, I deal in facts . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . those are the ones who are going across the border to work, and coming back and living in Saskatchewan because they can live cheaper and safer. That's what happens and you know it. The freeloaders who want the best of both sides.

MR. HAM: — Mr. Chairman, when I made reference to the word squirm, I wasn't suggesting that you didn't agree with the use of rear seat belts. I'm suggesting that

perhaps the cabinet doesn't agree with your philosophy, and I tell you this. We did oppose the use of mandatory seat belts, even though I would spend as much time as I had to with anyone to convince them that they should wear seat belts. It should be a personal choice, in my opinion. To me it is a crime, and you know this, that there are as many people killed in the front seat of a car wearing a seatbelt now because the fellow in the back wasn't. In a head-on collision he's thrown forward and causes the death of the person in front, suggest Mr. Minister, you've indicated and I appreciate what you've said that you support the use of rear seatbelts. That's fine. I'm wondering can you commit to us when your government is going to support the mandatory use of rear seatbelts?

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, I don't think we can anticipate legislation but I believe that you'll see the legislation before the end of this session.

MR. HAM: — Opening your seatbelt survivors' book, is there any particular reason why these testimonials weren't signed?

MR. KRAMER: — Yes, because we have a policy that says to the people we will not use your name unless you say we can. Most of them have said we can use their name. We have given them their privacy but if anyone wishes to come to my office, I will show the handwritten statement, chapter and verse and not only this — this is only last year's. This is 200 and some. We have nearly 650 now that have written in, and I will be happy, confidentially, to show you those — stack after stack of them. I'm getting them every day. I would like to just read the last, one short paragraph from down south of Swift Current. Her name is not here but I'm sure the member for Swift Current (Mr. Ham) remembers this very well. I'm sure the lady will never forget it.

I was driving a half-ton super cab truck and was in a collision with a school bus. My two sons, four and two, were in the back seat and were not wearing seat belts. They were both killed. As I was wearing my seat belt, I suffered only minor internal injuries and a fairly severe concussion. I believe seat belts saved my life as they might have saved my sons.

I almost weep when I read that because the courage that it must have taken for that lady to put that in writing, I think has to be remarkable. The last one, again I refer to the very last page. Seat belt saves Macklin man, and his name is here, Ron Gartner of Macklin. I will not read them all; I'm not filibustering but it's there. Mr. Chairman, I have tabled this for the benefit of the people opposite. We send these out everywhere we possibly can because I know that people convinced against their will are of the same opinion still, the old adage says. Certainly, we have to continue to persuade but the fact of the matter is that about 45 per cent more people are wearing seat belts now than did before the legislation came in. I can't stress that enough. All parties got with it in Ontario, except one; all the people in Quebec got with it; all the members in the legislature except one in B.C. supported it wholeheartedly. I say, again, just get on the bandwagon with us because it's too important to stand up and talk about personal liberty; it's just as ridiculous as people refusing to wear a hard hat when they go into industry. We had the Hindu that wanted to wear his rag top rather than a hat when he was in a factory and refused to work because it was against his religion to take it off. These are rules made by society.

The member said, in a speech in this House, he thought it was terrible that people behaved like tame animals. Would you sooner have them behave like wild animals, I ask you?

MR. HAM: — Well, since you're asking me, I'd sooner have people act like people, quite frankly inasmuch as they don't always act the way they should. I want to make it clear, Mr. Minister, that we did not vote against the use of seat belts; we voted against mandatory seat belts. There is a big difference. Just to finish this discussion, I don't know what government gets off where and I don't care if it's a PC government or Liberal government or NDP government by protecting the public from themselves because I'm afraid the day is coming when we're going to be so totally protected we won't have any identity.

To question another line here, Mr. Minister, could you indicate what studies have been made and completed with respect to comparing construction costs by private firms versus government operations?

MR. KRAMER: — The costs are pretty well on stream, taking everything into account. I said before that our private contractors are giving us tremendous service. I say that, and I have said this — I meet with the road builders occasionally — we have two construction outfits in Saskatchewan. They've been here for a number of years. They were here through all of the '60s under a different government. We intend to maintain a small, but effective, provincial construction capability and I make no apologies for that and I don't think that the industry is very upset about it. We do not intend to go beyond 15 per cent of the total construction work and it is necessary in many cases. We sometimes run into a situation where construction is very rough, where it's very wet, very stony. You can't expect private contractors to take the needless risks. They're going to bid high. If I was a private contractor, I'd bid high on the high risk area because I'm not going to be sacrificing with cheap work. There are times, and this is common across Canada, when we feel that we need to have a handle on certain types of construction. We need to have some experience and I think it's a good policy. We have actually cut back and plan to cut back some more on the total yardage in order to maintain the ratio between the private contractors and our government crew. The cost — getting back — you've asked me about the cost. We, for instance, don't pay tax on our equipment when we purchase construction equipment. We have that advantage. Neither do we have to take the chances of losses because we pay the costs as they occur.

