

campaigns on the part of many of the retail-supply authorities, a phenomenal increase being noticeable in the electric-cooking and electric-waterheating side of the business.

The statistics also indicate that during the past year 15,054 new consumers have been connected at an average rate of approximately 1,250 per month, and the completed figures for the year show that the ratio of number of consumers of electricity to the total population of the Dominion (1,577,109) is 23·5 per cent., or 25·4 per cent. of population in areas supplied with electricity.

The statistical data relative to each electric-supply authority will be found in the series of tables accompanying the report of the Chief Electrical Engineer.

SETTLEMENT AND OTHER ROADS.

The net expenditure from capital funds on work of this description during the last financial year amounted to £913,720, as compared with £444,377 for the previous period, an increase of £469,343. Although a considerable proportion of this expenditure has been incurred in the construction and bridging of what might be termed the uncompleted main connections in the Dominion's secondary roading-system, it has been possible to give greater attention than ever before to the improvement of settlement roads, particularly those in isolated areas.

In my Public Works Statement of last year I expressed the view that, while primary production had been developed intensively in districts served by good all-weather roads, it was practically impossible to expect similar progress, and least of all sustained progress, of areas yet without proper facilities for the transport of materials and produce.

My Department's operations on direct settlement roads during the year comprised the re-formation, or formation, of 465 miles of roads as against 336 miles for the previous period, and the metalling of 792 miles, compared with 645 miles for the previous year.

Although special attention is being given to improving roading development in country districts, it cannot be assumed that the individual circumstances of each settlement or each instance of clay-road access will justify national expenditure, but it is undoubtedly true that where further settlement or greater development is possible there is need of just such a measure of assistance as would encourage the further and more profitable use of these areas. Accordingly, it is my earnest desire to concentrate still further on the question of improving the road access to settlements wherever possible, not only in the knowledge that all-weather roads are necessary to the successful farming of our backblocks areas, but in the view that reasonable road access is indispensable to community well-being, involving such important interests as those of education, public health, and commerce.

Greater subsidies were made available towards the cost of bridging, which, without financial help of this description, would impose too great a burden on the local authorities and ratepayers. During the period under review my Department undertook expenditure, or assisted towards the expenditure, in respect of 166 bridges, totalling 10,890 ft. in length. Bridge-construction is a sphere where methods and practice have advanced greatly of recent years, with the result that it is now possible to design and build bridges in permanent materials at a reasonable cost. I have continually advocated the building of bridges of this description, and it is assuring to observe that local bodies throughout the Dominion are ready and anxious to adopt these modern designs, and so ensure to themselves and their ratepayers not only reduced maintenance costs, but also longer service from these bridges. The advice and guidance of the Department's engineers is gladly given, and many instances of severe flood damage to bridges have confirmed my view that local authorities should take every opportunity of conferring with the Department's representatives when considering the design of new structures.

The development of the tourist and scenic attractions of the Dominion has been furthered to a degree consistent with funds available, and at the same time in keeping with other aspects of the country's development, such as settlement of