

May 14, 1990

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Highways and Transportation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 16

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, before we rose for the supper hour the Minister had sent over some information with regard to the payment to senior management staff. For example, next to the deputy minister he has the figure of \$7,947. I am a bit confused and perhaps the minister can clarify this. In order to get the minister's salary, do I multiply that by 12 or do I add that on to the 90,896 that he was drawing in 1988-89?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, the numbers listed on that information item are monthly salaries as I understand it.

Mr. Brockelbank: — So then it's clear that the deputy minister's salary is \$95,364, give or take a few cents?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That would be correct; that's 12 times the number that's shown there, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What if any new circumstances enter the picture with regard to the deputy's involvement with Sask Transportation Company? Could you describe the conditions under which he is taking a management role in Sask Transportation Company as of recent date?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, the deputy minister's role as regards STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company), as he's the acting president at the present time and receives no additional remuneration for that particular job.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And is there a contract involved with the deputy or do you just anticipate on a month-to-month basis, and you anticipate that he'll be there a number of months? And if that's the case, what is the contract or what is the number of months you expect him to be there?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — There is no contract; it's on a month-to-month basis; and as I said there is no additional remuneration.

Mr. Brockelbank: — How long do you expect this arrangement to last, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I would have to say that it would be on a month-to-month basis and I can't anticipate how long it would be.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, what is the official reason why your deputy is seconded, if I may use that term, to Sask Transportation Company? Why did this occur?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well that's a very, very good

question. It gives me an opportunity to point out that there had to be someone in charge of the day-to-day activities. And as you know, the deputy minister of Highways has a long and distinguished career. And if I may say so, sir, he started working for the Department of Highways the year that I was born, and I was 37 on Saturday. That's a long and distinguished career with the public service. I think in the civil service there are few that have as good a reputation and I think that would definitely be one of the reasons why someone of that type of qualifications and ability would be asked to take over the running of STC at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I join with the government forces in applauding the long and faithful service of the deputy minister of Highways.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — But unfortunately that was not the question. I want to know from the Minister of Highways why it is necessary to send the deputy minister of Highways and Transportation over to STC? Is there something gone awry in STC? Perhaps the minister can relate what the official reason is for that.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Obviously, Mr. Chairman, if you've been following the news in recent weeks, you know that there is a problem at STC. And until that is clarified, someone had to take over the day-to-day operations. And I can think of few who would be any better to take over those day-to-day operations than Mr. Sutherland.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Yes, I think it's quite clear, Mr. Minister, I know the words stick in your throat of why the deputy minister has to go over to STC. And, of course, it's that the situation that occurred in STC that made this all necessary was the allegations and the subsequent court dealing with that particular matter of kickbacks on the purchase of STC buses. Now I realize, Mr. Minister, that would have been the simple answer to give to the members of this committee. I'm sorry to see you hedged around it. However that is another story which will open up later on.

For the time being, Mr. Minister, the top officers of the Highways and Transportation department — I see by the percentage increases last year and the percentage increases this year which are effective on April 1, 1990 — are certainly keeping up with, or a little ahead of the inflation rate.

Given the fact that the considerable portion of this department has been privatized by your predecessors in the office, which caused the lay-off of hundreds of Saskatchewan workers, and giving the fact that you're mowing the ditches with private contractors, what other things are you doing, Mr. Minister, in a privatized way for the Department of Highways? Could you indicate to me the broad cross-section of those jobs which were formerly done by the Department of Highways and its officials, are now being done in a privatized fashion?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll give you two examples of some initiatives that have occurred in the last two or three years. As was mentioned, mowing of the right of way is something that has been started and has been continued this year again. Our estimates are that there is between a 40 to 50 per cent cost saving to the province to allow private individuals to tender on mowing contracts, and as well, on any of our gravel roads that the Department of Highways is responsible for, we have initiated private contracting for that type of work — the blading of gravel roads, if you would. And we estimate there about a 30 per cent cost saving to the province.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And each of these privatizations has resulted in reduction of staff of the Department of Highways. Is that correct? And how much?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, with regards to the two initiatives that I mentioned, in the case of the blading the only time that we allow another contract to be let is if someone in a particular area is retiring, quitting, and it becomes open. Instead of hiring someone new, we simply go for a private contract to come in and do this type of work for us.

In the area of the mowing contracts, there has been no one who has lost their job because of mowing contracts being let. For the most part those people would be allocated to other duties within the department.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I suspect there must have been some people laid off. The point I'm getting at, Mr. Minister, is that you still maintain the same executive structure for the department as you had a number of years ago. Is that not correct?

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, there has been some reductions in management positions and I just don't have those figures right now; we're attempting to get the exact number for you, sir. But there has been a reduction in management staff.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well I suspect some of the reduction took place, Mr. Chairman, because of certain functions that were carried out in the department under the previous minister of Highways have gone elsewhere, and that had reduced staff somewhat. But it's difficult at best to quantify the benefits of privatization in the Department of Highways.

I want to move, Mr. Minister, to the area of ministerial assistants, and this is an area that's certainly blossomed under the previous minister and yourself and continues under yourself, I believe. I want you to confirm who is currently on your staff as ministerial assistants, special assistants, executive assistants, chief of staff, or whatever you may happen to call them today. Do you have a list, Mr. Minister, and their salaries, how long they've been on your staff, what are their duties?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — At the present time I have five staff members. We have Lorene Holizki, Lorraine Moffitt,

Mark Weigers, Robert Coulter, and Marie Delainey.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well that's a partial answer, Mr. Minister. I asked you for the list, and their salaries, how long they've been on your staff and what duties each one does? Can the minister provide me with that information?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — All the people that I mentioned are listed out as various ministerial assistants: Lorene Holizki is a ministerial assistant 4; Lorraine Moffitt is a ministerial assistant D; Mark Weigers, ministerial assistant 3; Robert Coulter, ministerial assistant 2; and Marie Delainey, ministerial assistant B. And in all those categories there are wage ranges which I could supply for you.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I would look forward to getting that list with the information on it, Mr. Minister. I see that the previous minister had one, two, three, four, five, six executive assistants — of some type or other — and a number of those have been sheared off because duties that would be assigned to them have gone to other departments. You still have five on a reduced-size department, Mr. Minister, so I look forward to seeing that list. Could you identify, Mr. Minister, if there's a number behind the name, what it means? If there's a letter behind the name, what it means?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The difference between the numbers and the letters are simply a classification for the most part. The simplest way to explain it would be the fact that, for example Marie Delainey and Lorraine Moffitt act in secretarial capacities, are listed as ministerial assistants B and D, respectively.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What is a ministerial assistant C?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I would presume, sir, that it is the classification that comes between the B and the D. I do not have anyone on my staff that is a ministerial assistant C. I have Marie Delainey, ministerial assistant B, and Lorraine Moffitt, ministerial assistant D.

Mr. Brockelbank: — The previous minister had a ministerial assistant C. And I was under the assumption that it was a clerical, as well as B and D. And perhaps the minister will indicate that when he sends the list over to me.

I wanted to get into some detail about that while I'm awaiting the arrival of that list, Mr. Minister. I bring forward the name of Howard Gelmich, I believe it is. Did he work for your department, for how long, and at what rate of pay?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, he did work under the previous minister and was transferred into Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What was the rate of pay when he worked for the department, your department?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I've just been informed that he was not an employee of the Department of Highways and Transportation but rather, under the former minister, handled the Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat as a ministerial assistant.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Peter Sheridan. Does he work for your department? — how long, what rate of pay, has he left?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — My information shows one Peter Sheridan terminated October 31, 1989.

