

PUSHING BACK FRONTIER

The frontier is being pushed back steadily in Canada's northland.

In Saskatchewan, an all-weather route opening a 5,000 square mile territory in the far northwest region of the Province is being pushed at top speed, and is now within a few miles of its terminus, Buffalo Narrows.

Although the road will not be completed this year, a right-of-way is being cleared to the settlement to permit winter freighting operations.

Initially, resources department officials had hoped to see the road, started in 1954, pushed through to Buffalo Narrows by 1958. However, smooth going, fair weather and streamlined building methods made for much greater progress than was earlier anticipated.

The road is linked with Number Three Highway at Green Lake, and now serves the settlements of Beauval and Île à la Crosse. Although immediate plans only call for building it to Buffalo Narrows, resources department officials believe it may be extended someday to serve the La Loche, Cree Lake and Athabasca areas.

Building of the Buffalo Narrows road, which will be about 130 miles long when completed, is a job for big machines--100 horsepower, bulldozer-equipped, crawler tractors to clear right-of-way and hack out passage through hills and ridges; cat-drawn and self-propelled scrapers to fill low spots; graders to build and shape the road; and heavy, five-ton trucks to haul gravel, sand and clay to "cap" new grade.

Together, these machines move close to 50,000 tons of earth daily.

The overall road-building operation costs about \$2,500 a day. A five-ton truck, alone, on double shift, burns \$25 worth of gas (about 60 gallons).

Approximately \$250,000 was allotted for construction work this year and it is estimated the completed road will cost the resources department close to \$500,000.

The 5,000-square-mile territory it opens up might be described topographically, as a shallow trough gouged out during the last ice age. It is bounded by the high land of the Missouri Coteau to the west-southwest and by the Precambrian Shield to the north-east. Its waters drain into the Churchill River system, which eventually finds its way to Hudson Bay.

Oldtimers from settlements like Île à la Crosse can still remember the time when their grandfathers travelled by boat all the way to Hudson Bay to trade their furs for supplies. The round trip took from early spring to late

fall. In those days, the Churchill was the highway of the North.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL GAINS

The new road will bring both economic and social gains to the Buffalo region, with its 3,000 Metis and Indians, and sprinkling of Whites.

It will permit extensive tapping of the region's resources and, by reducing transportation costs, substantially improve the region's economic position.

Its effects are already being felt. Freighting costs to Île à la Crosse dropped substantially last July, when the road reached the Canoe River crossing, ferrying point to the settlement across a narrow arm of Lac Île à la Crosse.

The Buffalo region's commercial fisheries resource will be among the first to benefit from the road, expected to cut freighting costs to railhead by half. This will bring fishermen greater returns and extend the scope of commercial operations to outlying lakes not yet fished. Present commercial fish production from the region is 2,000,000 pounds annually.

NEW INVESTMENT

It will also bring in new capital investment--garages, restaurants, and outfitting and accommodation facilities for the tourist trade at first and possibly larger industries later.

Businessmen in supply centres like Prince Albert and Meadow Lake will also benefit, through the greater flow of goods into and raw materials out of the region.

A group of Meadow Lake businessmen have already laid plans to make the road a main link of a route for winter freighting operations to Uranium City. These far-sighted businessmen are pioneering a new supply line to Saskatchewan's far north that may pay off handsomely for the province someday.

PROMOTES TOURISM

The road will promote tourism by making possible a new sport fishing industry. It will also assist mineral exploration by providing a new access route to the southwestern margins of the Precambrian Shield.

It will spark development of the region's market gardening and livestock raising potential by providing easy access to outside markets; make operable some of its timber stands; and provide forest fire protection access to several thousand square miles of commercial forest.