



CANADA

CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

Vol. 21 No. 18

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NEW HORIZONS IN RECREATION

The following is part of a recent address by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Mr. Arthur Laing, to the Canadian Forestry Association in Ottawa:

...Based on present trends, and coupled with other figures, we anticipate visits to national parks, in the year 2,000, to be close to 50 million. Impossible, you say; well, let's look at some recent figures that may change your minds.

In 1936, 500,000 visits were made to national parks in Canada. Last year, 11 million visits were made to our national and historic parks. In the Maritime parks, for instance, park visits increased by 505 per cent in ten years, from 1954 to 1964. In the same period an increase of 231 per cent was shown at national historic sites in the Maritimes, and the number of campers using national park facilities in that ten-year period increased by 361 per cent.

In our national parks, at the present time, we have 29,278 square miles of land, or about one acre of land based on the present population figures. But, over half that area is in Wood Buffalo National Park which is, as yet, relatively inaccessible and undeveloped for visitors. About 94 per cent of the remainder is in the Western provinces, which account for only 26.3 per cent of Canada's population. This means that in the heavily populated eastern area of Canada we have less than a tenth of an acre of national park land for each member of the general public. Couple this situation with our projection of 50 million visitations in the year 2,000 and you have a vivid picture of the dilemma we all face....

It is an accepted fact throughout the world that a park is a major tourist drawing-card for a locality, a region, a province or a country. And a national park

exceeds a provincial or municipal park as a tourist attraction. Because of its quality and the unique variety of its facilities for public use and employment, a national park draws visitors from more distant points, holds them for longer periods, and is more likely to be the main objective of a trip or the main choice of a place to spend a holiday.

RELIEVING PRESSURE ON PARK SPACE

One of the most promising methods of reducing or relieving the growing pressures on our national parks is through the provision of alternate areas such as shorelines, waterways, recreational areas, etc., to provide for a wide range of outdoor recreational pursuits, where the emphasis is on recreation and not preservation.

The amount of land required for any of these areas would be far less than is needed for a national park. These alternate areas would have to be provided by all levels of government. For the most part, these areas would be related to forest lands, thus intimately involving forest management and the forestry profession, who must become increasingly aware of the growing demand on these lands.

Where the area is of national significance, either by inherent features or by location, the Federal Government may well have to broaden its interest in outdoor recreation and become actively involved in the acquisition, development and operation of these areas.

If these other areas existed, many of the stresses and strains and misunderstandings that have developed around our national parks would be eased. While national parks will always cater to outdoor recreation, national shorelines and the like would be devoted