However, we have made comparisons in cases where it's not apples and oranges, (you can't take a wet job in the northeast and compare it to a dry job down in the southwest). We have had some comparisons, in fact we had some comparisons at Estevan where we had a government crew. We asked for tenders. The tenders came in high, much higher and I don't blame them a bit. We went at it and tendered again the next year and we got the tenders in lower. A good job was done. But on the whole, the measurements we made came out about even. We think we're getting a good job for about the same cost. I've asked my people to do a check. We did a check about five years ago and I've asked them to do a check again. We haven't got those figures in but I believe that as near as we can estimate, we are producing a dirt for about the same price, on an average. We're paying \$1.10 a yard in some places and we're paying 70 cents a yard in others and it depends entirely on the terrain. It's difficult to make comparisons.

MR. HAM: — I appreciate that. I wonder if you might supply me with a copy of that report when you receive it — the comparison? I'm pleased to hear you say that you want no more than 15 per cent of the total construction activity with government crews.

Perhaps this is bad timing, and I'm saying this with a great degree of constructive criticism. When I say it's bad timing, I mean bad timing on my part. I don't know how many times in the last three years, particularly during my drive between Regina and Swift Current, often times north, sometimes east, that I have driven the main highways (and I'm not speaking of 8 o'clock in the morning or 10 o'clock at coffee time or 12 o'clock at lunch time, I'm speaking of 9:30, 10:30 and quarter after 11; odd hours with respect to coffee and eating when I've seen highway maintenance crews parked in the ditch, two and three trucks, and no activity — lots of human bodies in the trucks.

My constructive criticism is this: perhaps there's something breaking down in our system of supervision on many crews. I'm not just referring to the crew in the Swift Current area because, as I say, I've been around and noticed this in many spots. No doubt you've had complaints in the past of the proverbial man leaning against the shovel thing. I'm wondering if that's under constant review. What are you doing to change it if there is a problem? If there isn't a problem, maybe my timing is bad.

MR. KRAMER: — These crews, maintenance crews, work from 7:00 until 4:00. They have two coffee breaks during that period of time. They take lunch and a coffee break. They may be — I don't know — they may be out of the way having lunch or having coffee. There is no way that you can determine what they're doing at that particular time. But we have supervisors. We have six. This is the most highly decentralized organization that you could find anywhere.

We have 125 service depots around this province. We have six management districts. One of them is Swift Current and there are others up at Saskatoon and North Battleford. But we have other ways of measuring. We know about the condition of the roads. We have measuring equipment to know whether the roads are in good condition. The riding quality has gone up consistently, on an average (and there's always bad spots) but consistently on an average, our maintenance people have been doing a better and better job with modern technology. I suggest that our management people know very well what kind of results they're getting. I know there's bad apples. They're human beings. There's a couple of thousand of them out here in the summertime. They aren't all gilded lilies but I'm going to tell you that every once in a while a couple of them get their walking tickets. When they get their walking tickets and leave we have to make it stick because they're unionized.

MR. HAM: — Thank you. I would just like to draw that to your attention. I hope that my concerns were, as I say, a case of bad timing. I'll keep my eyes open and I'll notify your department if there's a problem.

MR. R.A. LARTER (Estevan): — Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you what your experience so far — it might be too early to judge — but what your experience is on the Flyash Road on 47 North. I know you had the 2.1 miles, or whatever it was, of test area towards Boundary Dam on 18 previously, but I wonder, is it too early to judge just what this flyash is going to do on the highways down here?

MR. KRAMER: — Thus far satisfactory. We're quite happy with it.

MR. LARTER: — How far, Mr. Minister, do you feel that this flyash can be economically trucked to rebuild roads in that area? What is your figure on distance?

MR. KRAMER: — We can get to that answer in a couple of minutes, if anyone else wants to comment.

MR. LARTER: — I would like to ask another question then, while you're looking this up. On 47 north, the new stretch of the flyash road, is a tremendous piece of road — it's really well constructed, and seems to be standing up well. We only have six miles of road between Stoughton and Estevan that hasn't been rebuilt and the reason I point out this six miles is, it is very dangerous where they've narrowed up and gone to this new road. It's a very dangerous piece of road. I think I mentioned it in a letter to the minister that we just had this six miles left there. I'd like to also ask you, while you're looking up the flyash, about the sulphur at the steel and gas plant. I notice in some of the American road-building magazines that they are using sulphur in with blacktop. Now, I don't know just what action it has, but your engineers would understand this, and I wonder if you've given any thought to using up this sulphur at the steel and gas plant?

