



CANADA

CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

Vol. 19 No. 24

June 10, 1964

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NEW SESSION OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COUNCIL

Opening the twenty-seventh session of the Council of the Northwest Territories in Ottawa on June 1, the Commissioner, Mr. B.G. Sivertz, had the following to say about the development of the Territorial Government:

...The Northwest Territories and its antecedent Repertsland have been an imagination-stirring feature of Canada for three centuries. It still is. The Council of the Northwest Territories is more recent — but it nevertheless dates from 1875. It will not be far behind the oldest provincial governments in celebrating its centennial — and considerably ahead of some.

Though the Government of the Northwest Territories had had a long life, it has not had a placid one. Changes have been many and radical. In 1898, the Northwest Territories was diminished by splitting off Yukon to be a territory by itself. In 1905, it was further diminished by splitting off Alberta and Saskatchewan to become provinces. In 1912, the District of Ungava, i.e., what is now called New Quebec, was cut out from the Northwest Territories and made part of the Province of Quebec.

In consequence of these and several other less extensive changes, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been altered in form and function more than once. After creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, there was legislative authority for a Council, but none was appointed until 1921. The Commissioner governed in autocratic isolation. It would appear that preservation of law and order was almost the extent of government activity. The Council appointed in 1921 consisted entirely of

federal officials and it remained so until 1951 (except for the appointment of a lone N.W.T. resident in 1946). The first real change toward representative government came in 1951, when three constituencies were created — and increased to four in 1954. The number series by which this session is designated the twenty-seventh dates from 1951, when elected Council Members reappeared after there had been none for 46 years. There was reason for the Right Honourable Louis St. Laurent saying, when he introduced the Northern Affairs and National Resources Act on December 3, 1953, that Canada had administered these vast regions of the north in a continual state of absence of mind.

Since 1951, however, there has been very real growth. Members meeting today form a legislative assembly with a history meriting respect. Many distinguished members have served. They have moulded it into a jurisdiction analogous to that of a province. The Northwest Territories body of law stands reasonably adequate beside counterpart provincial legislation. Works enlarge each year. Perhaps it is worth noting that the Territorial expenditure in 1952-53 was \$433,762. This year it is estimated at \$8,900,000.

The main difference in jurisdiction between the Territories and a province is in the matter of natural resources. Whereas provinces own their land and what is on and under it, the Territories do not. The Federal Government retains control of the land, and responsibility for resource development, as it did in respect of the land of Alberta and Saskatchewan for 25 years after those provinces were created in 1905, i.e., until the Transfer of Resources Act was

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