

this position by authorizing certain amounts for expenditure by the local authorities as soon as the estimates are framed. By so doing, certain urgent works can be put in hand several months earlier than if these works had to await the passing of the estimates before the works could be authorized.

The system of framing the allocations in accordance with certain factors such as area, population, estimates of completion of roads, values, undeveloped lands, &c., has again been adopted. There has been much satisfaction expressed at the adoption of the principle by which the local authorities and the officers of the Department mutually confer as to the interests of the districts concerned. By this means more cordial relations have been established, and by mutual agreement certain works that would under ordinary circumstances have been included in the estimates have given place to others having superior claims for inclusion.

In consequence of the diminished demand for sections in the backblocks, the expenditure in connection with the roading under land-for-settlements vote for the current year has been somewhat less than usual.

It is satisfactory that during the past year there has been less occasion to deal with unemployment than during recent years, and consequently the claims that works should be started to relieve the labour-market have been even fewer than during the previous year.

There are now in various parts throughout the Dominion lengthy sections of roads for which engineering surveys have been made, and which are ready for work when sufficient funds become available, or when labour conditions indicate that they could with advantage be put in hand.

#### MAIN HIGHWAYS.

In accordance with the Main Highways Act, the Main Highways Board was to have come into operation at a date not earlier than 1st April, 1924, but owing to various unavoidable delays it was the 9th June, 1924, before the principal schedule of main highways was declared. From that date the whole of these main highways came under the operations of the Act.

The length of main highways already declared is approximately 6,008 miles, of which a considerable number in sparsely settled districts have been declared Government roads, in order that the Board may be able to contribute to their construction and maintenance on a more liberal basis than is legally possible in connection with the ordinary main highways. There have been legal difficulties in the initiatory process incidental to the commencement of works, and certain amendments to the Act are required before the local authorities can proceed with their proposals. Everything is now in readiness to permit of works being vigorously prosecuted as soon as these legal difficulties have been overcome.

The Dominion has been divided into eighteen highway districts. For all of these districts Highway Councils have been constituted, and, generally, everything is in train for the carrying-out of the intentions of the Main Highways Act.

The actual proposals for work as a rule, and except in the case of Government roads, originate with the County Councils. These proposals are forwarded through the District Highway Councils to the Board. Already numerous proposals have been received, and in the majority of cases are for the surfacing of roads in a manner suitable for modern conditions. The specifications for such surfacing range from ordinary gravel to bituminous concrete, and in a few cases cement concrete.

In the majority of cases only provisional approval could be given to these proposals, as it was necessary to await the passing of the estimates for the current year under the Construction Account of the Main Highways Board.

There have been many applications urging the declaration of additional highways, as there have also been many claims that roads which have been declared main highways should also be declared Government roads, in order to secure more liberal treatment in terms of section 22 of the Main Highways Act; also numerous requests from boroughs that the Board should take over control of certain streets that have proved to be difficult to maintain on account of the excessive amount of foreign traffic. The first report by the Board will be due as soon as practicable after 1st April, 1925.