MR. KRAMER: — We have been experimenting. We have been using sulphur. The results are satisfactory. We've already been using it and we're quite happy with the results.

MR. LARTER: — Will you give me the answer on that flyash?

MR. KRAMER: — Yes. We'll give it to you right now. The economical haul is 18 km, which is approximately 13 - 14 miles.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, I hope the minister has brought along the answers I think he has anticipated my asking. Will you give me the estimated '78-'79 salaries for the deputy minister and the two top executives below, and the actual paid in '78-'79, and the estimate for '79-'80, please?

MR. KRAMER: — The deputy minister, the provision for 1979-80, that's this fiscal year, is \$45,790. He has a car allowance of \$75 per month, plus 4.97 cents per kilometre for out of city travel. The associate deputy minister, no, I'm sorry.

MR. KRAMER: — The 1978 estimate was \$39,034, and the estimate requested for 1979 was \$41,640. That is for the associate deputy minister.

The next highest paid person is the chief engineer. Last year he was paid a few dollars more than the associate deputy, and this year he will be paid exactly the same.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, perhaps you can answer this question. The system is not the same as it is in continuing education. First of all, you did not give me the estimate for 1978-79 for the deputy minister, and you did not give me . . .

MR. KRAMER: — I did.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — No, you didn't. You gave me 1979-80.

MR. KRAMER: — My people are offering an apology here. They have given me the wrong column. Let's start over again. This year (we are talking about 1979-80) is \$45,680 for the deputy minister, \$44,140 for the associate deputy, and \$44,140 for the chief engineer.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Did you say the deputy minister was not here in 1978-79?

MR. KRAMER: — He was on a leave of absence. He was working for Lee and Associates

in Indonesia, as I stated at the outset. He was gone for 12 months, on loan to Indonesia. Actually, the employer is the Asian Development Bank, which is an international development organization.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, you missed, also, the estimates for the chief engineer for 1978-79. You gave me 1979-80, but you did not give me 1978-79.

MR. KRAMER: — This is a year and a half ago, for the deputy minister it was \$41,870, for the associate deputy, \$39,034 and for the chief engineer, \$39,055. Inflation has done some things — those estimates were made nearly two years ago and they just don't hold up.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — One final question on that subject. The estimate 1978-79 for all three, was it in fact the actual salaries paid for those three individuals or did that vary through a merit increase after?

MR. KRAMER: — I'll see that you get it. The fact is that Mr. Sutherland got the salary that Mr. Gentles should have got, because he was the acting deputy at that time. I want to be sure that I give you the right figures. We will give them to you in writing.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Chairman, one other area I would like to touch on. I understand the vehicles with the Department of Highways are the department's vehicles, they are not rented through CVA (Central Vehicle Agency). Is that correct?

MR. KRAMER: — No, they are all CVA.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Oh, they are all CVA? Trucks, cars and all?

MR. KRAMER: — The passenger cars, all the vehicles that are used, the small trucks are used by our foreman and so on are CVA. They are all under the CVA. That has been true ever since about 1965, when the government of that day decided they were going to put them all under one jurisdiction and then rent them out to the departments so that now it's all under the Minister of Revenue. The big trucks and that kind of equipment that we use in construction are under advance accounts.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — The maintenance and graders and so on are not CVA (Central Vehicle Agency)? They were a separate account. First of all how many vehicles does your department lease from the CVA?

MR. KRAMER: — 297. The maximum used was 296 and that was in the busy season. We are currently using 169. The estimate for '79-'80 is down 17 from the year before. We've asked for 280.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Is that passenger cars and trucks in the total figure you gave me —

the 297 that you allotted last year and that you're asking for now is 280 — that includes the half tons and the cars and everything?

MR. KRAMER: — Yes, that's right. The 280 vehicles are cars and light trucks — 2 x 4s and that type of vehicle. They are vehicles that are used by the surveyors, engineers and foremen in their duties round subdistrict, maintenance and engineering surveying and what have you.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — One other question. Getting back to the deputy minister (Mr. Gentles) you indicated he had a car allowance of \$75 per month. He is not given a car by the government through the CVA. The \$75 a month, in other words, is to operate his own automobile plus 4.97 cents per kilometre.

