

RESIDENTIAL UNITS

More than twice as many starts on the construction of new dwelling units were recorded in January-February this year than last, rising in total to 9,265 units from 4,042 in the first two months of 1957, Dominion Bureau of Statistics reports in an advance statement. Completions were practically unchanged from a year earlier at 17,567 units versus 17,776. Owing to the sharp rise in starts, the number of units in various stages of construction at the end of February advanced 17.6 per cent to 64,782 from last year's corresponding total of 55,079.

Starts were more numerous this year than last in all provinces except Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, while completions were greater in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec and Alberta but smaller in the other provinces. More units were under construction in all provinces except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

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FOREST ROADS AND PICNIC AREAS

An estimated \$5,573,000 will be spent to build forest access roads and establish campgrounds and picnic areas in the Provinces this year, it has been announced by Hon. Alvin Hamilton, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

The two programmes which are intended to improve provincial forest fire protection and travel facilities and provide employment, have been made possible through a federal-provincial plan in which the costs are shared equally by the provincial and federal governments. When the federal assistance ends on May 31, 1958 for campgrounds and June 30, 1958 for forest access roads, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources will have provided half the costs to help the Provinces finance the programmes.

Spending on forest access roads is estimated to total \$3,139,000 but the actual amount will be higher when it is known what Prince Edward Island will spend and how much other provincial governments may increase their estimates. By Provinces, expenditures on forest access roads will be: British Columbia, \$625,000; Alberta, \$180,000; Saskatchewan, \$325,000; Manitoba, \$160,000; Ontario, \$1,499,000; New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, \$100,000 each; and Newfoundland, \$150,000.

Nine Provinces are participating in the programmes and it is possible that the Province of Quebec will join later. The total proposed expenditure for campground and picnic area construction is \$2,434,000 but again it is expected the actual expenditure will be higher since Prince Edward Island has not yet decided on the amount it will spend and other provincial expenditures may be increased later.

Amounts being spent in each of the Provinces on campground and picnic areas are:

British Columbia, \$700,000; Alberta, \$250,000; Saskatchewan, \$91,000; Manitoba, \$130,000; Ontario, \$983,000; New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, \$100,000 each; Newfoundland, \$80,000.

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ONTARIO PARKS POPULAR

Nearly three million people visited during 1957 the many parks established by the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests. During the past few years, Lands and Forests has taken over some parks operated by the Department of Highways, and there are now 115 parks in operation.

Vehicle permits are required for entering 44 of these parks; in 40 overnight camping is allowed; 39 are maintained without any charge being made for their use; nine are under development, and 23 are reserved, or negotiations are under way by which they will be taken over.

The budget for public parks was \$15,000 in 1954; in 1956-57, \$1,700,000 was spent on improvement alone, and in 1957-58 expenditure will have reached an estimated \$2,250,000. Last year, 35 parks were provided with flush toilet accommodation, 21 with picnic shelters, and 50 miles of road were built to provide access. In 1957, also, 72,700 picnic tables were provided for the use of travellers as compared with 2,000 the previous year.

More than 120,000 people walked the nature trails established in connection with the nature museums in such parks as Algonquin and Quetico.

Average stay in the parks where camp facilities were provided has been estimated at 2.3 days last year.

Ontario parks have become increasingly popular with residents who cannot afford to stay at outfitters or hotel camps in the north, or who prefer to "rough it" on their own. The visitors pay 75 cents a night or \$4 a week for camp sites and can reserve the sites for only two weeks, with a possible two weeks extension if space is available. They are provided with free fire wood and cooking facilities and, in some cases, may obtain electricity at an additional cost of 25 cents a day.

Most of the parts are operated by rangers from the Department's staff who thus have an excellent opportunity to teach visitors something about life in the woods, the necessity for care in preventing forest fires, and the value of proper conservation measures.

According to Department records, few visitors do any serious fishing, being seemingly content to go out on the lakes and rivers to "pick up one fish for dinner".

Efforts are being made to establish parks at distances of about 100 miles apart and later, if necessary, the Government will study the advisability of providing boat liveries at some of the camps.