Mr. Brockelbank: — How long did he work for the department; what was his rate of pay?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — He worked for the previous minister as a ministerial assistant too. And if I may just clarify that, he began work June 1, 1988.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What was his rate of pay when he left?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — He was ministerial assistant 2, and my information is it was \$3,294 per month.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Do you know where Mr. Sheridan is employed now?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe he is with the present Minister of the Environment, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — The name Gail Anderson, works for your department — how long? She left the department. What's her salary when she left, if she did leave?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — My information is that her position was terminated October 31, '89. She began working for the Minister April 22, 1985, and at the time of termination her salary was \$3,753 per month.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Do you know where Ms. Anderson is presently employed?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe that she is with the present Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, why are there vehicle load size restrictions for vehicles travelling on the highways of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — There are load size restrictions on vehicles on our highways and roads in Saskatchewan for a number of reasons, among them safety, as well as the ability of various roads and highways to carry a particular weight or load size or restriction. There are load and weight restrictions for vehicles in all provinces of Canada, the territories, and the United States as well.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Why are there weight restrictions on loads on vehicles travelling our highways?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I said earlier, safety for one; number two, highways and roads are designed to be able to accommodate a certain amount of weight that they are expected to carry, and thirdly, we try to be equivalent to weight and load restrictions in other jurisdictions in the North American continent.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Does the Highway

Traffic Board offer overweight and over-length exemptions on a permanent basis?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — On an annualized basis there are some carriers who do have overweight, over-length permits for which they pay a fee to the Department of Highways. The Highway Traffic Board does not authorize those types of restrictions.

Mr. Trew: — Can you tell me, Minister, what the reasons for those exemptions are. For instance, is it hauling hay, you know, feed, that sort of thing? And what else would qualify for that permit?

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It could be as little as a single trip, for example, on a load that cannot be split up — a particular type of load that cannot easily be split up so we'll issue a permit for which the applicant pays a fee. There's also permits issued in accordance with our bulk commodity policy. So I'll just leave it there.

Mr. Trew: — Does Saskatchewan Transportation Company have permission to operate legally down the highways of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, they do have.

Mr. Trew: — When did STC apply for permission to run the overweight and over-length Eagles down the highways of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Chairman, I'd like permission to introduce some guests while we're awaiting the answer.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, in the Speaker's gallery there are two groups of Scouts joining us tonight. St. Timothy's 49th Scouts from the constituency of Regina North are here with their leader, Jack Zess. I will be meeting that group right in a few minutes for pictures and refreshments and a discussion.

The second group I'm introducing on behalf of my colleague from Regina North East, who is unable to be here at this moment. This is the Glen Elm 91st Scouts and one of the leaders is Mr. Alvin Funk. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these two groups of scouts to the Leg. Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Highways and Transportation Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 16

Item 1 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The permitting is as follows: one permit was issued August 15 to October 31 to cover the demonstration bus, and as new buses are delivered they obtain the permits.

Mr. Trew: — And you have been approving these permits then as the buses come into service. I see nodding on that side.

Minister, I asked you questions regarding the weight restrictions of loads and vehicles running on the highways of Saskatchewan. You said there are two primary reasons for weight restrictions: one is to enhance the longevity of the highways. If I may use some of my own words, that is to prevent the premature breakup of Saskatchewan's pavement of the highway system to prevent the rutting and the pot-holes and the need to rebuild highways before their design life has expired.

Minister, how in the world can you justify bringing in buses that are an additional five feet long and very much heavier than any of the buses we've previously had in Saskatchewan? How can you justify doing that and running these buses over the highways of Saskatchewan and prematurely causing the breakup of that pavement?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well first of all, I don't accept as face value the fact that the increase in length of a bus is a terrible, terrible problem. We've got a lot of vehicles out on the highways that are a lot longer than 45 feet. Semi-trailer units alone are 53 feet long. So we're not too concerned as far as the length is concerned. As far as the weight is concerned, again we have loads on our highways that are considerably heavier than that of the buses in question, so it is not as major a concern as you might make it out to be.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, are you telling me that you have on a regular, ongoing basis loads that have more weight per square inch of tire on the highway making contact with the pavement than these buses, on a regular, ongoing basis? Now I'm not talking about the one-time special permit to move a load that can't be broken up. I understand the need for that. Business has to carry on for the people of Saskatchewan. Houses have to get moved, for example. Elevators have to get moved. But I know that with elevators and their moving, there are many, many, many tires, like nearly a hundred tires under many of those elevators when they move. And even then, you only allow them to move during freeze-up.

Are you telling me, from your answer just now, that on an ongoing basis the Department of Highways has vehicles on the highways that have more weight per square inch, regularly, than these Eagle buses do?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, just — I suppose a matter of interest here for the record — all buses that are presently in operation whether they're MCI (Motor Coach Industries, Ltd.), or Eagle, or Prevost, are all overweight on their front axles when they are loaded. It's a national problem across the country and indeed in North America. Right now, we are part of a national interjurisdictional study that's trying to come up with some recommendations as to what we do with this type of

vehicle because when you load buses, no matter what make they are — Eagle, MCI or Prevost — they're all overweight on their axles — front axle. That's just a problem that we're trying to deal with.

Mr. Trew: — Minister, forgive me if I'm a bit cynical about: it's a problem we're trying to deal with. We've had buses,,, there's buses all over the world. You have just allowed the first 45 foot buses that Eagle has ever built, and you've purchased the first 11 of them, you add an additional five feet, you extend the length of the bus, and then you wonder why it is that there's overweight.

The Eagle buses you purchased have got the largest freight capacity, to my knowledge, of any bus in North America. Although I will say this: MCI and Prevost offered to make some changes to the compartment size because Saskatchewan Transportation Company needs large freight capacity. I'm not disputing that. The point I am making is: when you extend a bus from 40 feet to 45 feet there is naturally going to be more weight. Your job as Highways minister, because remember you're not the minister responsible for STC, your job as Highways minister, sir, is to protect and enhance Saskatchewan's highways. Why are you failing so miserably at that job?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well I don't suppose you would accept at face value my statement that there is no significant difference in the front of an Eagle axle, an Eagle bus, the front axle, as compared to MCI or Prevost when they're loaded. It's not significantly different. As a matter of fact even city buses have that same problem. There's again a weight situation that we would like to have an even better situation than it is at the present time.

As I said, we're part of an interjurisdictional national committee trying to overcome this. It's not a new problem. It's not something that just occurred last month; it's been around for several years. But it's only been in the last year or so that there's been any kind of concerted effort between jurisdictions to come up with regulations to cover this off.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, I want to get back to some of your personal staff and some specific questions about them. Joanne Tenold, is she one of your assistants? How long has she been employed by you? What are her duties? What is her salary?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Joanne Tenold was in my employ from November 1, '89 to March 9, 1990, and when she finished her employment her salary was at \$3,592.00 per month.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What was her title and duties, and where was she employed before and after joining your staff?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, she acted in the capacity as my chief of staff.

(1945)

Mr. Brockelbank: — Where was she before that, Mr. Minister, and where is she now, or after she left you?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — To the best of my knowledge she is presently with Executive Council.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, I'm going to start giving you these questions one at a time because I just have to get up and repeat them if you only answer one answer out of the two.

Do you know where she was employed in the Government of Saskatchewan before she joined your staff on November 1, '89?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe I stated it was Executive Council, and if I was remiss in that I apologize for this. As far as I know she was in Executive Council and worked for me for a period of time. As far as I know she is again back with Executive Council.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I apologize, Mr. Minister. I assumed that that's where she went after she left your employ.

I want to ask you a question about Mr. Jeff Conrad. How long is he employed? — what was his title, duties, salary?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Conrad worked for me between November 1 of '89 and January 1 of '90. He was paid ministerial assistant 2 at a salary of \$2,790 per month, and I don't know who his present employer is, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I didn't catch the salary, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — My information here is that it was \$2,790 per month.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And you're not aware of where he worked before, or where he is presently employed.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I stated, I don't know who his present employer is.

