

**Mr. Lesage:** In this case it does apply only to this department, but I believe the Minister of Public Works himself would be in a better position to announce government policy. I believe the Minister of Finance can announce government policy in that connection. It was formulated before I was a member of the cabinet.

**Mr. Abbott:** As my hon. friend is aware, the general policy under the Public Works Act is that the Minister of Public Works and the Department of Public Works are responsible for constructing and operating government buildings. There are some exceptions. For instance, in the Department of Transport construction contracts are let directly by that department. But the general rule is that the Department of Public Works has that responsibility. The trend has been continually toward taking that particular responsibility from other departments who may be handling these matters and placing it in the Department of Public Works.

**Mr. Green:** Has there been any change in government policy recently in this regard?

**Mr. Abbott:** No.

**Mr. Green:** I ask that question for this reason. When the Senate finance committee brought in its report on June 23, 1952, it recommended strongly that an end should be put to this business of many of the departments setting up their own little public works branches rather than giving the work to the Department of Public Works. The recommendation read in this way:

The growing practice for other departments of government to bypass public works department and build up little public works branches of their own should cease, and all such work placed in charge of the public works department, where the law intended it should be.

The new minister tells the committee that, so far as he is concerned, he believes this change which is made in the bill changing the name of his department applies only to that department, and that there is no change in general government policy. What I want to know is whether the government is now following the suggestion laid down by the Senate committee; and if so, what other steps are being taken to bring about that change?

**Mr. Abbott:** That recommendation of the Senate committee certainly has the whole-hearted support of the Minister of Finance. In this case this new act will now eliminate the reference to the responsibility of the minister of that department for housing and transfer it to the Department of Public Works. Certain other cases are now under consideration. As my hon. friend appreciates, there is a new Minister of Public Works and

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a new deputy minister of public works. At the moment the feeling is that the new minister should have a little more time in which to familiarize himself with the operation of his department before any major transfers are made. I can assure my hon. friend that the government is anxious to accomplish what the Senate committee had in mind and what we have been working toward.

**Mr. Green:** It is the intention then to get these other departments out of the public works business?

**Mr. Abbott:** Oh, yes.

**The Chairman:** Order. I do not think I should permit any continuation of this discussion. The minister has answered the hon. member's question with regard to clause 7. I do not think I should allow general discussion of other policy.

**Mr. Green:** I am through, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Nicholson:** Can the minister give the committee some indication as to the amount of funds which are to be available? Under subsection 2 the minister may co-operate with the provinces and with municipalities in carrying out any conservation or development plans under subsection 1. I had a telegram from the Flin Flon chamber of commerce this morning which pointed out important developments in the Flin Flon area. The minister is to meet the minister of highways of Saskatchewan on Tuesday, I understand. I wonder whether the minister or the Minister of Finance can indicate what the situation will be when the new department is set up, or as to how generous the treasury is going to be in making funds available for carrying out the purpose of a section like subsection 2?

**Mr. Lesage:** I do not believe it is the policy of any department or of the government to give any figures as to the estimates before the estimates are tabled in the house. I will certainly be delighted to have a talk with the Saskatchewan minister of highways and transportation, Mr. Douglas, on Tuesday next. We will look into every angle of any problem that he wants to submit for my consideration. He certainly will be well received.

**Mr. Green:** In this section there is provision for the department to carry on research. That provision seems to conflict with the national research council. Can the minister tell us what type of research is now being carried on by his department and what kind is to be carried on in the future?

**Mr. Lesage:** Forestry research and wood utilization research. We also provide some grants for the pulp and paper research institute in Montreal. We have forest products