MR. KRAMER: — He has exercised the option of using his own automobile.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — It was my understanding that we're going on wide ranging topics on subvote 1 and I'd like to direct some questions to the minister regarding the Trans-Canada Highway. As you know, Mr. Minister, my concern is in the section from Qu'Appelle eastward. My question to you would be how many times has the survey for the double lane from Qu'Appelle eastward been changed?

MR. KRAMER: — You were asking me from the end of the four lane east to Qu'Appelle?

MR. TAYLOR: — No, east of Qu'Appelle. I'm asking you about as far as it is completed. That would be another part of the question.

MR. KRAMER: — Well, my staff says they know of no changes that have been mooted or surveyed.

MR. TAYLOR: — No changes around the town of Wolseley over the last two or three years, no different routes in that area?

MR. KRAMER: — In routes studied, as I remember, I'm going from my own memory now, there have been discussions with the Town of Qu'Appelle as to the alignment of certain roads that are going through there . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Wolseley, sorry, not Qu'Appelle. I get those two towns mixed up occasionally.

MR. TAYLOR: — Well further to this, then, you are saying that there have been discussions. I am sure that there has been drafted more than one set of plans. I wonder if the department has come up with a final solution? I'd like to know how far the survey on No. 1 is completed east from Qu'Appelle. Is it completed to Wolseley? Is it completed to Grenfell? Is it completed to Broadview?

MR. KRAMER: — My deputy tells me he will have to check with the Regina offices as to the up-to-date figures and we will be glad to provide them for you. There are always studies going on. Quite often when people see surveys stakes out there they assume that it is being done for the purpose of building a highway. That's not always true. We have to allocate right-of-way well ahead of any construction in order to save money later on, so that we don't find a farmyard along a right-of-way that is going to be needed even ten years in the future, so that we can get that area dedicated for future highway use. So there's an awful lot of that going on. Somebody once said that if every stake that

surveyors had shoved into the ground in Saskatchewan over the last 20 years had grown, we would have had a reforestation project.

MR. TAYLOR: — I appreciate your comment, but, actually what I was referring to were drawings that I've seen, different drawings for around the town of Wolseley. I think you can appreciate the importance of this to me in my constituency. Many people are asking me questions, so I'll accept that you have to do a little research into this but I'll ask you to supply me with two things if you would: (1) I would like to know the survey and how far it is to the East, let's say to Broadview, if it's completed to Broadview, or if it isn't, how far east is it completed and how long it has been completed. That's of importance to me too. You'll supply me with that?

MR. KRAMER: — Yes I will. (I keep forgetting I've got to stand up to get it recorded.)

MR. J.G. LANE (Qu'Appelle): — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I've got a particular problem and it's one that I've raised in this Assembly before. Some of the roads around Regina — but one in particular which has been taken over into the municipal system, is the old No. 1 highway. Now that old No. 1 highway is probably one of the most abused roads in the province. An awful lot of it deals with city of Regina hauling gravel and to some extent highways hauling gravel and the various R.M.'s all utilizing it. There are many areas around the east side of Regina where there are gravel pits with thoroughly, heavily used roads, and, of course, the R.M.'s themselves simply can't afford the upkeep, and to a large extent they're not getting the value of the work they've done. Is there no way that some consideration can be given to the R.M.'s for these type of roads which carry not normal traffic but extremely heavy traffic for uses not necessarily related to the R.M.?

MR. KRAMER: — I believe you are talking about the old No. 1 which is now a grid road and the responsibility of Sherwood municipality. When they have road problems on heavily travelled roads, the grants that are provided to them for upkeep, maintenance and rebuilding, come under the jurisdiction of the grid road authorities. This is not under my purview and I would suggest that you raise that question when the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. MacMurchy) is up with his estimates. I cannot comment on that with a reasonable degree of accuracy. I have my own ideas on it, but I would like to point out that Sherwood municipality is hardly in the poorhouse.

MR. LANE: — The reason I asked you is because I have a list of material from the Department of Municipal Affairs refusing all sorts of assistance under the . . . if I could get some of the programs that have been turned down — main farm access, regional park access, industrial access, community access — all the different programs, and for some reason, they're being ignored. It's a concern. It's not their fault. I'll raise it with the particular department about the tourist roads in that particular area, but it strikes me, it's not their fault, and no government department seems to be coming to grip with it. They're paying the price for something that is by and large not their fault. You say you've got your own ideas. I'd like to know what your own ideas and your own thoughts are? There should be some degree of being able to maintain these roads. As I say, it's not the R.M.'s fault that they're being so thoroughly . . .

MR. KRAMER: — My own idea is that it's Sherwood municipality's basic responsibility. These people are constantly talking about keeping their authority, keeping their entity, and I think they also along with that, along with the tremendous grants that are being provided, ought to accept the responsibility.