Mr. Brockelbank: — The name David Chorney — he's one of your assistants — the same information about Mr. Chorney.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chorney was employed from October 23, '89 to February 28, 1990. He was employed as a ministerial assistant A, salary at \$1,830 per month. And I should also add to that, in keeping with the rest of the member's question and practice that we've established here, Mr. Chorney was unemployed at the time that I engaged him and I am not certain as to who his employer is at the present time.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Are you aware of the reason why he left your employ, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chorney and I had agreed to try to see how Mr. Chorney would work out in this particular position. Mr. Chorney is an MS (multiple sclerosis) victim and he agreed to try this job for a period of time and he found that the pressure and the stress was perhaps a bit more than he could handle, so we mutually agreed to terminate his employment as of February 28.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Bob Coulter — how long has he

been employed in your capacity, what are his duties and his salary, etc.?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Coulter commenced work for me on January 8, 1990. He's employed as a ministerial assistant 2, salary of \$2,790 a month.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Where was Mr. Coulter employed before joining your staff?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I understand that Mr. Coulter was employed by the Department of Social Services previous to coming into my employ.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What is the manner in which these individuals that I've been relating to — Anderson, Gelmich, Sheridan, Tenold, Conrad, Chorney, Coulter — what is the nature of their arrangement with the department? Are they personal service contracts, or some other type of arrangements?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As with all other departments, to the best of my knowledge they are employees of the particular department and work as ministerial assistants to the minister in charge of that department.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, are you familiar with a company by the name of West-Can Management Ltd., and if so, does your department have a contract with West-Can Management Ltd., and what's the terms of the contract?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, I am aware of an organization called West-Can.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I asked if you had a contract with this company, West-Can Management Ltd. If so, how long have you had the contract, when was it last renewed, what is the expiry date of the latest contract, what are the terms and conditions of the contract, what is the value of the contract? We want to know everything you want to know about Ralph Katzman and we should know.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — West-Can Management Ltd. has a contract with us. The latest one was signed January 1, 1990 and is valid until December 31 of 1990.

Mr. Brockelbank: — The contract was last renewed on January 1, '90 and terminates on December 31, '90. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It terminates December 31, '90.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I want to know what is the amount of the contract, the value of the contract, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The same questions I believe were asked last year and I will continue the tradition of the House in keeping with the same answers that basically it's a personal services contract. And the disclosure of the exact amount has never been the practice of this House, previous administration or this administration.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, I don't mind you playing little games when it's not dealing with someone such as Mr. Ralph Katzman. But I wish you'd come clean

with the public on the employment of Mr. Ralph Katzman. The previous minister of Highways last year said and intimated that Mr. Katzman, former PC MLA, was getting about \$48,000 a year. Well that is an outright falsehood, an outright falsehood, because the *Public Accounts* show that in 1988-89 West-Can was paid \$61,632.

Now, Mr. Minister, tell us what the price of the contract is. Don't let us have to wait two years till the election is out of the way and then go to *Public Accounts* and find out how much you paid the guy. Let's be up front about it. Tell us what you're paying Ralph Katzman.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the amounts there, according to my best information, include expenses incurred as well as the contract. So mileage, all those kinds of things enter into it, sir. So I'll just have to leave it at that.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Does the contract have any kind of clause with regard to the termination of the contract in advance of the termination date or at the termination date, which will pay any benefits extraordinary to the contract?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — No.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Who were the signatories of the contract?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe the signatures are those of Ralph Katzman and of the Department of Highways.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Who signed for the department?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Although it's hard to make out, it looks like Jack Sutherland.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Will he verify that he signed this dastardly contract?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe he would be proud to do so.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I wouldn't editorialize for the deputy minister if I was you, just say he did it. Does this contract provide to Mr. Katzman a government office, a vehicle, credit card, any other benefits?

(2000)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The only things that are there are the supplying of a vehicle and, as far as space is concerned, I believe whenever it is necessary he uses whatever space is available in whatever region he happens to be in.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I'm not going to touch that one, Mr. Minister. Is this vehicle assigned on a permanent basis to Mr. Katzman?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The most up-to-date information we have is that he is currently assigned a CVA (central vehicle agency) vehicle, however in the past he has used a private vehicle.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Could you give me a description of a typical week in the life of Ralph Katzman, excluding the week of the CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) annual dinner — if you could give me a typical week of Mr. Katzman and his duties that he performs for the Department of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — A week with Mr. Katzman is anything but typical. However, I will attempt to give you the duties that I have assigned to this particular person. Projects would involve things like promoting the department's community signing corridors, which have helped to clean up a lot of improper signing around the province; act as a liaison with the various private signing concerns — people wanting to know how to put signs up, where they're allowed to; disputes as to whether or not there really is a concern or a problem. There's some urban transportation concerns that he would become involved in: landowner-department disputes; access disputes; acts as a liaison between department and rural municipalities disputes — those sorts of things.

I suppose a very, very succinct description would be that of a trouble-shooter.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Did Mr. Katzman have some responsibility for recommending a cut in the transportation subsidy to the city of Saskatoon, for example, or did you do that all in yourself?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — In the Department of Highways and Transportation, there is no subsidy cut to the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And that's true, Mr. Minister. It's under Urban Affairs. That's where the cut took place. I was wondering, since it was transportation, whether Mr. Katzman was involved in some way in a consultant position to the Urban Affairs department. I want to find out whether the contract that you have with Mr. Katzman is for full or part-time work, and does he pursue any other business while he's on contract to the department?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It's on an as-required basis. And if I must say so he's been doing an excellent job.

Mr. Brockelbank: — So that either known or unknown to you, Mr. Katzman could be performing some other work responsibility, if he's on a part-time basis or as-is basis — as-required basis. Who does an evaluation of Mr. Katzman's work? Is it by you? Or the department? Or who?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — He has spent the last year or so working primarily in the area of the community signing corridors and reports directly to the department engineers. The concerns, as I've pointed out, are many and varied. It's not a matter of you have a half-hour to solve each problem. Some concerns take two days, some take two hours. It all depends on the circumstances and the situation, so it's not an exact science.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What regulations are there, Mr. Minister, in governing the number of assistants you can have, whether you call them special assistants, or

ministerial assistants, or secretaries, or whatever you call them? What governs how many assistants you can have? This would be number six here.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — You pretty much have me there. As far as Mr. Katzman is concerned, handling the concerns as he does — being able to work with the department people, having the respect of the department people, and having earned the respect of many of the people who have been perhaps in an adversarial situation with the department, or straightening out misunderstandings — I can only say that he's again doing an excellent job. I have no quarrel with him at all.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well, the question was: are you limited? Does your president of the Executive Council limit the number of executive assistants you may have? If so, what is the limitation?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Basically, I think the work-load that you have in any department, or responsibilities that are given to a particular minister would dictate the requirement of staff.

And as far as my staff is concerned, I can assure you, sir, that they are here bright and early in the morning, usually before 8 o'clock, and on many occasions they are still here well past 6 o'clock in the evening. We try to keep an open door policy. If people have concerns, there's no problem. We try to serve the public. We are a fairly rural province, as you know. Farmers oftentimes may like to call in at supper time, fair enough. There's always someone in my office, or for the most part there is.

I think if you look at the work-load that we have in the Department of Highways with some of the increasing concerns, all the way from branch line abandonments that the federal government and the two railways are engaged in, the VIA Rail situation that you brought up earlier this evening, an increasing traffic volume on our highways, the fact that we have 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada in the province of Saskatchewan. And if you want to take that to the nth degree, when you have 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada in one province — we have 25,000 kilometres of highway — I think that the department staff that we have as well as the ministerial staff we have do a very, very good job.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well, Mr. Minister, you may have six assistants, but it takes you an entire year to get the answers to 16 questions I asked in the estimates last year. It takes you an entire year. What are these people doing in your department?

You know you've got so many ministerial assistants around that you're tripping over them. Your budget's cut by \$12 million. Are you laying off some of your assistants or are you keeping them around to make excuses for the Minister of Highways and the government?

I think, Mr. Minister, you should give some serious consideration to reducing the amount of personal staff you have. It's a scandal that the Minister of Highways takes a year to answer questions that were asked in estimates in this Committee of Finance last year. He has a budget reduced by 10 to \$12 million and he keeps the

same level of staff, personal staff, that the previous minister had. There's got to be somebody evaluating what's happening in your department, Mr. Minister, and that's you. That is you. You cannot side-step your responsibility in this case.

