

taken in these branches, on which government money grants have been made.

In the earlier years of the work of the highways board, it was determined that a main road system should be evolved, in the older settled districts, which could be gradually developed and extended as the settlement areas enlarged and the locations of market towns and elevator points were determined by future steam railroad lines being constructed, and the co-operation of the rural municipalities was sought in order to evolve this main road system in such a way as would meet, as far as possible, the wishes of the people themselves and thus avoid the criticism of being arbitrary in the selections of these main road locations or of neglecting to consult those who would be forced to use the roads; and it was even then felt that the government money grants should be used in developing this system, while the rural municipalities could look after the local feeder roads connecting into the accepted main market roads.

It was also considered that the municipalities should assume the responsibility and the cost of maintaining all such main roads on which government grants had been given, and all contracts carried such a provision. But it was soon discovered that the changing of municipal councils from year to year meant changing ideas of what were to be regarded as main roads in the various municipalities, and the highway board was besieged each year with deputations pressing for consideration of their various new locations, and it became impossible to permit all of the changes thus suggested.

Maintenance Difficulties

It was also found that, by the great majority of the municipalities, the principle in the contracts relating to maintenance of roads already built was not thoroughly understood, or to some extent not fully recognized. These difficulties were contended with by a continual pressure on the part of the department to improve conditions until the end of 1917, when it was decided to work out a definite approved main road scheme covering the total settled area of the province, and to have all provincial money grants used in developing this main road system. In this work the department sought co-operation with the local members of the legislature and the municipal councils, and other sources from which information might be obtained. The plan has been practically advanced to completion except in those sections where new railroad lines may be constructed and new towns located, or where it is impossible to determine what would be the future needs of these localities.

To stimulate interest in the maintenance of roads already improved, a road-drag competition was instituted in 1913, and all rural municipalities were encouraged to enter selected sections of roads in this competition. Suitable prizes were given in each of the five districts into which the organized municipalities were grouped; and all available data on the beneficial results of the systematic use of the road-drag sent out to all these municipalities. It was felt that the many miles of main and feeder roads already constructed at heavy expense were in danger of being destroyed, and of requiring, if neglect continued, additional large expenditures for reconstruction simply for want of maintenance, and this competition was instituted to encourage the municipalities to undertake this maintenance work, as well as to demonstrate the effectiveness and cheapness of the method of carrying it out.

Road-Drag Competition

In the seven years during which this competition has been held, 145 rural municipalities have, at one time or another, entered a section of road in this competition; 58 have been in for one year, 29 for two years, 19 for three years, 15 for four years, 12 for five years, 9 for six years, and 3 for the full seven years. Six municipalities have been in continuously for the past six years, and five others continuously for the last five years. These figures indicate, to some extent, a lack of sustained interest in road maintenance work, and it is apparent that some accentuated energy must be applied to keep the provincial main roads in shape.

This descriptive historical sketch of the attempts made in the past towards a comprehensive workable system of improved roads throughout the province has been written partially to show the great difficulties to be contended with in a province of the extent of Saskatchewan, with sparsely settled areas, with over 200,000 miles of road allowances, and with constantly changing road requirements due to railroad extensions and the establishment of new market towns or elevator points, and partly to indicate the sustained interest taken by the government of the province in the effort to improve conditions for the benefit and comfort of those settling on the prairies and in the more broken wooded areas in the north.

Department as Now Organized

The department, as now organized, is controlled by a deputy minister, who is responsible to the minister of highways, with a working staff as follows:—

1. A chief engineer and superintendent of highways, who has complete charge of the construction program of the department, and who controls the ten divisional superintendents, the engineering staffs of the bridges and roads branches and the road-drag competition inspectors.

2. A director of surveys and town planning engineer, who controls the district surveyors and the town-site engineer, and has charge of all surveys for town-sites, new railroad location plans and road diversions, and also has charge of all drainage works undertaken as local improvements under the Drainage Act of the province.

3. A chief clerk and superintendent of ferries, who has charge of the purchasing and handling of materials and supplies, the control of the correspondence and office staff, the accounting work of the department and supervision over the ferry inspector, who controls all the ferries operating in the province.

The legislature votes an appropriation for the Highways Department which is divided into amounts for salaries, superintendence and supplies, capital bridges, roads, revenue bridges and repairs. The capital bridge expenditure is handled entirely by the engineering staff of the bridge branch after the locations have been determined, and which generally are determined on the recommendation of the local divisional superintendent, confirmed by the superintendent of highways and the deputy minister. Plans and specifications are then prepared, and all such works are handled by contract under inspection of a resident inspector.

Division Based on Constituencies

The amount set apart for road work and revenue bridge construction and repairs is divided by the minister on the basis of the constituency unit, four factors being taken into consideration in making the division: First, and most important, the area of the constituency; second, the population of the constituency, as a well-settled district would be reasonably entitled to more grant than one sparsely settled; third, the railway facilities enjoyed by the district, as where these are plentiful, fewer roads are required; and fourth, the topography, difficulties of opening up the district and the consequent cost of construction. Perfection is not claimed for this method of considering the constituency as the unit of allotment of funds, but on the whole it has worked out satisfactorily.

The divisional superintendents of the department, after consulting with the interested local members of the legislature and the rural municipalities concerned, then make their recommendations of what new bridges are required and what sections of our approved main roads should receive attention during the current year.

These recommendations are carefully checked and considered, together with all other information which may come into the department, and, when approved, the bridges are placed on a construction schedule, to be built by special bridge crews working under the department's control. The road work is handled either by contract with the municipality, under which it performs the work and is paid the money grant after the work has been inspected and passed by the divisional superintendent, or is carried out by a government