

B.C. tests natural gas cars

The British Columbia government has begun testing to determine if cars can run satisfactorily on compressed natural gas.

B.C. Science Minister Pat McGeer said that running vehicles on natural gas rather than just on conventional oil-derived gas would eliminate Canada's dependence on oil imports, now costing \$16 million a day.

"We have all the fuel requirements to operate personal transportation systems now and far into the future if we only develop the technology to the point where we can use our own resources," Mr. McGeer said.

He said British Columbia has at least a 50-year natural gas supply. If every car in the province was converted to run on the fuel, it would require less than a 40-per-cent production increase and no new pipelines to service them.

A car and van have been converted to a dual fuel system — natural gas and conventional gasoline — for a three-month test. If it proves feasible, Mr. McGeer said, B.C. Hydro and the University of B.C. are considering converting their fleets to the system.

Private cars could be converted in the future by adding two small storage tanks, a pressure regulator and several other

small parts — for \$1,500, or less if conversion kits are mass-produced.

Mr. McGeer said conversion costs could be recovered in two to three years through cheaper fuel costs and less engine wear.

Compressed natural gas would be sold to service stations for about 6.6 cents a litre, compared to the current price for conventional gas of 17 cents a litre, he said.

Inventions for sale

The Canadian Government is ensuring that valuable inventions arising out of government and university research are taken up by industry.

Canadian Patents and Development Limited (CPDL), a Crown corporation, through its inventor's assistance program helps Canadian inventors by assessing the technical feasibility and commercial potential of their products or ideas.

The CPDL chooses the most promising ideas from the more than 250 that are submitted each year, files patent applications on some, licenses the know-how on others and then advertises them to industry through its *Inventions Catalogue*. The catalogue is available by contacting: Canadian Patents and Development Ltd., 275 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0R3.

University signs agreement with Islamic group

McGill University in Montreal has signed a letter of co-operation with the Aga Khan Foundation to work together in two areas of major concern to both institutions — the fields of health and Islamic studies.

The McGill Faculty of Medicine is finalizing an affiliation with the 721-bed Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College now under construction in Karachi, Pakistan. This hospital aims to set standards for hospital care in Pakistan and the McGill Faculty of Medicine will assist in planning, equipping and staffing both the hospital and the teaching college. Selected graduates from Pakistan will also be trained at McGill as future faculty teachers. The affiliation with the McGill Faculty of Medicine is the first for the Aga Khan Hospital. Other universities are joining for differing specialties.

The Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University will co-operate with the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, England, which is a research organization sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation. The two institutes will exchange faculty staff and students and carry out joint research into Islamic subjects. The McGill Institute will also receive an annual grant of \$125,000 over a ten-year period to help the institute increase its teaching staff, expand its library of Islamic publications, and offer further scholarships to students in the Islamic field.

The Aga Khan is the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Community, which is spread over 25 countries, mostly in the developing nations of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Canadian Armed Forces women to serve at sea

The Canadian Armed Forces, for the first time, is allowing women to serve at sea as sailors.

The two-year naval experiment is part of a five-year Armed Forces test that began early in 1979 to determine the impact of opening up men-only jobs to women. So far 81 of 127 positions have been opened to women, although none of these is classified as a combat or near-combat post.

Eight young women recently became the first female members of the crew of a Canadian naval vessel.

The *Cormorant*, with a complement of 62, is the navy's only non-combatant ship, assigned to carry out underwater repair work on the Maritime Command fleet.

The women are mostly doing clerical or kitchen-duty jobs, jobs that in the past were performed by men.

Two are cooks, another is a mess-hall steward; one is to handle paperwork; others will be dealing with ship's supplies.

But Captain Gilmore Morrison said he intends to get the women as close to near-combat duties as he can. He has no doubt the test will be a success.

The women, all unmarried, range in age from 22 to 29 and come from across Canada.

The opening of new classifications for women in the Armed Forces began in 1970 after a recommendation from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.



British Columbia Science Minister Pat McGeer with natural gas car.