I want to find out if Mr. Katzman has access to the government aircraft. I want to know if Mr. Katzman has access to the government aircraft and for what purpose.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Gone around Mr. Katzman for some time, and you've known him probably for a lot longer than I have, sir. I don't think his credibility or his character are in question here. Mr. Katzman has performed admirably well for the department. He also sits on the board of the New Careers Corporation and gets no pay for that. He's been a public servant. He's been a member of the legislature and he's done all kinds of things like that. He's been involved in community work. And in direct response to your question, no he does not have access to government aircraft.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Does Mr. Katzman travel outside Saskatchewan on behalf of the department of government that he works for?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — To the best of my knowledge, no. If you have information to the contrary, please share it with me.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Does Mr. Katzman have access to an enRoute card?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — If he does have, it's not the Department of Highways' enRoute card.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Okay, Mr. Minister. You describe this person as being a very valuable person. You have six legislative assistants, or assistants of some kind. Somebody is not doing your personal work for you in the department, not getting the answers out here, not answering the letters. Perhaps if Mr. Katzman is as good at the job as you say he is, he should be retained and you should get rid of some of the other ones.

But I'm sure that Mr. Katzman's expertise in the areas in which he has shown himself to be that, would be welcomed in the private sector, Mr. Minister, and perhaps he should be privatized. I realize that would be a big project, but I think we should have a look at privatizing Mr. Katzman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brockelbank: — I mentioned earlier today, Mr. Minister, that I was concerned about an amount of money that this department had spent over a specified period of time on advertising with Dome Advertising and Roberts & Poole. In the period May 1, '84 to May 17, '88 this Department of Highways spent \$2,329,939. All the government departments and agencies spent \$46,645,346 in that same period of time.

The gross expenditure of advertising money by this government leaves something to be desired about whether the government is paving the highways with

advertising or with pavement. I think it's advertising because when I drive down the highways, and when other people I've talked to drive down the highways, they're hitting the holes and the bumps and the ruts and the cracks in the highways. So obviously you're paving the highways with advertising.

I want to know what amount of money was spent by your department on advertising last year, and what firms; what work did each firm do for your department.

(2015)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, while we're just clarifying a couple of things, advertising and print-related expenses would include such things as the official highway map, again, hot-line advertisements, various publications, a staff publication in motion, various types of miscellaneous advertising, things like salvage of hay notices — you know, mundane things like that. It does add up to a fairly significant sum. Traffic accident statistics, annual reports, signing manuals and brochures — normal informational items that people require.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I asked, Mr. Minister, what firms and what amounts?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — For the year '90-91, it would be Smail Communications, 75,000; and Dome would be about 200,000.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Was this the kind of work you were describing earlier, Mr. Minister? Before you answered this question, you were describing some of the kind of work that was done for the department. Is that it?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I said, the programs include road information, the hot line, the orange zone — construction zone — road restrictions, the highway maps, private signing corridor advertising; you know, that kind of thing.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Do those amounts you give me for Smail and Dome Advertising include the Highway Traffic Board, or is that over and above that?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — My information is that it is all inclusive and includes the Highway Traffic Board.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Was any of the amount of this money spent for public opinion polling, focus groups? And if so who was that paid to and do you have the questionnaires that were a result of the polling?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — There was zero dollars spent for polling, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What is the amount budgeted for advertising in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The amounts of 75,000 and 200,000 respectively, as I quoted to you, is the amount for advertising.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Minister, the question I asked you — when you give me the figures of 75,000 for a Smail

and 200,000 for Dome — is what was the amount spent by your department advertising last year? Now from the answer that you just gave me, I would assume that's your budgeted amount for the fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, that's correct, '89-90. And that would have been Smail at 90,000 and Dome at 225,000.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Will any of the amount that you specified for the budget be used for polling or focus groups?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — No.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I want to ask you about another company, Mr. Minister. Does your department have, or has it a contract with a firm called Trade and Transportation Group?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes we do.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Could you tell me, Mr. Minister, what is the nature of the contract with this particular firm, Trade and Transportation Group? Is it a Saskatchewan firm and who are the principals?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The person with that group that we deal with is Frank Trotter. No, there is not, it is not a Saskatchewan based company. The reasons for employing this particular firm would be because Mr. Trotter and his group are national, I would even say international experts on transportation economics. And when you're dealing with rail lines and things like that, it definitely pays for itself.

Mr. Brockelbank: — This group, Trade and Transportation Group, is its speciality rail studies and transport studies? Could you bracket the firm more closely, Mr. Minister, so I have an idea of what this firm does?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That would be correct basically in the area of rail, railroad economics. That's their speciality, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — How much was paid to Trade and Transportation Group last year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I don't have that number at my fingertips, but I will get it for you.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And has the group, Trade and Transportation Group, provided the department with studies in this area of expertise, and would it be possible to obtain copies of those studies they've done?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The firm supplies information on rail costing and, as I pointed out the other day in the Assembly, much of that information is used by the department in its attempts to have freight rates lowered, making certain that freight rates are not any higher than they absolutely have to be, and in general representing the agricultural sector of the province as well as the industrial sector, resource sector with regard to movement of products in and out of our province.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What was the value of contracts done by this firm in the last year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I said, I don't have that at my fingertips but we will get that information for you.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Does the Department of Highways have a contract with a firm called Pals Communications? Is this a Saskatchewan firm? What is the nature and value of their contract?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — No.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Did the department have a contract within the last two years with Pals Communications?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Not to the best of my knowledge, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I want to find out, Mr. Minister, whether the department had a contract with a firm called International Road Dynamics. Is this a Saskatchewan company? What is the nature of its business?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, yes, and they are a leader in the development of electronic traffic equipment.

Mr. Brockelbank: — They're a Saskatchewan firm, I take it. What purchases has your department made from International Road Dynamics? When were the purchases made? Could you provide me with a list and the amount paid in each case?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have all those numbers at our fingertips. It's fairly technical information; it's their weigh-in motion technology. Some of the new weigh scales in the province are included in this. I'll get that information for you, sir.

(2030)

Mr. Brockelbank: — How did you, Mr. Minister, acquire their services? Did you tender for the services? How did you come into contact with them and make use of their services in an official way?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — In some of the leading-edge technology that we're presently working on with them in research with department staff. They are our preferred group to work with. They've been working with them in a number of areas, as I've pointed out, however they also have tendered on some contracts and have been the successful bidder.

Mr. Brockelbank: — So it was a mixture of tendering and departmental preference that got them into contact with an official position with the department.

What has been the department's evaluation of this equipment which we've obtained from International Road Dynamics, and how would the equipment be paid for? Was it paid for upon a satisfactory operation of the equipment? Was it contingent upon that? If not, how and when were the payments made?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Any products that we have paid for to date we've been extremely satisfied. There's still pieces of equipment that are under research and development, and as with the terms of any contract, you would have a particular amount of hold-back until you see that the equipment actually does what is purported to do.

Mr. Brockelbank: — When do the payments begin to International Road Dynamics? Was it 1986-87 and subsequent years? And if so how much would have been paid in each year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I don't have that information at my fingertips, sir. We will provide that information for you by year.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Okay. I'll appreciate that, Mr. Minister, when it arrives. It would appear that this group has received fairly substantial payments from the department for equipment and I want to know that the department feels that they're fully protected in the operation of this equipment, in a satisfactory manner. Mr. Minister, who are the principals of International Road Dynamics?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Sir, I don't know who the principals are. I do know that the products that they have developed, and that we have been using and the ones that we are developing are satisfactory and working very well.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to deal somewhat with travel in the department. I want to find out from you, what is the present procedure in the department with respect to travel by yourself and officials of the department? Is it the practice of your department to charge everything on the enRoute card? And who has access to the enRoute card and how is the use of it controlled?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, enRoute card numbers are used and prior approval is required for each trip.

Mr. Brockelbank: — With regard to the enRoute card, can the minister provide me with the amount spent on air travel, the amount spent for accommodation, the amount spent for meals in each instance, in the previous year? That includes you, Mr. Minister; I want to see your name on that list too.

I want to be able to identify the amount charged by personal staff and any other people that may be involved in using the card.

