

marvellous resources of the Dominion and in keeping with the splendid opportunities offered at present and certain to follow in the golden age after the war."

Mr. Keith referred to the fact that about 1,000 members of the Engineering Institute, or nearly one-third of the membership, are or have been in active service at the front.

## PROVINCIAL POLICY OF ALBERTA IN FINANCING ROADS\*

By L. C. Charlesworth

Deputy Minister of Public Works, Alberta

I HAVE been asked to say something with regard to "The Provincial Policy of Alberta as to the Financing of Roads." I am not just sure what phase of the question it is desired that I should discuss, but there are several different angles from which the subject may be approached, any one of which opens up a wide field. At first thought, "the provincial policy of Alberta as to the financing of roads" appears to mean the question of raising the money which is spent on roads by the province. This leads us to the question of what roads the province is to assume responsibility for, and the extent of that responsibility.

There is also the question of how good, *i.e.*, how expensive, a road is justified in each particular case.

In practice generally, the commonest financing question to be solved is, how to build a road costing two or three thousand dollars, which is absolutely needed, with one thousand dollars, which is all there is available for the purpose.

So far as Alberta is concerned, the passing at the last session of the legislature of an act entitled "The Public Highways Act," has settled for the time being some of these questions. This act provides for the division of all the highways in the province into three classes—main highways, district highways, local highways, and the responsibility for the cost of construction and maintenance of a highway of any class is specifically set out in the act, as is also the proportion of the cost to be borne by the province and by the local authority of the municipality within which the highway lies.

### Main Highways

Main highways are defined as "Such highways as the minister of public works deems to be of prime importance, either by reason of being trunk channels of communication between the more important cities and towns of the province, or with the main travelled roads, situate outside and adjoining the province, or for other good reasons." The location of these main highways is established only after consultation with the municipal authorities in the municipal districts within which they lie, and the route is then laid down exactly upon a map. This map forms the basis of an order-in-council establishing the road as a "main highway" under the act.

The cost of construction of these main highways is to be borne jointly by the Department of Public Works and the local authorities in the proportion of seventy-five and twenty-five per cent. respectively, and the cost of maintenance is to be borne entirely by the department.

"District highways" are those which the minister considers to be of less importance generally than main

highways, but still of considerable local importance. Their location is to be established by order-in-council in the same manner as main highways, but only after agreement with the municipal authorities of the districts through which they are intended to run. The cost of construction is to be borne by the department and the local authorities jointly in the proportion of twenty-five and seventy-five per cent. respectively, and the cost of maintenance is to be borne entirely by the local authorities. In the case of district highways, the minister may direct that districts through which the highway does not in fact pass, shall contribute towards both the original cost of construction and the cost of maintenance. This provision is made because the case may frequently occur where the people most in need of a particular road to a market town reside in another municipal district.

### Local Highways

"Local highways" are all such highways in the province as are not classified as main or district highways, and they are to be constructed and maintained entirely at the expense of the local authorities within whose district they are situated.

The control of construction shall, in the case of main highways, be under the Department of Public Works, and in the case of district highways, either under the department or the local authorities as agreed upon, and in default of agreement, under the department, and in the case of local highways, under the local authorities.

Provision is made in the act for recovery by the department from the local authorities of their proper proportion of the cost of highways constructed.

Provision is also made that where the local authorities fail to properly maintain a district highway after sufficient notice, the department may step in and properly repair and maintain the same, and recover the cost of so doing from the local authorities.

A highway under the act by definition includes any bridges thereon, but a special clause in the act provides that the department may repair any bridge on any highway in case of flood or accident, and where the legislature votes the money for the purpose may build or rebuild any bridge. This provision was made, doubtless, because it was felt that in many cases bridges of the larger sizes were often beyond the financial ability of the local authorities, and that they had not sufficient experience or equipment to deal with such matters as efficiently as the department.

The minister is given power to make rules for the control of all traffic and vehicles on any highway. These rules will probably include some regulations as to the permissible load upon tires of different widths.

The act does not come into force in its totality until the first day of January, 1919, and in the meantime preparation is being made for the classification of the highways of the province.

### Not Yet in Operation

As we have not yet operated under the act, we are not in a position to give any idea as to where its weaknesses lie. Doubtless it has faults, which can only be made apparent by its application, but we believe it to be a step in advance towards a system of roads in the province.

These remarks seem to have developed into an explanation of The Public Highways Act of Alberta more than a discussion of the financing of roads, but I trust they may be of some interest.

So far we have only earth roads, and there is no question but that for a long time to come the great majority

\*Paper prepared for the Engineering Institute of Canada, and read by J. D. Robertson at the Saskatoon Meeting.