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JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

House Question

April 3, 2008

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as you know, one of the most pressing issues in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is the extension of Highway 417 through and beyond the town of Arnprior. There have been some recent rumblings that work on that project is going to recommence. I'd ask you today if you could tell us what plans your ministry has for the extension of 417 this year.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thank the member for the question. It's an excellent question. Our government, as you know, is investing record amounts of money in keeping our highways in good repair and reducing congestion and improving safety and promoting the economy. In 2008-09, we're spending \$927 million for that purpose.

I know the member has read the budget and this is where he and I picked this up. On page 38 it mentions exactly what he said: "Another new project includes capacity improvements to Highway 17 near Arnprior in eastern Ontario to address growing traffic and enhance safety." So I know what he's looking for would be the detail in that particular case.

The ministry staff held a public information centre for the area last week and municipal councils were informed of this funding. So all funding is in place; he'd be happy to know that. Funding for the construction of phase one from Rural Route 29 to Division Street is in place and construction will start in 2009 and complete in 2011.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a small part of the phase. Municipal leaders have told us continually that we need ongoing and continuous progress on this file. That's a little bit of work and we do we appreciate it. The previous government brought that highway to Arnprior. What we need now is continuous progress beyond. You will know that the federal government has given strong indication that they are prepared to share in the cost of this project, should the province make it one of their priorities.

Will you commit to putting in your five-year plan ongoing progress on 417 through Arnprior to Renfrew and beyond?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, a very understandable question. It's interesting, though, I must say as a preamble, that the federal government is going to fund all of these projects individually—they talk about them when members bring them forward—but that would mean a lot more federal money coming in. We would welcome that and I'd get my friend to help me out in that regard.

A detailed design for phase two from just west of Division to Scheel Drive is under way. The public has been participating in the design through the public advisory committee. Two public information centres have already been held and funding approval for construction of phase two will be considered in future budgets. But we're doing the work ahead of time so we can get the projects moving as quickly as possible. The timing of construction for phase two will be determined upon receiving funding for approval for construction.

I know the member and I will both be advocating for as much funding as we can with our good colleagues in government. I'm glad to have his support for this particular initiative.