Do you have a list, Mr. Minister, of the amount of money your department budget spent on ministerial staff travel in-province, out-of-province but in Canada, and outside of Canada during '89-90?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — In the first part of your question, the entire department, on a name by name basis, that would be fairly complicated. We can give you total figures if that would be satisfactory.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I think, Mr. Minister, I would be satisfied if you were to break it down to you as the

minister for those three categories of expenditures; and your predecessor during '89; and your personal staff as another category; and officials of your department is the next category; and then all others is the final category. Would that be more or less convenient for the minister to obtain from his department?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — If I may, Mr. Chairman, senior officials — how far do you want to go?

Mr. Brockelbank: — The list that you said you're going to send over to me, Mr. Minister, which includes your senior executive — that would be the one group: yourself, personal staff, any others.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I don't have those exact numbers again at my fingertips. I will get you the numbers for myself; I will get you the numbers for the staff, and I will get you the numbers for the senior officials.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And all others in the final category. Then, Mr. Minister, could you get the budgeted amounts for those same grouping?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That's fairly difficult to do because again sometimes depending upon need, in my own case I don't and I had not planned on such things as a sudden trip to Ottawa to visit with the federal minister on the VIA issue, so those types of things aren't budgeted. In that regard, we go on an as-needs basis, and we try to keep it as lean and as spare as we possibly can.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Yes, I understand that, Mr. Minister. What has been established by the facts and figures that are on the books is what I'm mainly interested in. I realize that you're not clairvoyant and you cannot tell what,,,. Although you have some of the attributes, you cannot tell the future, and therefore the budgetary figures will not be near so significant as the actual figures.

I wanted to ask you about WESTBRIDGE, Sage, Management Systems Ltd. and services provided to your department by those three outfits.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, while we're looking for those numbers for those companies, I'll just invite the member to ask any further questions. We'll attempt to have those before we're through. We're just digging them out right now.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Right, Mr. Minister. I believe that Management Systems Ltd. is a subsidiary of WESTBRIDGE. Could you correct me if I'm wrong on that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I believe that that is correct at this time.

Mr. Brockelbank: — All right. I wanted to find out how much of the computer services were provided by each of those last year, and whether it was tendered, Mr. Minister, or how the service was obtained. And I want to know what the budget is for those same areas for this year — '90-91 — for these three firms, and from what part of your department are the payments made.

(2045)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That's again going to take a moment or two for us to come up with. If we don't have those numbers before we're through this evening, I'll have the information for you. You have my undertaking to do so.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, Mr. Minister. What services are provided to your department by the property management corporation? And have these services changed since last year? And if so, what changes have taken place?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — There is roughly the same services being provided as in the last year. The services that are provided would be things like accommodation, mail, photographic and records management services, that sort of thing.

Mr. Brockelbank: — If the level of service is the same, Mr. Minister, why has the department's payment to property management corporation been reduced by about 2.5 million?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I said, Mr. Chairman, it's roughly the same services. We've been after trying to save a dollar wherever we can, wherever possible. They've reassessed some rates in this year and we were able to come up with the current estimates.

Mr. Brockelbank: — It would appear last year, Mr. Minister, when I brought the subject up of the rates charged by the property management corporation to the Department of Highways, the previous minister was totally disinterested in asking property management corporation to reassess what they were charging for the services they provided.

What brought about this change in heart? Was it pressure from you, Mr. Minister, to get the property management corporation to reassess their rates? Was it true, Mr. Minister, that the property management corporation was padding their rates to build a kitty in the property management corporation at your expense? Why did you go into an,,, after the property management corporation to get a change in rates?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As a department we're always looking, you know, for the best bang for the dollar. We've been working for some time to try to get lower rates; those are the types of things that we try to do. As to what the policies of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) are, perhaps you can ask them that question in their estimates.

Mr. Brockelbank: — I look forward to getting your information on WESTBRIDGE, MSL (Management Systems Ltd.), and Sage Consulting, Mr. Minister, in due course.

I wanted to ask a question about the rural bus subsidy program. It's mentioned in your annual report that this program serves four routes at a cost of about \$47,000. Which four routes are referred to in this instance?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — There are three routes: Estlin to Saskatoon; Leoville to Prince Albert; Regina to Redvers; the fourth one you refer to falls under the RTAP (rural transportation assistance program) program. And the nine routes currently in operation under that are: Beechy to Outlook; Central Butte, Elbow, Outlook, Saskatoon; number 3, Archerwill to Wadena; number 4, Wishart to Wynyrd; number 5, Radville, Ceylon, Weyburn; number 6, St. Walburg, Paradise Hill, Lloydminster; seven, Laird, Waldheim, Rosthern; eight, Tramping Lake, Wilkie; number 9, Bengough, Ogema, Pangman, Regina.

Mr. Brockelbank: — How much is allocated in this program for the '90-91 budget, and is it for the same routes, Mr. Minister, or does that vary from time to time?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — For the first three I mentioned, it would be about 130,000, and for the RTAP routes the subsidy varies from 16,000 to 40,000 per annum.

Mr. Brockelbank: — What attempt does the department make to ensure that the service also feeds, acts as a feeder into other passenger modes in larger centres? I'm thinking of STC, Greyhound, VIA, airlines.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well the RTAP routes connect with STC points and obviously make connections with STC bus lines.

Mr. Brockelbank: — And the other ones serve a variety of passenger services. Is that correct, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, that would be correct.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Is this program evaluated on an annual basis or how does the minister evaluate the program?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — They're evaluated based on a number of issues — ridership and so on. In the case of the RTAP, the local municipality causes to exist a local transit authority committee or an LTA, which evaluates the performance of the particular route.

(2100)

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to ask a few questions on northern roads and highways. I also want to touch on some of the airports in that area and also on some of the forestry agreements regarding roads, that your department administers.

I want to start off, Mr. Minister, with the airport at Ile-a-la-Crosse. I wonder if you could indicate what work is planned this coming summer, if the engineering work has been completed, and if you could indicate what amount of construction and what construction will be taking place on the Ile-a-la-Crosse airstrip.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Ile-a-la-Crosse, we plan to reconstruct and lengthen the runway to 3,000 feet.

Mr. Thompson: — Are you going to rebuild and pave that strip this summer, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It would be a seal base. The cost would be about \$450,000, somewhere in that area.

Mr. Thompson: — Well, Mr. Minister, it would seem to me that a settlement such as Ile-a-la-Crosse, which is the second oldest community in this province and which has a fairly large hospital there, that if you're going to rebuild that airport it should be brought up to a standard of, say, a 5,000 foot runway — at least a 4,500 foot runway. You say you're only going to spend \$4,500 to rebuild and seal cap that airport. I would suggest that you should take a look at that and build that up to a larger standard. It should at least be a 4,500 foot runway and it should be a paved strip. You indicate you're not going to pave that; you're just going put sort of a stabilized base on it. Is this what you're going to do?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It will be an all-weather strip. The seal coat will allow aircraft to land all weather; it will be 3,000 feet long.

Mr. Thompson: — Okay, Mr. Minister, could you indicate when you talk about a seal coat, is that not just a stabilized base, an oil base? This is not a paved strip, is this right?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It would be a granular base structure. The seal coat would be a wearing surface. The only pavement, as you and I think of pavement, is on major airports.

Mr. Thompson: — It would not have the type of a base that the airport has in Buffalo Narrows then, is this right?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — It has the same base structure. The only difference would be that the seal coat is a very thin coat as opposed to the inch or two of hot mix that's put down on top of that base coat at Buffalo.

Mr. Thompson: — Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you could indicate what the plans are for the airport at Stony Rapids, and also I would be asking the same question of the airport at Fond-du-Lac.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — With regards to Fond-du-Lac there are no planned improvements this year. Last year there was some lighting and fencing improvements that were installed at Fond-du-Lac, and I'm sure you are aware of that. At Stony, the construction of a new airport is something that's been a topic of discussion for the last couple of years. The detailed engineering will begin this year.

Mr. Thompson: — Will that begin this summer, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, in '90-91, the detailed engineering design. Okay?