MR. E. BERNTSON (Souris-Cannington): — Mr. Chairman, this is probably an unfair comment because I've just reviewed this briefly, but that's never stopped me before. It seems that the activities of project array are directly proportional to the percentage of popular vote in that particular constituency that went to the government, particularly as it relates to Souris-Cannington.

Every year since I've been in the legislature I've brought two highways to your attention: No. 9 south of No. 18 to the U.S. border and No. 8 from the U.S. border north. Now, I grant you that they have had some considerable work done on them. No. 8, for instance, in the last couple of years has had its shoulders pulled in and recapped. They've done lots of work but the problem is that it's a soft base, it's mushy ground, and the road is just as terrible as it was before they started. The ditches are beautiful.

No. 9, as you well know, is probably one of the highest and heaviest traffic roads with the potash trucks, etc. South of No. 18, on No. 9, from 18 to the U.S. border, it's constantly a mess. It's just a mess and there's no other word for it.

Now, my duty here is to represent the people who elected me. Perhaps the best way I could represent them would be, if this summer looks like it's going to be good weather, to resign so that we have a by-election down there and watch the highway equipment move in. It worked in Pelly.

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, I think those are very unkind remarks but at least the member presented them with a smile on his face and I appreciate that.

I have a record of averages of work done. I think I had that little list around here somewhere about the work done in various constituencies.

I am simply saying that there's a constant prioritizing and you can put your own interpretation on it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I know you did, but we spent — I did a little check — and going from memory, our budget in nine areas that were represented at least last year by construction was \$9 million worth of construction in constituencies that were represented by nine Conservatives.

The question comes up because on occasion somebody says, well, we should have some work over here, or here. So, as I say, you can put your own interpretation on it.

One thing we are doing (and you mentioned it) is maintenance. We've got 6,000 miles — they're not all in Conservative constituencies by any means — of oiled roads that, in fact, ought to be rebuilt, desirably should be rebuilt but when it costs \$150,000 a mile (I had some statistics on that) to build one mile of good first-class road which we can maintain satisfactorily for five years for \$103,000. So the cost — what are those figures . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

I have this example. It solves nothing but it will give you a bit of an idea. I will pass this across to you people for your consideration.

We have a section that you're acquainted with of 26 from Meota to No. 4 Highway which is 15 kilometres. The maintenance over five years has cost us \$103,300. We're reconstructing that road this year at a cost of \$809,000 for grading and \$707,000 for paving, for a total of \$1,686,000 for 15 kilometres.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Where's that?

MR. KRAMER: — From the junction of No. 4 to Meota, Saskatchewan, No. 26. The point is it doesn't matter where it is, (this is only one example I have an example on 48 as well). The maintenance over a five year period on this stretch so far — and people are getting good service on it — is \$103,000, or an average of \$20,000 per year for maintenance. The interest on \$1,686,000 is \$160,000 a year, for one year.

So, you've got the economics, you're going to look at the economics. We continue to rebuild. I can give you 48 in the Wawota area. The cost there — you can study this at your leisure. It's an interesting figure.

MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Chairman, I don't quarrel with your economics or your logic in not building every road tomorrow, but I do question your priorities, particularly on that section of No. 9 from 18 to the border because, you know, it is a mess and it is every year. It is constantly, and it has the potash trucks running over it every day by the tens of dozens and sure, they've spent money on it, but it's pounded out every year. No. 9 north of No. 18 to Esterhazy is probably the best road in all of Saskatchewan and we just don't know why it stopped at No. 18.

MR. KRAMER: — If you can give that table of figures for the amount of traffic and what the traffic is used for — \$200,000 a mile — would that build it? To rebuild that would cost us — build it and pave it to carry those heavy trucks would cost us \$200,000 a mile. So there you've got five miles for a million bucks. There's about 19 miles.

MR. BERNTSON: — How many cars would you have to lose to pay for that?

MR. KRAMER: — I'm not arguing that it shouldn't be built. I'm simply saying the economics of that and a number of other roads that are considered a mess by the people that use them are very similar. We do the best we can.

MRS. J. DUNCAN (Maple Creek): — Mr. Minister, I'd like to speak for a few moments on Highway No. 21. It's the major north-south link for the whole west side of the province and I'm sure you realize the amount of traffic that travels on that particular road. It's very narrow, full of dips. There are no shoulders at all. There are many places that aren't oiled or paved. I see there is going to be some paving and oiling along it but it's our major link to the United States. It's a heavy traffic pattern road and I was wondering whether there is any plan in the immediate future for widening and repaving of this link?

