

March, attention switches to the rivers.

The Mackenzie and Liard Rivers are bridged by ice in the winter, but the ice starts falling apart in mid-April. For some weeks it is impossible to get across, and the traffic from bank to bank or beyond moves by helicopter.

Around the beginning of May, after the ice has cleared, ferries take over. The Liard ferry can carry eight automobiles across in six minutes, and the Mackenzie one can carry ten automobiles across in eight.

The Mackenzie Valley

The snow and ice in the southern Mackenzie basin melt in April. The Mackenzie River system is the longest in Canada—its watershed drains over 700,000 square miles.

Tons of icy water pour down the mountains, and the ice cracks into splinters, hillocks and masses the size of islands.

The Mackenzie flows to the northwest, and as the ice and silt-laden waters plunge toward the Beaufort Sea, they leach out iron, calcium, sulphur, and phosphorous—all elements essential to growing things—and deposit them on the flood plains.

By late May and early June the lower Mackenzie has thawed; birds are arriving in great flocks from Mexico, South America and even Antarctica;

the top few inches of permafrost have melted; and forget-me-nots, lupine and poppies pop into bloom. Caribou herds return from the south to their calving grounds on the Beaufort Sea, and swarms of mosquitoes and black flies appear to torment them.

The St. Lawrence Seaway

The St. Lawrence Seaway closes down for the winter around December 15 and opens up again around April 1.

The winter months are spent in major maintenance and rebuilding—this winter the workmen widened the Welland Canal section between Lakes Ontario and Erie. In March they start cleaning up from the construction work, and then the ice breakers, the *Pierre Radisson* and the *Franklin*, start clearing the way in the locks west of Montreal.

If the winter is exceptionally mild, the Seaway may open to traffic as early as the end of March—if it is exceptionally severe, the opening may be delayed as late as April 7th, though that hasn't happened in years.

Pleasure craft are permitted in the Seaway, though boats less than twenty feet long or weighing less than one ton are not allowed in the Welland Canal.



Spring comes late to the Eskimo village of Koartak in northern Quebec.