Mr. Thompson: — I want to be a little bit more specific on that. Are you going to carry out the engineering work, say in the next three months?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, most of it will be done within

the next three months. As a matter of fact, I'd say that 99 per cent of it will be done within the next three months.

Mr. Thompson: — Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

I wonder, the next time you go up there if you would also take a look at that piece of road between Black Lake and Stony Rapids. And most certainly there needs to be some improvements on that, and I would just urge your department to take a serious look at that.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could indicate what the cost is of maintaining the airport at Charlot River for this year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — We no longer maintain anything at Charlot River.

Mr. Thompson: — Mr. Minister, who maintains that airport then, if the Department of Highways does not maintain it? Did you not construct that airport?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — To the best of my knowledge SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) is the organization that has built that strip and maintains it.

Mr. Thompson: — Are you saying that the airstrip at Charlot River was built by SaskPower and not by the Department of Highways?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — We haven't built anything at Charlot River recently, no.

Mr. Thompson: — When we talk about recently, I'm talking about in the last three years because there is an airport that has been built there in the last three to four years and I'm assuming that the Department of Highways has responsibility for all airports in this province. I was not aware that your department did not have responsibility for airports such as Charlot River's.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — We have not constructed anything there. The Department of Highways and Transportation has not constructed anything there within the last three years.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. That's an interesting statement. I'm sure that you figured that you were responsible for all airports in this province and I only assumed that. I'm not aware of any other ones except on the farmer's, or individual farm land where they have the airports. But a major government airport that's built up two miles from another airport at Camsell Portage and about 12 miles from another major airport, as far as I was concerned, was just a total waste of money and we'll most certainly be bringing that up with the proper department.

I want to now turn to the roads, Mr. Minister, and I wonder if you could indicate what work you're going to be carrying out this year on Highway 965 from Highway 55 to Canoe Narrows, Jans Bay, and Cole Bay.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — On the area that you were speaking about, if I understand you correctly, we would be doing dust treatment in that area Canoe Lake to

junction 155.

Mr. Thompson: — You are going to dust treat all of highway,,, or the road which is referred to as 965 from Cole Bay to Highway 155, is this right?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — No, it would be not the entire thing. It would be to improve the safety in some areas, sections, hills, curves, things like that, sir.

Mr. Thompson: — Are you doing any engineering work on 965?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — No, sir, not at this time.

Mr. Thompson: — Could you indicate, Mr. Minister, how much money was spent on Highway 903 last year, and how much,,, First of all, Mr. Minister, do you have a highway array this year that you're going to pass out to the legislature?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, it was tabled in the legislature better than a month ago. It's been tabled, so it's here. I'm sorry if the member doesn't have it.

Mr. Thompson: — Fine, Mr. Minister, then I will just continue on with the question on Highway 903. I wonder if you could indicate how much money the Department of Highways spent on 903 last year, and what are you budgeting this year for Highway 903?

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — In the fiscal year '90-91, capital construction program, Highway No. 903; grading from junction Highway 904 to Canoe Lake Indian Reserve, \$540,000, approximately. Again, these are estimates; they're going to be a rough estimate of what we expect it to cost.

Highway No. 903; grading Canoe Lake Indian Reserve to Parker Lake, in excess of \$1.4 million. Highway No. 903; grading Parker Lake to 53 kilometres north of Highway 965, approximately \$100,000 expenditure.

Mr. Thompson: — So you're spending approximately \$2 million this year, is that right, on engineering work and construction of Highway 903?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That would be roughly correct, sir, yes.

Mr. Thompson: — Okay, Mr. Minister, I just want to bring this to your attention, and to your department's attention. Highway 903, which is a logging road which runs up into the bush country in the Vermette Lake area, you're spending approximately \$2 million this year. And then right beside there where the highway, the highway from Cole Bay to Highway 155, which is a road that is a dangerous road — it's been brought to the department's attention on a number of occasions in this legislature; there have been petitions that have been sent in by the citizens of those three communities, and also from Beauval — and yet your priorities lie with building roads into the bush country for the logging companies.

Now, I think that, Mr. Minister, your priorities are all screwed up here when you start building those bush roads right alongside of a road that should be improved, and you're not even putting any money into engineering. Once again, that Highway 903 is strictly a logging road, and your priorities are to build highways and roads for the logging companies, and you're forgetting about the citizens of the province that live up there. So I'm just saying, Mr. Minister, that you should, as a new minister, rearrange the priorities of that department and start dealing with the individuals who live in Canoe Narrows and Cole Bay and Jans Bay and bring that highway up to standard. There's been many fatal accidents on that piece of crooked road that we're talking about. There's school buses that are going over that road every day and that road should be rebuilt.

And I'm just asking you, Mr. Minister, if you would consider rearranging your priorities and taking some of that money out of 903 and putting it over to that road from Canoe Narrows into 155.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the department is always reassessing the needs of the province, the people that live in the various areas of the province. We'll be certainly taking it into consideration.

As I said earlier, we have the situation where we have 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada are in Saskatchewan, and it's our job in the Department of Highways and Transportation to try to do the best we can with the resources that we have. While I can understand the concerns of the member and we certainly will be taking them into consideration, there are many areas in the province where people would like improvements made. But as I said earlier, we've got 25 per cent of all the roads, a million plus population in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Thompson: — Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could indicate how much money you're going to spend on Highway 55. That's completed from Big River to the Cowan dam. I wonder if you could indicate how much money you're going to be spending on Highway 55 from the Cowan dam to Green Lake, and if you have tendered out a contract on that piece of road yet. That is a major highway, Highway 55.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Highway 55 under the construction projects '90-91, it shows construction east of the Carrot River to east of junction No. 23, junction No. 924 south. And if you go to surfacing on Highway 55, we're surfacing east of the Carrot River to east of junction No. 23; resurfacing Nipawin to White Fox, junction of No. 924 south. It's all Highway 55.

Mr. Thompson: — Mr. Minister, that's not the question that I asked you. I asked you how much money you were going to spend on Highway 55 from the Cowan River to Green Lake, and when were you going to let that tender out for the,, finish constructing that piece of road between Big River and Green Lake. That was the question.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — We're going to be finishing grading on 924 south and we'll be tendering the paving of that later this summer. There will be no work north of 924.

Mr. Thompson: — Well, Mr. Minister, that is a major artery between Big River and Green Lake, and you've constructed up to 924 which is the Cowan River, and that's where the Turtleford constituency ends and that's where Athabasca starts, and that's where you quit building the highway. And it's as plain as that.

And that's what the folks up in Big River and Debden, Shellbrook and Canwood country are saying. The only reason that road is not being completed, you've let out the contract last year up to the Cowan River, and now all of a sudden you come to another constituency and you quit building.

And that is highly unfair, and that's how you operate and that's why you're sitting at 11, 12 per cent in the polls. And that's what's going to defeat this government, the kind of policies that you're carrying out on your highways and every department that this government operates.

My next question to you, Mr. Minister, is how much money are you going to spend on the road on the west side of Cowan Lake known as the Weyerhaeuser highway? How much money is the department going to spend on that road this summer?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm quite surprised at the accusations from the member across the way. That is not my method of operation. The Department of Highways does not have that as their method of operation. If we go around the province and take a look at the construction and resurfacing projects, they are certainly not done on a constituency basis as to which side of the government the particular member is on.

And I do take some exception to that, and you surprise me, sir, with that accusation. We did want to finish paving the highway as we have outlined. This year we are undertaking engineering for the north portion that you've mentioned, and it will have a high priority in next year's budget, sir.

And I can only give you that as the facts as they exist. There is no ulterior motives and there is certainly no conscious effort on the part of the department or myself to do anything along the lines of what you have suggested.

Mr. Thompson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'll close off when I get the answer for the question that I asked, but I want to repeat that question. How much money is the Department of Highways going to be spending on the Weyerhaeuser road that's on the west side of Cowan Lake?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — On the Rehill Lake road, we plan to reconstruct about 21 kilometres of that, and it will be around \$1 million.

(2130)

Mr. Thompson: — Okay, Mr. Minister, once again this is another glaring example, Mr. Minister, of how you are operating a department — not the department itself but the government in power today and the ideology that

you're carrying out.

