



# REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 82

## THE TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY

(Based on an address by the Minister of Public Works, Mr. Robert Winters, delivered in Hamilton, February 22, 1956; and on an article by Lance Connery, Chief, Publicity Division, Canadian Government Travel Bureau, published in "International Markets" July 1953.)

Canada's national story is in many ways the story of facing up to the problems of the country's vast space. Space has not been the only obstacle to conquer; the towering Rocky Mountains and the rugged Canadian shield have posed formidable barriers to carry travel and communications. Moreover, the natural lines of geographic similarity and economic interest to a great extent run north and south across the Canadian-U.S. border rather than east and west across the Canadian nation.

Given these factors, it is obvious that the modern Canadian nation could arise only with the help of complex and extensive systems of communications. Indeed, the history of Canada has been shaped by the development of communications perhaps more than by any other single factor; Canada's growth has from the first been interwoven with the story of the development of water, rail, road and air transportation. Step by step, a web of communications has been built across the country opening the way to new resources and stimulating economic development. This story is being extended today by great projects like the St. Lawrence Seaway, worthy in every way to take their place with the episodes of the past. It is against this background of communications and transportation development and of their great benefits, past and present, that one can perhaps find the proper context for that other major project, the Trans-Canada Highway.

Under the Canadian constitution, roads are normally considered to be a provincial responsibility. But since 1919 the Federal Government has shouldered part of the financial burden for road-building. It is responsible for instance, for building and maintaining roads in the National Parks and the Yukon and Northwest Territories and it maintains the Alaska Highway. In the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway the Federal Government is co-operating with nine of the ten Provincial Governments in the most ambitious road construction program in Canada's history. For six years now provincial and federal authorities have been working together on the task of completing a 5,000 mile, paved, all-weather highway from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia.

Capital costs are shared, with the Federal Government contributing 50 per cent, matching provincial expenditures dollar for dollar up to a total federal contribution of \$150 million. Administering the federal portion of the project is Honourable Robert H. Winters, Canada's Minister of Public Works.