

C. ROAD FINANCE.

(1) DOMINION'S ROAD BILL, 1934-38.

The Department has investigated the numerous statistical data available from official sources and has analysed and classified them in order to show approximately what the roads, streets, and bridges are costing under the headings of construction, maintenance, and loan charges.

The classification of the roads into main highways, urban roads and streets, and other roads has been carried out, as each class of road or street has differing problems attached to it. This classification has involved a certain amount of estimation, as also have certain aspects of the figures for the whole road bill. Any estimations have been made on a conservative basis, and the figures are sufficiently close to actual fact to form a basis for reliable broad conclusions.

Attention is directed to the fact that certain adjustments have been made to the figures published in reports prior to 1937, while in the 1937-38 figures it has been necessary to estimate the figures for interest charges on local-body loans for roading purposes.

The following table shows the expenditure under the various headings for the five years ended 31st March, 1938 :—

	1933-34.	1934-35.	1935-36.	1936-37.	1937-38.
	£	£	£	£	£
Maintenance—					
Main highways	954,656	1,501,539	1,632,453	1,314,694	1,482,531
Urban roads and streets	397,371	392,032	406,775	424,201	463,533
Other roads	718,943	955,994	1,098,366	1,038,204	1,164,972
Total	2,070,970	2,849,565	3,137,594	2,777,099	3,111,036
Construction—					
Main highways	286,709	428,072	624,943	1,622,982	2,565,822
Urban roads and streets	1,104,047	944,235	903,918	938,692	982,008
Other roads	1,240,920	1,172,529	1,102,730	1,443,185	1,605,648
Total	2,631,676	2,544,836	2,631,591	4,004,859	5,153,478
Interest and sinking-fund charges—					
Main highways	632,846	612,129	605,403	605,925	642,695
Urban roads and streets	585,900	554,400	580,979	573,423	580,773
Other roads	1,136,070	1,136,515	1,122,408	1,047,394	1,135,116
Total	2,354,816	2,303,044	2,308,790	2,226,742	2,358,584
Total annual road bill—					
Main highways	1,874,211	2,541,740	2,862,799	3,543,601	4,691,018
Urban roads and streets	2,087,318	1,890,667	1,891,672	1,936,316	2,026,314
Other roads	3,095,933	3,265,038	3,323,504	3,528,783	3,905,736
Total	7,057,462	7,697,445	8,077,975	9,008,700	10,623,098

The principal points emerging from the figures for the years ended 31st March, 1937, have been commented upon in previous annual reports. The figures for 1937-38, as compared with those of the previous year, are commented on below :—

MAINTENANCE.

(a) *Main Highways*.—Expenditure under this item shows an increase largely due to an increase in the moneys spent by the Main Highways Board under this heading. The figures for 1937-38 are approximately £170,000 in advance of those for the previous year.

(b) *Other Roads*.—Here the increase in maintenance charges is £126,000 on 1936-37. This is accounted for by a large increase in the moneys spent by counties out of ordinary revenue.

(c) *Urban Roads*.—This item has increased by £39,000 from the previous year's figures. This is accounted for by the increased expenditure by Boroughs on road maintenance.