You're spending a million dollars on the road on the west side of Cowan Lake which is going bring that Weyerhaeuser road fairly close to Green Lake on the west side. You can point your finger all you want but that's exactly what it is. After you get your 21 kilometres in there, that Weyerhaeuser road up the west side of Cowan Lake will be fairly close to Green Lake, and probably the next leg will finish that into Green Lake. And what is going to happen there? Once that road is completed, then you are going to kill the community of Big River. Because you're not going ahead with the construction of the highway between Green Lake and Big River; you're not completing that. But yet you're building a road around for Weyerhaeuser that's going to link up with Green Lake, and if that happens — and you're fairly close, as I indicated now — once that 21 kilometres is completed you're not going to be very far from the community of Green Lake. And that, Mr. Minister, could literally kill the community of Big River and that surrounding area.

You talk about the priorities. Well I just want to give you the priorities again in closing off. In Athabasca you've got the highway between Canoe Narrows, and Beauval, and Jans Bay, and Cole Bay, where you're spending absolutely no money. The bush road for the Meadow Lake saw mill, you're spending over \$2 million again this year and you've built a bunch of that highway last year. Between Green Lake and the Cowan River, you're not going ahead with any more contracts; you've come to a complete stop. Yet you're going on the other side of the lake and you're building another complete highway for Weyerhaeuser.

Now I just say to you, Mr. Minister, you just have to take a look at that and you can draw your own conclusions. And I tell you, the folks in the Big River and the Debden and Canwood area have most certainly drawn their conclusions.

In closing off, Mr. Minister, I just want to say once again that your priorities are lying with the bush roads of Weyerhaeuser and the bush roads for the Meadow Lake saw mill. They most certainly are not with the communities of Big River, and Debden, and Canwood, and the communities of Beauval, and Jans Bay, and Canoe Narrows, and Cole Bay — that's not where your priorities are.

In closing off, I have one more question, Mr. Minister. How much money did your department spend on the road from Points North to Black Lake this year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The Department of Highways and Transportation spent no money in that particular section, as I believe you're referring to. There was a winter road pushed through under private contract, I believe, but I don't believe the Department of Highways and Transportation entered into that.

In anticipation of comments from members opposite — although I did not expect it of the member who is presently asking questions — I took a look at the array of construction projects we have for this year and I superimposed that on a constituency map of the

province. In my own constituency of Kelvington-Wadena, sir, we will be spending \$1,600,000 roughly this year; in your constituency of Athabasca, we will be spending upwards of \$3 million in construction, capital expenditures. So I don't believe, sir, that you can say that you are hard done by.

I would also offer to you a breakdown, if you would like, of all the various and sundry maintenance and miscellaneous projects that are carried on every year and the ones that are expected to be carried on this year. I do have that information for you, if you would like it. Come on down to my office; I've had it broke out as closely as I can so that you'll be able to see in more detail what the department is doing. It would take us all night to go through it here, so I would like you to come to my office and get that tomorrow.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very for that information, Mr. Minister. And if you could maybe break that down and pass it over to me.

I wondered, Mr. Minister, if you could indicate how much money the Department of Highways is spending on the road between La Loche and the Alberta border towards Fort McMurray?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — A rough figure would be approximately \$800,000 since January 1 of '90.

Mr. Thompson: — And that is money out of the Highways budget. Is this right, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, sir, that is money out of the Highways budget.

Mr. Thompson: — Thank you very much.

Mr. Goulet: — Yes, for the record, could you tell me how much money is being spent on building bridges for the province of Saskatchewan this year?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Approximately four and a half million for the entire province.

Mr. Goulet: — Where is the bridge construction going to take place?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As tabled, the 1990 construction projects — I'll send you over a copy, sir, since you don't have one. I could read into the record, but it would just take too much time. I'll send you a copy of the array over so you can see for yourself.

Mr. Goulet: — Thank you. The reason why I ask the question was to raise the issue of the Cumberland House bridge. And I was wondering whether you are intending to do any planning with the community in regards to dealing with the Cumberland House bridge.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, we have been working with the communities up there as regards a number of proposals, including a weir. I took the opportunity at breakup, when the ice was just starting to go out on the river, to drive up to take a firsthand look at the highways into Cumberland House.

I crossed the river partially on the ice and partially by boat on the open section of the water. I met with the economic development group up there on extremely short notice. I was happy to see that the road to Cumberland was kept in very, very good condition.

I travelled up there, maintained the speed limit all the way. My compliments to the people who keep that road in as good a condition as it is. I met with the economic development group and they outlined to me their priorities and they include such things as the farm, a recreation centre for the communities, a weir-bridge combination. At the present time, we have a Department of Highways person who is working with their group looking at the engineering feasibilities of a weir, and they have some ongoing studies in some other areas with regards to a weir and what it might possibly lead to.

Mr. Goulet: — I guess the reason why I raise that issue, Mr. Minister, is that you well know that the people in Cumberland House have been asking for a bridge for many, many years. And also I guess, you know with the high unemployment rate, you've heard the stories as you met with them in that regard.

I notice that when I meet with them all the time they said they don't want to use any of the Cumberland House agreement-type money which they've slated for other projects in future development and they would like to be treated like anybody else in the province in regards to highways and in regards to bridge planning. And they would like to see the minister take the responsibility like he does in any other place in the province of Saskatchewan to try and deal with the bridge issue at Cumberland.

Most of the people in Cumberland have stated that they didn't want it to really go to a legal case. I understand that there was a human rights case, a charge of discrimination being laid against the government for not building this bridge but nobody really wants any legal case at all at the community level. What they want is to be able to work with the minister and try and do some long-term plans so that they can start dealing with not only the bridge issue but the road issue as well.

So I would like to shift off then into the road. There is a requirement. They tried to build a weir across the Tearing River and there's a mine there 25 miles away, then the Meadow Lake mine.

Of course there's issues related to that in regards to environment, but more specifically people want the road built over there so they can, not only be part of job creation on the road to the mine, but also in the long run, be able to drive to the mine which will only be a 25-minute drive, you know, with a proper road there.

And it would also make a tremendous connection, you know, from Nipawin over to the northern Manitoba road system, road corridor. And it would make an excellent road in regards to the development of tourism in that area. I was wondering what you have in the plans then in regards to your discussions with the community for a weir and a road into the Meadow Lake. Have you had any

consideration on that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — That particular topic was not extremely high on the priorities when I met with some of the people there. We have not done any work in regard to that. My major concern would be to provide access for the community, and I'm prepared to work with them, as I've stated.

They told me they were working on the design for a weir, and if that's feasible, if that's possible, it would provide a couple of things for them and I'm not too sure that they would like me to make those announcements here. I would rather that you talked to the people there and find out exactly what they have in mind. Suffice it to say they are doing some fairly in-depth engineering studies into the weir across the river and what it could provide for them in the way of economic benefit as opposed to simply putting a bridge in.

Mr. Goulet: — Now I'll just talk to another area. We'll deal with the Highway 102 north of La Ronge. Basically a lot of the communities would like to see improvements. We know that we've got a paved road right up to Sucker River about approximately 20 miles north of La Ronge.

Now of course, a lot of the mining development, there's been two new gold mines going up, one at Preview Lake. And there's a lot of gold deposits and base metal deposits in that area.

Now along with the uranium mining all the way to the connection with 905 up to Wollaston Lake, a lot of the people have complained that the road in there with the utilization of great big trucks makes it extremely dangerous for the people when they drive. They've got super big trucks travelling with hazardous materials, you know, sometimes some of these are dumped on the road. But in many cases, most of the people are really worried about the fact that some of them get chased off the road once in a while.

(2145)

There is a lot of pressure all the time. You've seen many delegations from La Ronge and many delegations trying to improve that road, Highway 102 north. And now with those mines going up only 40 miles north of La Ronge, what are you going to be doing specifically on that stretch from Sucker River to Missinipe in regards to surfacing or improvement? And also cutting off from Highway 102, the road into Stanley Mission, and also the improvement up to Southend? And the other one, I might add, on 905 is there is roads going to the mine at Rabbit Lake but it's surprising that we haven't got a road into the community at Wollaston Lake, and yet some of the world's richest deposits on uranium going on Rabbit Lake, going on A, D, Eagle Point and all of these. There's a lot of roads going to the mine but none of the road planning goes to build something to Wollaston Lake.

