

DETAILS PRESENTED OF WORK BEING DONE ON ONTARIO'S ROADS

Hon. George S. Henry Says Experience Shows That Statute Labor Yields in Efficiency to Contract Plan, and Gives Details as to Townships' Benefit by Government Aid

DEPARTMENT'S AIM IS UNIFORMITY

A detailed outline of the affairs of the Provincial Department of Highways was given in the Legislature yesterday afternoon by Hon. George S. Henry, Minister of Highways and Public Works.

When second reading was called for a series of bills having to do with the roadways of the Province, Mr. Henry took the occasion to describe the affairs of his department at length.

Mr. Henry referred to the passing of the toll road system. In 1926 the Florence Toll Road was taken over by the County of Lambton, marking the exit of the old order.

Statute labor was also rapidly vanishing. Actual experiment had proved that statute labor was only about 33 per cent. efficient, and that the work on the roads could be done three times as cheaply by contract. The extent to which the townships had benefited by Provincial aid, he said, was as follows: 1920, \$340,973; 1921, \$708,486; 1922, \$649,601; 1923, \$614,037; 1924, \$638,940; 1925, \$988,633; 1926, \$1,270,000.

Sketches Roads System.

Mr. Henry traced briefly the expansion of the county road system since the inauguration of the Highway Improvement Act in 1901, when a subsidy of 33 1-3 per cent. was offered, down to the present time, with the passing in 1925 of legislation raising the subsidy to 50 per cent. At present, he said, the mileage of county roads was 8,304, including a substantial amount of permanent roadway, such as bituminous macadam and asphaltic concrete.

As for suburban roads, to which the Province contributes 50 per cent., and counties and cities 25 per cent., each, it was stated that the mileage now totalled 693.

The general policy of the department, he said, had been the enlargement of road units with the object of securing more uniformity. Local, or township, roads had developed into county roads, and these in turn had become Provincial highways. Centralization of control had been growing, with the result that more uniformity was being obtained. Altogether the total mileage of the various roads was over 52,000. Total expenditure on these roads was \$151,672,812.56, made up as follows: County roads, \$71,777,641.89; township roads, \$21,404,913.63; Provincial highways, \$58,490,812.04.

It was significant of the trend of road legislation, he declared, that the Province had borne more than half the burden, having spent \$8,578,699 more than the counties and townships. In 1925 the total expenditure on the various systems amounted to \$16,599,291.99, while in 1926 the amount spent was \$15,564,756.93, unfavorable weather restricting the program that had been mapped out.

Sources of Revenue.

Speaking of sources of revenue to meet these expenditures, Hon. Mr. Henry referred to the gasoline tax. For the fiscal year ending Oct. 31, 1926, gross revenue from the tax was \$3,533,744.82, while \$157,054.26 was given back in rebates, leaving net revenue of \$3,376,690.56. There were indications, he said, that a still larger revenue would be derived from the tax during the current year. The increase in November over the same month in 1925 was \$59,000, while the increase in December was \$25,500. These, he noted, were low months of consumption, and it was estimated that there should be an increase, taking into account increased automobile registrations, of \$400,000, which would bring the revenue for 1926-27 to \$3,750,000.

Revenue from motor vehicle registrations, he noted, was \$6,415,713.05 for the last fiscal year. The main items in this figure were: Automobile permits, \$5,032,427.85; commercial permits, \$1,079,656.03, and public vehicles, \$87,085.26. Owing to the \$5 reduction in license fees there would be a drop in this revenue during the coming year of about \$1,500,000, as 343,992 cars were registered last year. This would be offset to some extent, however, by an increase in registration.

Reference was made to the increase in motor busses. On Dec. 31, 1926, there were licensed in Ontario 110 operators, with 340 vehicles, having an estimated value of \$3,000,000. Last year these buses contributed \$87,000 to the Treasury.

Ontario Assessment.

The assessment of Ontario for road purposes, Hon. Mr. Henry pointed out, was \$2,759,851,641, on which a 2 1/2-mill rate would produce \$6,899,627 annually. The cities and separated towns would pay 61.5 per cent.; the townships 28 per cent. and the towns and villages 10.5 per cent. The main burden would fall on Toronto, which would have to pay \$2,128,000, or 31 per cent. Hamilton would contribute \$376,000; Ottawa, \$353,800; London, \$178,000 and Windsor \$158,000. These five cities alone would pay \$3,252,800, or about 46 per cent.

More Money for Counties.

When Mr. Henry had concluded E. Proulx (Liberal, Prescott) suggested that, if the Government took over the maintenance costs with which the counties are assessed, the counties would have more funds to build roads. The mileage would be extended, said he, and so the Government might wait a year or two before extending the roadwork, take over the county maintenance, and still have the same result.

Second reading was then given to three highway measures, which had been explained in the House on previous occasions, namely, the amendment to the Highway Improvement Act, 1926; the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, 1923, and the amendment to the Public Vehicles Act, 1923.

Mining Measures.

Second reading was also given yesterday to Government measures to revise and consolidate the mining laws of Ontario, to amend the Mining Tax Act, and to confirm an agreement between the Township of Stamford and the Hydro Power Commission, and also to seven private bills.

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE TO MAKE PROTEST ON CANAL CHARTER

Prime Minister to Introduce Resolution Which House Is Expected to Support

MR. RANEY IS FAVORABLE

Says He Agrees With Premier That Provincial Rights Are Endangered

The Ontario Legislature will shortly endorse, it is believed, Premier Ferguson's protest against the renewal by the Dominion Parliament of charter rights to the Sifton interests for the canalization of the water route through the Ottawa River to the Georgian Bay.

A query in the House yesterday from Hon. W. E. Raney, Progressive Leader, drew from the Prime Minister the admission that he had in preparation at the present time a resolution that would register an emphatic protest to Ottawa from the people of Ontario. The resolution, which he expected to bring down on Monday, will steer clear of party bias entirely.

Raney Is in Accord.

Mr. Raney, in voicing his query, declared his hearty accord with former statements of the Prime Minister to the effect that renewal of the charter in question would "rob the people of Ontario of their rights."

"While," he continued, "I am not in favor of advising Ottawa on questions of policy under the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada, when such questions affect constitutional or property rights in the Province, I have no hesitation in approving any action which will indicate the attitude of this Legislature."

"I am aware, of course, that the statement of the Prime Minister of the Province carries weight, but there are 37 members on this side of the House, who, I believe, are also in agreement, and it is a question whether whatever action be taken by the Government, the voice of all parties might not have greater weight before the Parliament of Canada. I would like to inquire whether the Prime Minister intends to submit a resolution along the lines of the contents of his statement of this morning, so that the members of the House may go on record as supporting such a statement."

Announcing that the resolution was even then in course of preparation, Premier Ferguson said that his issuance of the statement had been "almost an emergency measure."

What Ontario Thinks About It.

"I wanted to indicate to the people of this Province and to the members of the Federal House," said he, "the feeling of Ontario in regard to this matter. I do not propose to bring in a resolution which in any way might be taken as having a party bias. My whole idea is to make an emphatic protest to Ottawa on behalf of the people of this Province."