



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 53/8 SOME ASPECTS OF A NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY

An address by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Lionel Chevrier, to the 37th Annual General Dinner of the Canadian Industrial Traffic League, Toronto, February 18, 1953.

... I have chosen to speak on some of the important considerations that must go into the framing of a national transportation policy. This is a most appropriate subject to discuss with you, for your members are customers of all the various transportation agencies in Canada. All phases of transportation are of practical concern to you in your daily work. The subject is all the more appropriate because the Canadian Industrial Traffic League was the first organization to submit comprehensive suggestions as to a national transportation policy. ...

Let me say at once that there is a great deal more to transportation policy than the mere matter of regulation. Official policy has never been limited to this rather negative work, but always has emphasized the positive and constructive side of providing adequate transportation services to support our economic development. From the earliest days in this country right up to the recent past, no government would have been a government without a positive policy in this field. Even in the comparative maturity of today, the matter of extending services to new places, and sometimes in new forms, is very much to the fore.

The reasons for public concern with transportation are obvious. The physical features, the resources and the climate of Canada are such that we have made and still make our living mainly by exporting a comparatively few primary products to other countries. In our history these products have been fish, furs, lumber, grain, minerals, pulp and paper, and now perhaps oil and gas. For such products, transportation is a large element of cost. This is particularly true in Canada, where long railway lines must pass through much unproductive territory. Efficient transportation can make us, inefficient transportation can break us.

Looking first at water transport, I need hardly remind you what an important part it played in the early development of Canada. For many years it was the only method of conveyance and it played a determining part in the location of many of our important cities.

Public policy initiated canal development soon after the coming of the steamboat in the last century. A series of 9-foot canals were completed through the St. Lawrence River and into Lake Erie before Confederation. By the end of the century or soon after, these canals were deepened to 14 feet, a 30-foot ship channel had been provided from Montreal to the open Gulf of St. Lawrence, and Canada had built a canal at Sault Ste. Marie. Later Canada built the