So I'd like you to comment on the Wollaston Lake situation regards to the road, that aspect from Missinipe to Sucker River and also to Stanley. Could you make a comment on the situations on what we might expect from you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — At the present time there's no plans to upgrade the road into Stanley Mission. We have completed the engineering and design work for the portion of Highway 102, and it will receive a very high priority in next year's budget.

Mr. Goulet: — I'm glad to hear that Highway 102 will have a priority. By priority you mean the stretch from Sucker to Missinipe or for the whole Highway 102?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The stretch from Sucker River to Missinipe, yes, that area. It will have a very, very high priority for construction.

Mr. Goulet: — I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Minister. The other one is on Hanson Lake Road. There's some surfacing that is required on that road and there isn't that many miles left for surfacing on that road. I'm just wondering what do you intend to do in terms of planning this year and next year on that particular stretch, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — In the area of Hanson Lake Road around the Big Sandy cut-off, that project has been tendered. The construction outfit is in there right now. Roughly in the neighbourhood of a million dollars will be spent in that area this year.

Mr. Goulet: — How much will be left to complete then?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Well that should take care of the paving on that cut-off. It should be complete when this is done.

Mr. Goulet: — I guess, Mr. Minister, I'd like to just make a closing comment. The member from Athabasca laid it out very clearly in regards to the fact that we do have a lot of the,, you know, a lot of the road building goes into the development in regards to the forestry development and also to the mining development.

But what we're also stating is that the developments should also consider the communities as well, and that the improvements to the communities needs also to take a priority. As we look into the future the communities aren't going to be able to partake into the development, and when we're getting on about a billion dollars a year from the North from the development, from mining and forestry, and when you take that much money out from one or two constituencies — you know, over a billion dollars — you need to put the infrastructural development in there so that the people can partake in the development in the way that they should. And also too, the only other,, after the development leaves, there will be the traditional resource use and the tourism that is required in that area. And for those to develop you need an excellent road system.

So I would like for you to, as you look into the future to put greater emphasis on the community level. Make sure that the money that we take out of the resources, whether through Weyerhaeuser or whether through Cameco or other major corporations, that this money is put back in.

I might make a little comment that you gave an extra \$7

million to Cameco the other year. We would definitely like to see that money go back to getting the community roads fixed up. And so with that, Mr. Minister, I'll leave it back to the critic to make a decision on the next speaker.

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I'd like to thank the hon. members for the questions. The two members that have just questioned me are from northern Saskatchewan. And again, I'd just like to point out that anticipation of some concerns is raised by the member for Athabasca and to a lesser degree, the member for Cumberland.

Just because they are northern Saskatchewan, certainly doesn't mean that they are forgotten by the Department of Highways and Transportation. And yes, we realize fully the importance of the resource sector in this province as well as we recognize the agricultural sector in this province.

So again for your information, sir, I had superimposed over a constituency map all of the projects involved in the Department of Highways and Transportation this year including construction, airports, what have you, maintenance. To give you a rough estimate, the total expenditures of the Department of Highways in the constituency of Cumberland is over \$9 million — \$9 million; the constituency of Athabasca, it's over \$8 million; my own constituency of Kelvington-Wadena, the expenditure is just over \$3 million.

So I feel, sir, that we in the Department of Highways and Transportation and in this government have done our best to recognize some of the special needs of the people in northern Saskatchewan as well as the resource sector, as you have pointed out, sir. And if you would, chastise me on a political basis, but please commend the department for the work that they have done and do in the north.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, can you confirm that Transport Canada is planning to shut down or reduce significantly the operations of the aviation regulations office in Regina which, as you know, would mean that pilot licensing, aircraft licensing, and aviation operations licensing in this city would be impaired? Can you tell us what steps you've taken to try to prevent this from taking place?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Yes, I've heard that rumour as well. In the event that it is true, we have taken steps to contact the federal government voicing our opposition to that. I have received no answer at this time.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Minister, I must say that I am very surprised that you have not received any answer from Transport Canada. And I wonder, can you tell this House how it is that Transport Canada and the federal Minister of Transport could be contemplating — indeed actively planning — actively planning this closure without first discussing it with yourself and the provincial government? How is it that they would attempt to do this without your knowledge, sir?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — The information I have is that the officials will be meeting in the near future on this topic, the aviation officials. But I have not received an answer to my letter stating my concerns.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — I guess my question is: how is it possible that the federal government could be actively planning such a move without consulting you first, inasmuch as it does involve transportation? How is that possible?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — For fear of sounding flippant, and I don't mean to do so, sir, the federal government has been doing things without consulting with the provincial government in the recent past, as you are quite well aware. As soon as we caught wind of the rumour, we immediately took steps to voice our opposition. And as I said, officials will be meeting in the near future.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Minister, will you be encouraging the federal government to undertake full public discussion with the aviation industry and other interested parties in Saskatchewan, so that all concerned will have an opportunity to voice their concerns and to put their ideas before any plans are actively carried out?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — As I pointed out, we will be actively discussing these topics with federal officials in the near future. And obviously, we are going to try to make the case for maintaining all the services that we possibly can here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Can I ask you, Mr. Minister, why you've been keeping this a secret up till now? Why has it taken a member of the opposition to raise the question before you're prepared to discuss it?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I would just like to point out to members opposite — and I don't mean to be argumentative, but I will point out that we have been in session for some time. We have been here every day. I've been here. I believe I've only missed one or two days out of the session, and I have not had a question from the hon. member anywhere remotely resembling this particular topic. So there was ample opportunity for the member to voice his concerns about this previously.

Having said that, the answer is quite simple. If it's a rumour, if you hear that someone is contemplating a move, you immediately take steps to verify if they are indeed going in that direction. And then you take steps to try to work out an agreement, preferably one that would be satisfactory to the province, and the one that is satisfactory is to maintain services as they presently are. Our officials will be meeting with the federal officials in the near future to find out exactly what the federal government may have in mind, and I will be more than happy to keep you informed.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — The point is, Mr. Minister, that you've kept this whole issue in the dark. You've kept it a secret. You haven't raised it. It's taken a member of the opposition to make the issue public. And the reason that you've done that is that you hoped that you'd be able to gloss over this issue and to protect the Mulroney government in Ottawa, who again is acting against the interests of Saskatchewan. You're trying to defend him. You're trying to protect him. That's why you're keeping it secret, Mr. Minister. Isn't that the case?

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — Mr. Chairman, that's not the case at all. I believe the member is trying to be provocative and to try to use some fear tactics or scare tactics or what have you. At the present time it is a rumour. We are trying to ascertain whether there is, in fact, any basis to it, and as I said our officials will be determining that in the very near future. And that's exactly where it's at, sir.

Mr. Brockelbank: — Mr. Chairman, I can just get in a quick question here with four short parts before the closing of the committee today. It has to do with the reconstruction of a section of Highway 302, west of Prince Albert.

Mr. Minister, what is the length of the piece that will be reconstructed? Is the section to be paved or only upgraded? Has the tender been let? Who was successful? And when is the construction scheduled to begin?

I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if the minister could make available to us the work array of projects, because he said he'd tabled the document earlier in the session. Now I don't recall getting it. Maybe it wasn't distributed. Could the minister send over 25 copies of the work array and a similar number of the new highway maps? And, Mr. Minister, could you autograph one for me with your picture?

(2200)

Hon. Mr. Petersen: — I don't mean to sound unkind. I do have copies of both the construction project and the highway map. If you are indeed serious, I will send over copies of the construction projects, and I will also extend my invitation to all members of the opposition to at any time come to my office and discuss concerns with me as regards to construction or anything else that you might have.

The question regarding Highway 302 that you asked about, just about 14 kilometres will be constructed this year, and I believe it will be July, August when the tender goes out.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:02 p.m.