

The Department of External Affairs and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs announce the official opening of the Dr. Henry Norman Bethune Memorial House. The Honourable Otto Lang, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport, officiated at the opening ceremonies this afternoon in Gravenhurst, Ontario. Mr. A. T. Davidson, Parks Canada Assistant Deputy Minister, performed the duties of master of ceremonies.

The ceremonies were attended by a distinguished group of visitors from the People's Republic of China. A delegation of ten Chinese officials led by Vice-Minister of Public Health, Mr. Chang Chih-chiang, one of the most senior Chinese officials to have visited Canada in recent years, travelled to Canada specifically for the opening. Mr. Chang addressed the guests on behalf of the Government of China. Mr. Chang's delegation included senior medical officers of the People's Liberation Army who were associated with Dr. Bethune in China as well as officials of the People's Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A group of four media correspondents sent from Peking to cover the opening ceremonies were also present.

The Honourable Frank S. Miller, M.P.P. for Muskoka and Ontario Minister of Health was in attendance as the representative of the Provincial Government. Mr. Allan Sander, the Mayor of Gravenhurst, attended on behalf of the municipality. Mr. Chester Ronning, ex-Canadian diplomat who was born in China, spoke on Dr. Bethune's career. Also attending were the Chinese Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Mr. Chang Wen-chin and a large number of Embassy staff. Mr. Arthur Menzies, Canada's Ambassador-designate to China who will take up his new post in Peking this autumn, was present.

Parks Canada, on behalf of the Department of External Affairs, has been engaged for some three years in the restoration of Bethune House, previously the Gravenhurst United Church manse, which was purchased by the Federal Government in 1973. The decision to purchase the house was based on an appreciation of Norman Bethune's personal qualities as a medical innovator and early advocate of universal public health care in Canada and his unique place in the history of relations between Canada and the People's Republic of China. This act of commemoration by the Federal Government marks a significant step in the development of Canada-China relations.

Restoration, circa 1890 the year of Bethune's birth, has been carried out by the technical and historical experts of Parks Canada. Bethune House will be permanently administered and maintained by Parks Canada as a part of its historical sites programme.