



Photo: Rick Winter, Nova Scotia Power Corporation

The plant and the sluice gates are remotely controlled from a regional control centre about 80 miles northeast of the power plant. Its initial output is expected to be about 50 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. That is about the amount of energy consumed by a city of 120 000 people.

While the pilot plant is in operation, an environmental committee — consisting of representatives from federal and provincial agencies and departments — will observe the effects, if any, that the plant will have on the environment. Also, they will be able to detect any problems that might be created by a larger project.

From an environmental point of view, however, the power plant starts out with two major advantages. First of all, its presence means that there are now two outlets in the causeway (instead of just one), so the danger of flooding is reduced. And second, the plant will be an on-going source of non-polluting energy.

First National Park 100 years old but new ones still being added

Conservation is often thought of as a recent, 20th century concern. But it was 100 years ago that the Canadian government saw the need to preserve some special aspect of Canada's natural heritage. In 1885, the federal government established Canada's first national park in Banff, Alberta.

It was the construction of the trans-continental railroad that led to the creation of this first national park. In 1883, crews working on the railroad near Banff discovered some caverns and natural sulphur hot springs in what was to become Banff National Park.

Erosion monoliths in the Mingan Archipelago, one of Canada's newest national parks



Photo: Parks Canada

The federal government realised even then that these springs were of national value, and in 1885 it passed an Order-in-Council, which reserved an area of 26 sq km around the newly discovered hot springs. This was the first step in the creation of Canada's network of national parks.

Today, the parks system is the largest in the world. There are 31 national parks, with at least one in every province and territory. Altogether, the parks, historical sites and heritage canals represent an area of 40 000 sq km — larger than all of England.

During this centennial year, activities planned as part of the celebrations include the restoration of the original national park facilities at the hot springs in Banff; production of several TV films on Canada's natural and cultural heritage; and a national conference — the Canadian Assembly on National Parks and Protected Areas — which is to be held in Banff in September.

New parks being created

Although the national parks network is well-established throughout Canada, the Canadian government is still on the lookout for new areas of unique interest to preserve for future generations. In June, 1983, it acquired nearly all the islands and islets in the Mingan Archipelago (located on the North Shore of the St Lawrence, more than 1 100 km from Montreal) to develop a national park.

The Archipelago's maritime, mid-northern climate, combined with the many geological upheavals of local rock layers, has helped to create land formations of great beauty and diversity. A wide variety of plant life, much of it unique to the area, is found on the islands. The area is also home to a large bird population and a thriving marine community.