Finland. Finland has 78,000 km of public roads, 24,000 km of city streets, and about 280,000 km of private roads that are maintained by adjoining landowners or people living alongside the road. Private roads with more than one owner can be managed as road cooperatives. By 1997, 104,000 km of all private roads had been legally constituted under the Private Roads Act as cooperative roads. These roads carry an average of 45 vehicles per day, and 99 percent have gravel and earth surfaces.

The Private Roads Act requires that the cooperative stipulate right-of-way, ownership, and the formula for distributing maintenance costs among both road users and the adjoining property owners. The cooperative is responsible for arranging maintenance and may either pay its own members to do the work or use a contractor. Each cooperative must hold an annual meeting and must elect a chairperson, a secretary, a trustee, and other office-holders to manage their maintenance operations. The trustees charge about $200 annually to manage an average-size cooperative. The cooperative sets its own maintenance fees, accepts new members, and is responsible for having the previous year’s accounts audited. Membership is compulsory for property owners who use the road. Maintenance costs are shared among members, depending on the size of their property and the amount of traffic they generate.

The government supports maintenance of cooperative roads provided that a formal cooperative has been established, the road length to a permanent residence is at least 1 km, and there are at least three estates with permanent residents alongside the road. Each municipality has its own rules for supporting cooperative roads under their jurisdiction. In 1997, 87,000 km of the 104,000 km legally designated as cooperative roads received public support from the government, a municipality, or both. The support was given to 17,400 cooperatives with 392,000 members. In 1990 the government provided about $30 million to support cooperative roads, municipalities provided $40 million, and the remaining $50 million came from members of the cooperatives.

Government support is channelled through the Finnish Road Administration (FinnRA) and is allocated to each qualifying road on the basis of traffic volume and number of permanent households served. The amount of government support is adjusted for climate and average income. Additional support may be granted to cover exceptional items. A FinnRA supervisor inspects the qualifying roads once every two to three years and transfers road maintenance know-how through an annual meeting with the road cooperative. FinnRA’s administrative costs of managing cooperative roads is about $60 per road cooperative per year.

Finland, An Example of a Cooperative Road Society. One of Finland’s cooperative roads is the Sakkola road in the southern municipality of Karjalohja which has a land area of 123 sq km and a population of 1,410. The road is 4.65 km in length and the cooperative has 35 members. There are only 5 resident families along the road. The remaining members own holiday cottages, forest and farmland. Since most of the residents are elderly and are not professional farmers, they have selected a trustee from a nearby village to manage their finances and organize the maintenance works. Annual maintenance costs for the road are about $3,000 (i.e., about $650 per km). The costs mainly consist of winter maintenance and regravelling. The government meets about 45 percent of the above costs, the municipality meets 15 percent and the remaining costs are divided between the 35 cooperative members. The allocation between members is based on their land holdings and their use of
the road. The trustee charges about $200 per year for his services and the FinnRA local maintenance supervisor inspects the road every second year.

**Ontario, Canada.** Responsibility for designated roads in Ontario is divided between the province and municipalities. Residents served by undesignated roads (i.e., roads which are not incorporated within a municipality), may enter into agreements with the province to share the costs of construction and maintenance. There are two basic forms of agreement: individual agreements involving individual persons or organizations, and collective agreements under which the residents form themselves into local roads boards for purposes of managing their roads. The remaining unincorporated roads are not considered public roads and receive no assistance from the province.