



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE UNFOLDING PATTERN OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

An address by Mr. Robert H. Winters, Minister of Resources and Development, to the Alberta and Northwest Chamber of Mines at Edmonton, Alberta, July 5, 1950.

At a time when national economic development is in the foreground of public interest our meeting today accords me an opportunity to review briefly the unfolding pattern of development of our northern region.

Economic Significance of the North

I speak of an area containing nearly 1,500,000 square miles - one quarter of the entire area of Canada. Potentially it is one of the richest sections of the continent in terms of natural assets.

From the earliest times fur production has been a mainstay of the northern economy. In 1948 the harvest of over half a million fur pelts in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon produced over two million dollars. The fur trade continues to provide the chief source of income for native Indians and Eskimos as well as for many white residents of the Territories.

But it is the mining industry, more than any other, that has been responsible for the opening up and permanent settlement of Canada's northland. I refer to the industry in all its branches - but particularly to gold, silver, base metals, oil and uranium.

Mining possibilities were believed by early explorers to exist in many areas of Canada's North. But transportation difficulties, as well as climate, hindered development.

The aeroplane proved to be the key to unlock substantial amounts of the metallic treasures of the Shield - the same Shield which in mineral areas of the central provinces has added so enormously to the wealth of Canada.

Fortunately there are few places in the Northwest Territories in which it would not be possible for aircraft to find a safe landing on water or on ice - depending on the season. These favourable conditions and, above all, the invaluable efforts of pioneering bush pilots, based on this city, ushered in a new era of expansion north of the 60th parallel.

The spectacular discovery, on the shores of Great Bear Lake, of uranium, the present source of atomic power - has focused world attention on the North.

But there has been much else besides. The discovery of gold deposits in the Yellowknife area and of base metals on the south shore of Great Slave Lake finally dispelled the myth that the Canadian northland was a barren, unprofitable wilderness.

The white man is definitely in the North to stay! For the business of mining precious or base metals is seldom a seasonal one. Actually the mining industry, by and large, provides the least interrupted employment of any primary industry in Canada.