MR. KRAMER: — It was in 1972 I think, it was one of the first things that I did when I was minister. We designated No. 21 as a second north-south highway from Willow Creek to Lac des Iles. I called it the wild goose route for want of a better name and I think it's a good name for it. There have been millions of dollars spent between the two points. It tapers off as you know at Willow Creek. There are some 20 miles of very, very poor road to port of entry at Willow Creek and we're going to upgrade those. It happened last summer and you're probably aware of this. We had a cavalcade starting south of the border, visitors from the border. I have travelled that and probably you have down south there. The condition of that road south of the border leaves even less to be desired than ours. It couldn't be much worse than the 20 miles, I'll admit that. We are maintaining that as well as we can and there's only — the traffic count is 20 vehicles a day on that, incidentally. I don't know whether you are aware of that. The traffic count is 20 per day. That is very, very low. It does not warrant, by any means, under any criteria, an oil surface road. We are contemplating that because we feel that if we're going to

persuade the people in Montana to do something about improving theirs we have to set a bit of an example for them. Now, that's the sad story.

I was in Helena, Montana, two years ago and I asked them, tried to persuade them to rebuild their area, their side of the border. They said, 'Well we haven't any plans for the next five years'. Now, that was part of the reason for having the cavalcade come up to show them what the potential was. Hopefully, that may change. I intend to go back to Montana and talk to them again and try to get — because there's little use in going to the border and then winding up kicking the white-faces off the cattle paths. That's about the situation in many places.

So, 21, yes, we have priorities on that. It's an important road. It's going to get just as much consideration as we can possible give it within the scope of our budget.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I'd like to talk on the Fort Walsh access road. I believe there's been some correspondence between you and Mr. Faulkner in Ottawa. In the last letter you stated that there had been a draft agreement drawn up for financial sharing on the maintenance costs of this road. Perhaps you are also aware that the R.M. of Maple Creek estimates that it has cost them \$12,000 over and above normal maintenance costs on this road. This summer they are anticipating an \$84,000 regravelling program which they feel is three years earlier than what it should be. Is that still within your department or is it in Tourism and Renewable Resources now?

MR. KRAMER: — Well, if we could ever get the federal government, that's Parks Canada and Hugh Faulkner and company, to agree to what their responsibility is. They have technically agreed. We thought we had an agreement this time last year in fact and then all of a sudden the deal was off. At this time last year Parks Canada had agreed to share that road and to continue on through the hills of Fort Walsh where there's nothing but a trail.

Now, the sad and sorry part of that whole operation is that they've spent a lot money and did a beautiful job on renovating Fort Walsh. I think it was well over a million dollars. Well over, all right. Then if they could be any more ridiculous, they didn't build a road for people to get to it. They advertise it across Canada and throw that burden of cost onto the municipality. It's a municipal road, no provision. It's like fixing up the guest room for visitors and then you don't even have steps to get into the house. That's what that department has done. Now I have said — I talked to Mr. Anderson, the reeve of Maple Creek, at the municipal convention last year. I said, 'Look, it's very well to ask us to move in and do what we can. Mr. MacMurchy will do what he can in assistance as the grid road portion that is there and it is their responsibility to assist'. But, if the federal government does not accept their responsibility before this spring, there's going to be a sign put up (and I'll see to it that it is) telling the travelling public just exactly whose responsibility it is and why it is that they're faking, because I'm not going to take the blame. It is their baby. We'll share it even though possibly there may be some argument whether we should, especially with that last stretch. But we'll share it. We've offered. They said they would and now they said they wouldn't. Now, believe it or not, Mr. Chairman, they have had it before Treasury Board they tell me, for the last six months in Ottawa and they have thrown the application to Treasury Board. They've thrown the Fort Walsh Road — 200 miles away from grasslands — in with the whole grasslands park operation. Small wonder we're getting no action! Small wonder!

The last person I talked to was the parliamentary assistant to Hugh Faulkner, who is in Vancouver. He spoke to the Wild Life Convention. I told him again, as I have told Mr.

McIsaac, our MP — and Mr. McIsaac has done everything he could — I'll give him credit for that. He's done every possible thing he could do.

I've talked to Otto Lang about it. But I don't think we're going to solve the problem by taking the monkey off the backs of the federal government.

MRS. DUNCAN: — So you won't be coming forth with any funds to sort of help tide the R.M. over? In one of your letters you stated that the road is a source of embarrassment to both the federal and provincial governments. Well I'm sure you must be aware that that embarrassment is even magnified a thousand times more by the businessmen in Maple Creek who have to deal with these tourists who come and their axles have been broken, or whatever.

