

*Trans-Canada Highway Act*

the trans-Canada highway. As the Minister of Public Works has pointed out, and I do not want to be unfair to other provinces, there are a number of provinces that are close behind. Given some time, and perhaps a different look so far as financial policy is concerned from the Minister of Finance, they will be able to obtain the provincial funds necessary to complete the building of their sections of the trans-Canada highway under this partnership arrangement.

There are a number of things that should be done, and I suggest there are a number of reasons why there should be an expanded program. There is a need, I would suggest, for an expanded highway program to meet increased automobile traffic in the years ahead. The whole question of traffic on the provincial highway systems and the question of traffic through cities, is one which causes a measure of concern to every provincial government and to most municipal governments. Canadians are asking this government to play a more substantial role in the provision of highway services in this country. We are probably 40 years behind the United States in our federal highway program. I believe that is too great a distance to be behind the United States in the development of such a highway program. Admittedly, for a country with as small a population as ours, and our vast distances, it poses a very difficult problem.

However, even though it is a difficult problem, our need for this kind of federal transportation policy is probably even greater than that of a country like the United States which is more densely populated. There is another great advantage to Canada in the development of a trans-Canada highway system, the development at any rate of a system of interprovincial and intraprovincial highways as well as interurban highways, and that is the great attraction that these facilities provide to tourists coming into Canada. The greater the number of tourists who come to our country to use our roads, the greater the revenues to all levels of government in this country. Certainly the provision of an adequate system of highways is most important in attracting tourists.

There is another urgent reason at this time why there should be an expansion of the federal government's role in the building of highways. We have a very substantial number of unemployed and the extension of the highway system would assist in putting people to work and in dealing with the whole question of unemployment. We have the resources available for the building of further trans-Canada highways, north and south roads and a more adequate highway system in this

country. When the former administration undertook this program back in 1949 it was at a time when there was still some argument that equipment was scarce. We had something approaching full employment, and the federal government at that time could say that in embarking upon an expanded highway program they were merely competing for the resources that were being already fully utilized.

This can no longer be said because resources for building highways are at hand and, in certain instances, are idle. They should be put to work. I would ask the minister at this time to give consideration to the building of the second trans-Canada highway, as it has been named, as well as provision for a program for building north-south roads, a program providing federal money for other main roads and providing federal money for roads going through urban centres. I have also brought to the attention of the Prime Minister the fact that Senator Neuberger of Oregon has a bill before the United States congress asking congress to provide money for paving, on a joint basis with Canada, the Alaska highway. I think that is a suggestion that should not be turned down, as the Prime Minister has already done, but is something that the Canadian government itself should support and promote, both because it would be providing an excellent highway for the people whom it serves and would be providing services that would undoubtedly increase the tourist traffic within our country.

I want to ask the minister whether any consideration has been given to the calling of a highway conference to discuss an expanded highway program in this country. I would ask the minister what study, if any, has been made within his department of the road needs of this country and the method, if possible, of the federal government's participation in a second trans-Canada highway, shall we say, or in main north-south highways? I would ask the minister whether his department, in the light of severe unemployment in this country, has made any study of the labour content of highway construction? To what extent can a program of expanded highway construction in this country provide employment for people who are now out of work? This might not be the kind of work that lends itself to winter employment, but it is certainly the kind of work that lends itself to summer employment, and from all indications it would seem Canadians will need expanded programs of many kinds if we are to reduce, during the summer, to a very low figure the very high levels of unemployment that now exist.