

Census shows population aging at rapid rate

The first data from the household survey in last summer's census indicates that the Canadian population is now the oldest it has ever been.

Because of a steady decline in the birth rate that started 20 years ago, the population's median age — with half of Canadians above it and half below — was 29.6 years last summer, higher than during the Great Depression, when the birth rate was also reduced. The median age is expected to rise steadily through the rest of the century according to the figures released by Statistics Canada. By the year 2000 the median age is expected to be 36, unless there is a sharp increase in the birth rate. If present trends continue Statistics Canada predicts that by 2031 there could be one pensioner for every two workers, down from the current ratio of about one-to-five.

Median age rising

At the turn of the century the median age was just over 20. It rose to 27 during the 1930s and then fell back to 26.3 by 1961 because of the postwar baby boom.

The data was compiled from questionnaires filled out in virtually every Canadian household in June last year for the once-a-decade full census. It elicited informa-

tion on such things as age, marital status, sex, household size and type of dwellings occupied by Canadians.

The census data has important policy implications for both the public and private sector. For the public sector, the statistics indicate a growing need for services for the aged, and less need for schools almost everywhere in Canada. For the private sector, the census provides a basis for determining markets for specific goods and services.

Some of the highlights of the decennial survey were:

- the population was 24 343 180, of which 12 274 890 were female and 12 068 290 were male;
- while the population as a whole had increased by 5.9 per cent since the mid-decade mini-census in 1976, the number of children under 15 fell by 7 per cent while the number of people 65 and older increased by 17.9 per cent;
- 14 918 445 Canadians said English was their mother tongue, a 5.6 per cent growth from 1976, while 6 249 095 said it was French, up 6.1 per cent. Some other mother tongues had a booming growth, including Spanish by 59 per cent, Armenian 65.8 per cent, Chinese 69 per cent, Indo-Pakistani languages 100.3 per

cent and Semitic languages 58.8 per cent — the ranks of the divorced rose dramatically. There were 500 135 divorced Canadians who had not remarried, compared with 302 535 in 1976;

— but there was also an increase in the proportion who were married — from 47.7 per cent in 1976 to 49.1 per cent in 1981;

— the average number of persons per family fell to 3.3 in 1981 from 3.5 in 1976;

— there were 8 281 530 households, for an average household size of 2.9 persons compared with 3.1 in 1976. The largest were in Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories, averaging 3.8 persons, and the smallest in British Columbia, where the average was 2.7. One- or two-person households made up 49.3 per cent of the total, while only 14.6 per cent contained more than four persons;

— 57.2 per cent of the occupied private dwelling stock in Canada were single detached dwellings, with Newfoundland having the highest proportion at 78.5 per cent and Quebec the lowest at 43.9 per cent.

Gold rush days remembered

Edmonton, Alberta's ten-day annual celebration, Klondike Days, held in July again drew large crowds of enthusiastic supporters this year.

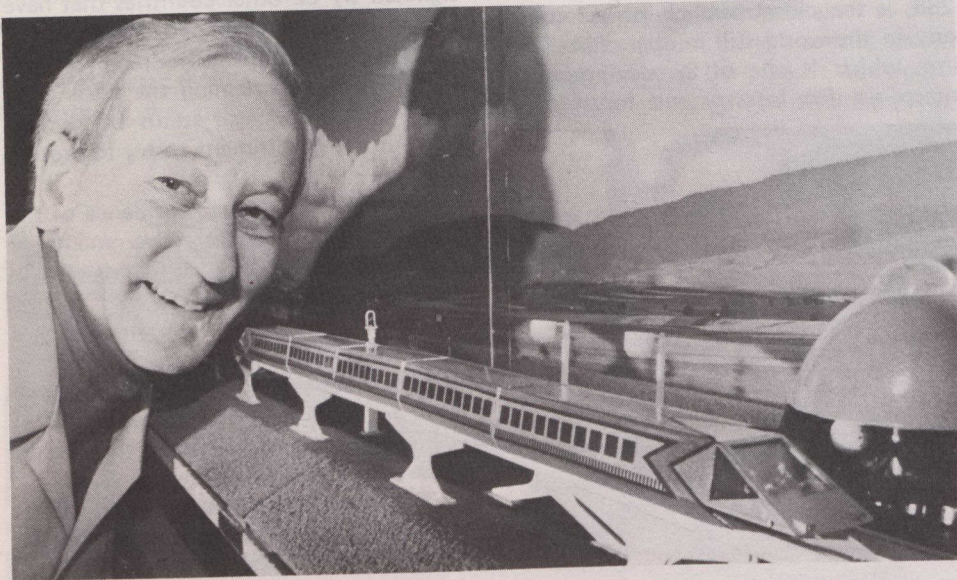
The name, Klondike Days, was adopted by the city of Edmonton 20 years ago for its annual fair in recognition of the city's role as a service centre and stopping point for the thousands of people who went north in search of gold during the gold rush at the end of the nineteenth century.

Many of the activities of the fair were organized by the Klondike Days Association which also received a substantial grant from the Edmonton city council.

During the festivities, bars, banks and other businesses became saloons, forts and fur-trading posts as much of the city was transported back in time. Women dressed in frilly frocks, mesh stockings and feathers, while men wore arm bands, vests or anything else that resembled nineteenth-century attire.

Some of the success of the celebration was due to the fact that emphasis was placed on inexpensive entertainment, both in the city core and at the exhibition grounds, where the \$4 admission price for adults covered many free activities, including outdoor entertainment.

Model train builder uses scraps for prize-winning creation



Chuck Collins of Ottawa stands before his four-metre model of a monorail which won the Delaware trophy — for ingenuity in model building at the northeastern convention of the National Model Railroaders Association held in Albany, New York. Collins, a 55-year-old professional narrator, said he is a "scratch builder"; the pylons for the track are old cigarette display signs, and the station is made of a pantyhose shell with a bubblegum skylight. "I can see something in any old piece of junk," he said.