

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

## INQUIRY AS TO DISTRIBUTION

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. Donald M. Fleming (Eglinton):** May I direct this question to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, in the absence of the minister? When will he be in a position to make available for distribution copies of the public accounts? The public accounts were tabled three weeks ago today, and at that time the parliamentary assistant said that they would be available for distribution within a few days. That was on October 31.

**Mr. James Sinclair (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance):** That was the understanding at that time, because they were in the hands of the king's printer. I shall make inquiries and give an answer tomorrow.

## TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY

## PROVISION FOR FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROVINCES

**Hon. Robert H. Winters (Minister of Reconstruction and Supply)** moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to encourage and assist in the construction of a trans-Canada highway and to provide for this purpose that the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply may enter into agreements with any provinces providing for the payment by Canada to those provinces of contributions in respect of the cost of a trans-Canada highway; with provision also for the employment of temporary engineers, technical officers and other employees for the purpose of the act.

**Mr. Green:** Is the minister going to make a statement?

**Mr. Winters:** I have a short statement. I could make it in committee.

**Mr. Green:** We should like to have it now.

**Mr. Coldwell:** Make it now.

**Mr. Winters:** Before I make my statement on this resolution, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to the notice of motion for the production of papers, in *Votes and Proceedings* No. 4 of September 20, standing in the name of the hon. member for Lake Centre, and I should like to table the correspondence with those provinces which have registered no objection.

This resolution deals with a proposal to provide assistance to provincial governments toward the completion of a trans-Canada highway. This project is one for which there has been a popular demand and an increasing need. It is now timely to bring the project to realization.

*Trans-Canada Highway*

Since the termination in 1927 of federal assistance under the Highways Act, 1919, aid given by the federal government to provinces for highway construction has amounted to \$28,650,000. This aid was extended during the years 1931-1939 for the purpose of relieving unemployment, and was largely spent on portions of a contemplated trans-Canada route.

Most provincial governments would have great difficulty in assuming alone the financial burden of completing a trans-Canada route to adequate standards, in addition to the demand for annual outlays covering capital expenditures and maintenance costs on their over-all highway systems. Under the circumstances, and because such a highway will have some national complexion, assistance from the federal government appears warranted.

When completed, the interprovincial or trans-Canada route of approximately 5,000 miles should assist in the development of trade and of natural resources, as well as our tourist industry.

Though first conceived as a direct link for through highway traffic between Halifax and Vancouver, it is now contemplated that the highway will extend beyond the Canadian mainland, on to Vancouver island, Cape Breton island, and the insular provinces of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Thus it would become a joint project with a portion of it in each of the ten provinces.

The federal government's concept of the highway is not that of a superhighway for high-speed traffic from coast to coast. It is rather that of a first-class, hard-surfaced road which should follow the shortest practical east-west route across Canada and through each of the provinces, consistent with the needs of the provinces and of Canada as a whole.

The highway, excepting those portions in national parks, when completed would remain, in each of the provinces, the property and responsibility of the province. The federal government's purpose is to encourage and assist the provinces in the construction and completion of the project.

A federal-provincial conference was held in Ottawa on December 14 and 15, 1948, to discuss problems related to a trans-Canada highway. At that time the provinces indicated in a broad, general sense that they favoured the project.

As a preliminary step toward the enactment of enabling legislation a resolution was placed on the order paper during the fifth session of the 20th parliament. However, since all provinces had not formally indicated