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, there ought to be a dust-free road from Maple Creek through to the park. The only reason that it should be is because of the tourist input and the tourist factor. If the ordinary ranching and farming people who are there, the Saskatchewan people, it would be quite all right the way it is. But that's not the situation. There are a lot of access roads that are no better or no worse. When all that traffic comes on in the summer, created by the federal park site (Fort Walsh), then we're in trouble.

The only way I can answer the member is that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has a sharing program and an assistance program and I'm sure he will do everything possible to assist them in the area that is their responsibility and used by the residents of that area. But I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the only way we're going to get the federal government — any federal government, now or later — to accept the responsibility is to have the Canadian public, the travelling public, the tourist public come down on them like a ton of bricks and say, what the Sam Hill do you think you're doing? You spend a million or more on a tourist facility and then you don't provide access to it. As far as I'm concerned, my back goes up a little bit when I'm kind of pushed into this. I think it's a bit like the wildlife question. We're not going to gain anything by taking the monkey off their backs. I wish I could do better but that's just exactly the way I feel about it.

MR. J. GARNER (Wilkie): — Mr. Minister, I'm not going to compliment you too much on most of your highways. I didn't really think I had a question on highways until you brought up cow paths and that brought to mind some of the roads in my constituency. I would like to know how much your department has spent in the last three years on Highway No. 21 from Kerrobert to Unity and on Highway No. 31 from Kerrobert to Macklin?

MR. KRAMER: — You're talking about the average maintenance costs?

MR. GARNER: — The maintenance costs that have been put into those two roads in the last three years?

MR. KRAMER: — I will dig the figures out for you but up to '77 you can find the maintenance costs in Public Accounts on all of those sections. That's the area you can find it in and I'll try to get more recent information if you wish.

MR. GARNER: — Thank you, Mr. Minister.

MR. KRAMER: — Would the member just give me a note of those two sections and pass

it across to me.

MR. GARNER: — Also, Mr. Minister, while we're discussing these two roads, I've heard a lot from your department and from you personally, about safety and your concern for the safety of the people of Saskatchewan. I commend you on that. That's very honorable. I respect you very much for that, sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. GARNER: — But on Highway No. 21, I notice in one of the pamphlets I have received, we're not going to do anything, I guess, in the upcoming year. Are we going to wait on that road that has no shoulders left? They aren't potholes any more, they're almost sloughs after it rains. Are you and your department going to wait until someone gets killed on that road before we do something about it, Mr. Minister? It's a serious problem in the Wilkie constituency. I hope you will take a very strong and close look at it because if something isn't done about it . . . it's not a level road, there are many hills on it and it's very difficult to drive side by side to pass someone or to meet someone. It basically isn't much over ten feet of driveable road. It's a real serious problem, Mr. Minister, and I really hope that you will take a look at it because I'm very much afraid . . . I hope, Mr. Chairman, that I don't have to stand up in this House a year from now and say, well I wish we had done something about it because two or three people were killed on it.

I would appreciate receiving what information and costs have been put into these last roads. O.K. Thank you.

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, the member paints a rather rugged story. I think it has a little bit of — I would refer to it as Pulitzer Prize fiction in it — but I am not suggesting for one moment that that old road is not in need of rebuilding. That's not the point. I would like to suggest to him, and to other members, that these narrow roads are not . . . if their surface is reasonably good at least they are dust free. They are not the most accident-prone roads we have. Building, unfortunately, again on the theme of safety, building first-class highways does not guarantee against the stupidity of certain people who are driving. It was on a first-class highway just recently that four people were wiped out in the Yorkton area simply because they drove in conditions that should have told them that they should not be driving at those speeds. People seem to have the idea, and I caution everyone to caution everyone else, people seem to think that simply because it's a good road they can drive on it regardless of whether it's snowing or blowing or whether there's a snowfall going up from a truck. People are killing themselves simply because they are driving through areas where the visibility is down to zero. The surface of the road doesn't help that. They bet their lives every time they take a chance.

MR. GARNER: — Well, in reply to that, Mr. Minister, I don't really think the people there are too concerned about driving when there's a storm and that because it's very difficult to drive on that road on a bright sunny day. I hope you will take notice of it and please review that road. Maybe we can prevent someone from being killed on it. Thank you.

MR. L.W. BIRKBECK (Moosomin): — Mr. Chairman, I rather hesitate to ask a question because of the lengthy answers that the minister is giving us in reply to questions. Mr. Chairman, in order to speed things along I'm going to ask a series of fairly short questions and I would expect a series of fairly short answers.

