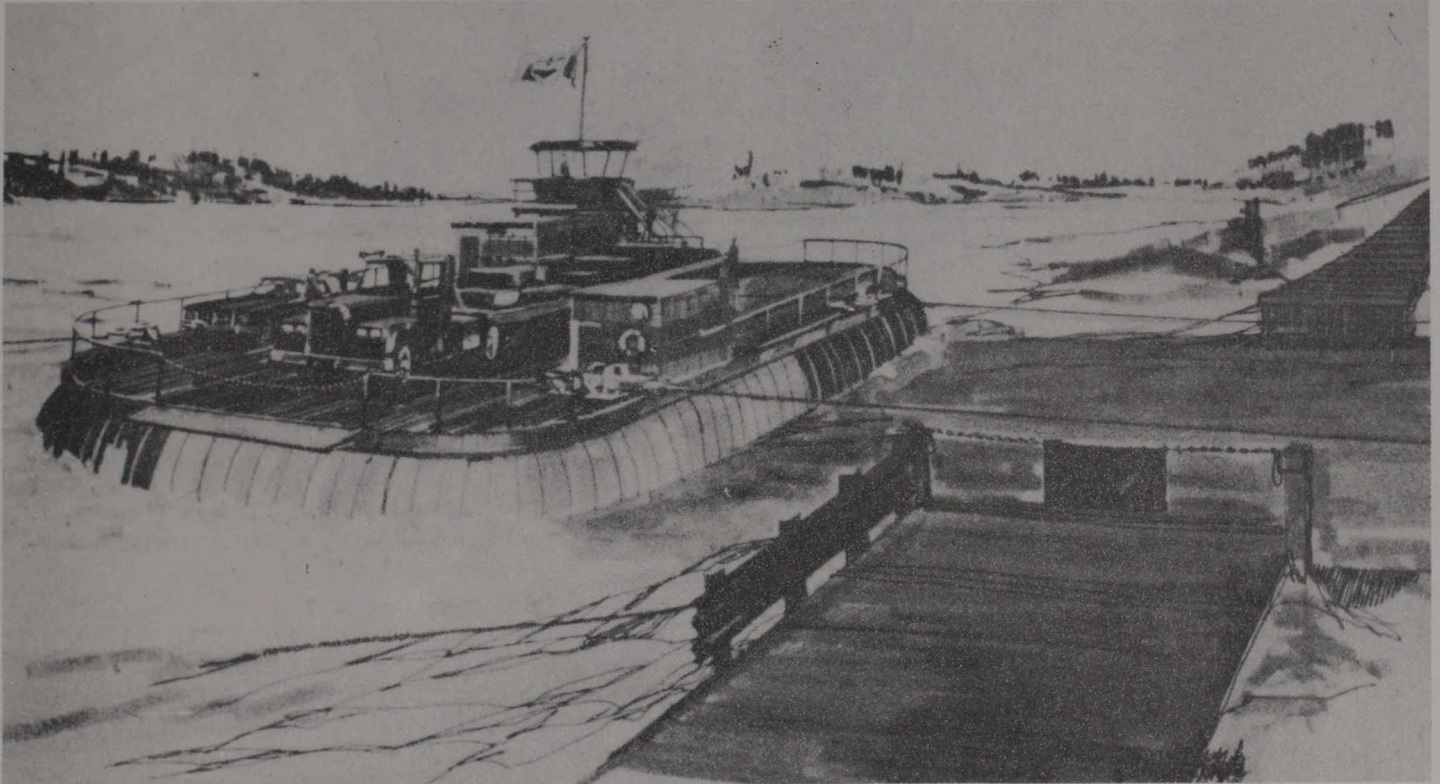


# HOVERLIFT

## A YEAR ROUND FERRY



Canada's distances and rough terrain have demanded that the transportation industry be innovative and daring, and the need to get further north to reach energy resources challenges the ingenuity of Canadian aviation today as much as it ever did in the past. The search for oil and natural gas in the Arctic has depended entirely on airlift to get the oil rigs in place and for support during the drilling program. However, aviation technology has made other significant contributions to northern transportation and a novel ferry system in Northern Alberta has evolved from hovercraft engineering.

The hoverlift is intended to be a ferry system that will operate year-round whereas present ferries can only operate during periods when there is open water. Existing systems utilize ferries during the summer and run the roads on ice during the winter but this provides no transportation during the periods of freeze-up and thaw. Bridges are rare in the north because of costs; however, estimates

suggest that a hoverlift can be built, installed, and operated for less than the interest cost on the investment of building major bridges in remote areas.

"The idea originated with Hoverlift Systems of Calgary and was developed in conjunction with the National Research Council," said Fred Harvey, Chief Bridge Engineer for the Province of Alberta's transportation department. "Hoverlift systems had already developed a hovercraft for possible use in the oil industry and it looked as if it could serve our purposes."

The hoverlift will be floated above the surface using conventional hovercraft technology but the hoverlift will not be self-propelled. Once the vehicle is off the surface it will be pulled across the river on cables using winches and engines that are on the vessel. The only part of the system that will be on shore will be the anchor points for the cables.

"This could become a new technique of bridging if we do not en-

counter any major difficulties," said Mr. Harvey. "It is still a development project and that is why we are trying it out at La Crete crossing where we have Alberta's major river and probably the worst ice conditions in the province."

The hoverlift is being manufactured by Central Fabricators Ltd. of Edmonton, Alberta, and it will be equipped with Caterpillar diesel engines. When the parts are completed the assembly will take place in the Edmonton yards of the Alberta department of transportation, and extensive trials will be carried out on the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton before the hoverlift is taken north.

The hoverlift system could be particularly appropriate in Northern Alberta. Rich agricultural land penetrates further north here than anywhere else in Canada but transportation across rivers has been a major block to development. Most pertinent however, is the need to get into the areas that could hold the oil and gas that all of North America so badly needs.