

scheme and a more direct involvement of the weir fishermen in the management of the fishery.

TRANSPORT—REQUEST OF ATLANTIC PROVINCES FOR FUNDS
TO IMPROVE TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my short comments tonight is to elaborate on my question of December 2 last to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) with regard to the submission by the transport ministers from the Atlantic region on the desperate need for a highway strengthening program in the Atlantic region. However, as selfish as it may seem, I am particularly concerned about the deterioration of what can only be referred to as a fourth class Trans-Canada Highway in my part of the province in western Newfoundland, particularly between Port aux Basques, through St. George's, Stephenville, Corner Brook and on to Deer Lake. These are five communities which comprise the comparative urban areas of western Newfoundland. This too is part of Canada.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway and connecting links form the basis of an interconnecting highway system which is vital in the building of an economic base for western Newfoundland. While I realize that it must fit in with an over-all transportation plan for the province, the extreme pressure placed upon the use of the present system has indeed reached alarming proportions. The pressure on the increasing use is brought about by the fact that the available system of rail for the transportation of goods and services has deteriorated to a point where the basic industries have had to turn to rubber transport in order to compete in far off markets, and I refer mainly to our basic pulp and paper industry and the linerboard industry in Corner Brook and Stephenville. This has resulted in the increased traffic of tractor-trailors to the point where it is becoming absolutely dangerous for vehicular traffic other than the massive tractor-trailors which have been travelling the roads in ever increasing numbers in the past years. I can only stress that unless something is done on an emergency basis, we will all regret what is likely to happen.

The frustration which I have to endure at the evident procrastination of the government is that it appears that in spite of the countless studies on transportation which have been undertaken, there will now be further delays as a result of the impending appointment of a royal commission to study once again transportation problems in my province, when as recently as 1974 a voluminous study was produced on the trans-Newfoundland corridor transportation. I do not recall how many volumes there were, but volume C on the Trans-Canada Highway gives a complete picture of the conditions, the requirements, the cost, and the expected benefits. It goes into every detail which time will not permit me to go into tonight. I wonder why the government has to await another study before taking any action.

It adds to my frustration to know that there is a fundamental lesson we should all have learnt from history, that the basis of any economy in developing an area to take advantage of its

resources is a proper transportation system. However, to add further to my frustration I read today a news release by the minister announcing a \$30 million agreement for construction and improvement of highways in the northern part of the province of Alberta. I say God bless Alberta, it deserves it, but I ask, how long do we in Newfoundland have to wait for the infrastructure support necessary to give us a transportation base which is so vital to our future economy?

● (2210)

Just yesterday the minister indicated in reply to a question of mine that as a result of meetings with the Atlantic transportation ministers an agreement was reached to divert funds from other programs and to direct those funds toward the highway strengthening program for the Atlantic region. I sincerely hope that this will come about, and while it is a foregone conclusion that the royal commission study will come into effect, I hope the minister will, as he indicated to me previously, demand that the transcorridor study be referred to and become an important part of the relative factors to be considered by the commission to avoid further delays.

Even though the transportation studies will go through another process of delay, it is most important that on an emergency basis implementation of highway improvements take place in Newfoundland, regardless of the over-all acceptance of a policy for the province which will fit in with Canada's over-all new transportation policy, which I hope will be to the benefit of all Canadians.

I hope that the very capable parliamentary secretary to the minister will be able to give me answers which I can relate to the people of Newfoundland, and I hope he will assure them that this necessary transportation system will be made available by the government he represents.

Mr. Marcel Roy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for raising this important matter. I appreciate this opportunity to speak on this subject this evening for two reasons: because of its subject matter, and because the hon. member has raised this matter on a historic day for all Canadians. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) mentioned today during question period the visit of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to the President of the United States.

On March 10, 1976, the Atlantic ministers responsible for highways met with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) in Ottawa. They presented to him with their joint submission for a ten-year highway program of assistance for the provinces to strengthen and improve primary highways in the Atlantic region, including the Trans-Canada Highway. The proposal involved the strengthening and upgrading of more than 2,000 miles of highways in the four provinces.

In the months following the presentation of the submission Transport Canada has carried out an economic analysis of the projects which the Atlantic provinces considered to be of particularly high priority. As the hon. member might appreciate, this has been a time-consuming task, due to the number of