

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 57/12 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Remarks by Mr. George Hees, Minister of Transport, to a Combined Meeting of the Premiers of the four Atlantic Provinces and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, Confederation Chamber, Charlottetown, P.E.I., Monday, September 23, 1957.

Whenever I visit the City of Charlottetown, and particularly this historic chamber, my mind goes back to the birth of this nation ninety years ago, and the tremendous strides we have made in the intervening years.

Canada has advanced far in those ninety years. Our population has increased from about 3-1/2 million in 1867 to approximately 17 million today, and our growth as a country is reflected not only in our position as a leading member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but also by our position as the fourth largest trading nation in the world.

In reviewing our achievements as a nation, which today has a gross national production of approximately 31 billion dollars, we must not overlook the fact that there are wide differences in the prosperity enjoyed by the people living in various sections of the country. For this country to be really prosperous, there must be a far more uniform pattern of prosperity from one end of the country to the other.

The recent studies by the Gordon Commission show that the average income in the Atlantic region lags behind that of the rest of Canada, and is today 33 per cent below the average for the other six provinces.

I will not try to explain how this inequality arose in our development as a country. I much prefer, first to recognize that it exists, and second, to say that I am firmly convinced that it must be corrected.

I believe that the natural resources of this area exist in sufficient quantities to give the people who live here a considerably higher standard of living than they enjoy today.

I am also convinced that the vast majority of the Canadian people are willing to co-operate, financially and otherwise, to make the full economic development of this area a reality. This economic development is of great importance to the Canadian Government, and takes a prominent place in our deliberations.

The problem is how can this development best be accomplished. I suggest there are several courses of action, none of which individually will solve the problem, but which, undertaken collectively, could achieve the desired result.