

*Alaska Highway*

**Mr. Paproski:** Stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order No. 4 in the name of the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid).

**An hon. Member:** Stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order No. 10 in the name of the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. O'Sullivan). Shall the order stand?

**Mr. Paproski:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, may I say I think it has been agreed so far as the business from four o'clock to closing is concerned that we would go to order No. 64.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Is it agreed that all the other orders stand?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

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● (1600)

### ALASKA-YUKON HIGHWAY AUTHORITY ACT

#### MEASURE TO DEVELOP CANADIAN SECTION OF ALASKA HIGHWAY

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River)** moved that Bill C-264, to provide for the establishment of the Alaska-Yukon Highway Authority (Alaska Highway), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

He said: Madam Speaker, it was an important decision on the part of the House of Commons to allow this bill to come before us in today's private members' hour, which was to be just about the last private members' hour in this session. I am delighted at the fact that even after this most important measure has been referred to committee it will be possible for other private members to bring other matters before the House which are undoubtedly equally important.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** And get the same treatment.

**Mr. Oberle:** This bill is timely for another reason, because recently certain actions have been taken in the United States which have an effect on the subject which we are discussing this afternoon. The government of the United States has passed a bill, signed by the president, which concerns itself with this great and historic road link.

I have just received a report from my most distinguished counterpart in the U.S., Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska, regarding the federal action of the government of the U.S., which I would like to put on the record. It reads as follows:

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 . . . authorizing reconstruction work on the Alaska and Haines Cutoff Highways, requires that prior to the expenditure of funds by the United States an agreement must be reached between the United States and Canada covering all conditions under which the highway is to be built. During discussions in January of 1975, Canadian officials advised U.S. highway representatives that

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Canada could not agree to hold the right-of-way for this highway forever inviolate. This requirement was contained in Public Law 93-87 authorizing the reconstruction project. All other provisions of the agreement were tentatively agreed to by representatives of the Canadian and U.S. governments.

In order to remove this restriction and get the project moving, legislation was introduced on March 19 which would require that Canada provide "all necessary right-of-way". The bill passed the Senate on September 4, was referred to the House and was passed by that body on December 1. On December 12, President Ford signed the legislation into law.

With this restriction removed, hopefully the tentative agreement between the U.S. and Canada can soon be finalized. The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) reported that the agreement had been sent to Canada's Public Works Department. The agreement will ultimately come before the Canadian cabinet for its consideration.

FHA reports that the groundwork has been laid for the environmental impact study. Engineering plans for the project are also quite well along. However, until the agreement is finalized no funds can be committed and construction will continue to be delayed.

Why should the U.S. government be concerned about the Alaska highway? Later on in my comments I will touch on that briefly because, after all, it was the U.S. government which built this great road link in the first place.

The section with which the U.S. government is concerned at present is the section which would tie that portion of Alaska, which is known as the panhandle, with the other parts of Alaska. In other words, residents of Fairbanks, Cordoba and Anchorage will be able to travel to Juneau, and in order to do that they will have to travel through the Yukon territory and indeed through portions of British Columbia, through the constituency represented by the hon. member for Skeena (Mrs. Campagnolo). I have great hope that since my colleague, the hon. member for Skeena, is in the House today and, I understand, will be addressing herself to the subject, she will probably allow this bill to go to committee for discussion as I know that she also is extremely interested in achieving the goal which my bill hopes to achieve.

If you will allow me, Madam Speaker, I would like to give a brief history of the Alaska highway. The construction of the Alaska highway had been proposed for many years before the outbreak of World War II. However, it was not until the Japanese occupied some of the Aleutian Islands and threatened the air ferry supply to Russia that a highway was actively considered.

Construction of a pioneer road by engineer troops followed rapidly on the heels of the location crews. Speed was the first consideration and this road detoured around swamps, gullies, rock knolls and other obstructions, resulting in a very crooked road with many step grades. Many of these crooks and crannies are still in the Alaska highway today.

After August, 1942, efforts were directed to getting the pioneer trail converted to a passable road at the earliest possible moment. This road disregarded the public roads administration procedures, where design alignment and grade would delay completion, and followed the path of least resistance. In March, 1943, instructions were issued to complete the work at the minimum possible cost and standards were reduced still further. Road construction ceased in October, 1943, but bridge construction continued until 1944. The resulting highway, while passable and providing a good gravel driving surface, had geometrics of a varying but generally poor standard.