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, Project Array, has not one highway in my constituency

under consideration for construction in the upcoming year. Why? Because we haven't programmed them, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister says there is not a highway improvement in my constituency because they have a program. When I go back to my constituency and explain the Minister of Highways tells me we have no road improvement which for No. 48 they've been waiting 20 years — 20 years for that road to be improved because it as well can be a main thoroughfare across this province like the Yellowhead route (which we support), like the Trans-Canada and No. 48 as well must be improved and completed. You've got it partly improved and now you're going to stop for an entire year because you have a program.

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, what kind of a program is it in any road construction project that starts a road and then stops construction and doesn't intend to proceed for a year's time? Mr. Minister, please would you answer that question?

MR. KRAMER: — The fact of the matter is that there are literally, as I said, around five - six thousand miles in this province that need rebuilding and we're going to get at them piece by piece as the condition and traffic count demands. Obviously, it wasn't programmed because it was not as high a priority as some other areas and that's the only answer I can give you.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Indian Head-Wolseley): — Mr. Minister, I'm also very concerned with Highway No. 48 and as you know it is a very good highway part way through my constituency to Montmartre. I understand it was a priority for the highway department that was called off just about November. Now, is it the policy of your department to do half a job? It would seem to me that if you're going to build Highway No. 48 from the junction of No. 1 that you would build it through to the junction of No. 9 and not just Montmartre . . . and with everyone in that constituency under the intention from your department that it was to be completed and then all of a sudden it was dropped. I'd like an explanation. Is this the way you build roads mainly?

MR. KRAMER: — Mr. Chairman, I have said that we were expanding our construction program fairly cautiously but each year a bit. We are not expanding as much this year because of federal cutbacks in our total provincial needs. Therefore, it's just not possible to continue with all of those roads that we would like to and you're not the only one. The member sitting behind me, the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Matsalla) is complaining bitterly because he hasn't got a single mile in his constituency. That's right. But the fact of the matter is there are a couple of more, I think my seat mate, Mr. Byers, former Minister of Highways, says he would have liked to have seen some of the programs that he was hoping to have. It's not there. You simply have to have dollars and when I say \$5 million that was anticipated is just not there, in August, then you have to do some redrawing of plans.

MR. TAYLOR: — I understand that you can't build all of the roads in Saskatchewan in one year. I think all of us understand that. But I am saying, is it your policy to go halfway down the road and fix it up and leave the other half as one of your cow paths that you've been referring to. That's what I'm wondering.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

MR. KRAMER: — I disagree with the member for Indian Head-Wolseley about it being a cow path. I simply say that there are 6,000 miles of darn good secondary highways and No. 16, the area you're complaining about, is still a pretty good highway. I drove — listen my friend, I drove out to Wawota to a wild life meeting three years ago. I drove out

deliberately — not on 1 but 16. I kept my cruise control at 60 miles an hour all the way out there except when I had to meet or pass. I'm saying that that road is as good as and better than some areas in Saskatchewan. So just hold your fire.

MR. BIRKBECK: — The minister is telling me that he went out to Wawota with speed control on at 60 miles an hour, he said. That's a speed zone of 50. And furthermore, how in the name of goodness he got around some of those curves at that speed, I don't know.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, what you should have done once you got to Wawota, was just continue on down to the border and found out what the rest of that highway is like.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have been asking this Minister of Highways, since I was elected in 1975, to complete that 48 through to the border and it still isn't done, Mr. Chairman. It is not done and I am really concerned about it. I tell you how concerned I am, Mr. Chairman. Then there are two of us now, that's right. The member for Indian Head-Wolseley is affected by that particular road. Mr. Minister, I am going to guarantee you — I know right now, and not through any motivation from myself, that you are going to get petitions and briefs submitted to you from that area regarding Highway 48 and your only way out of it is to finish those few miles. It's not a hundred miles. It's just a very short strip of highway, really, to complete the whole strip through. The Minister of Tourism will be very glad to see that finished because it will assist the tourist trade, it will assist in the transportation of goods, which primarily are moving out of the East. Mr. Minister you are aware of that. Your NDP candidates during election promised that in their campaign brochures. They would work to see completion of Highway 48, not just in my constituency but in the constituency of Indian Head-Wolseley. Now I ask you, Mr. Minister, would it have been any better had they been elected? Would those roads have been finished then?

Mr. Chairman, the claim we make is a very serious claim. It's a very serious claim and it's a challenge that we lay out to the Minister of Highways — that this member for Indian Head-Wolseley and myself, representing Moosomin, are concerned about that highway. I've been concerned about it since 1975 and I'm not going to get off your back and nor are the people out there until we see that road completed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: — Hear, hear!

The Committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:00 p.m.