

Speech from the Throne

A meeting of commonwealth prime ministers will be held in London at the end of this month to consider a number of problems affecting the peoples of this great association of nations. My prime minister plans to attend this conference.

During the summer arrangements were completed to permit the navigational facilities of the St. Lawrence river to be enlarged and a hydroelectric project to be undertaken in the international rapids section.

Work on these two projects has already begun and my ministers are convinced the stimulus to the national economy resulting from their construction will be shared in all parts of the country.

Since you last met, Cape Breton island has been linked with the mainland by the new causeway which will be ready for service as soon as the ship canal has been bridged.

It is expected that, in the course of the coming season, the new ferry between North Sydney and Port aux Basques will be in operation and the ferry service between Yarmouth and Bar Harbor started. Construction of a new ferry to operate between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island will be undertaken early in the present year.

To improve navigation on the Pacific coast, you will be asked to make provision at this session for the removal of Ripple Rock.

Canadians learned with deep regret of the loss of life and damage to property caused by two severe storms felt heavily in the province of Ontario and the province of Nova Scotia. An agreement has been reached with the province of Ontario to assist those persons whose homes were damaged or destroyed and assistance has been given under the Agricultural Prices Support Act to the producers of apples in Nova Scotia. You will be asked to make the necessary financial provision for these arrangements.

The Disabled Persons Act which you passed at the last session was proclaimed to come into force at the beginning of the present year. The governments of all the provinces have announced their intention to participate in implementing the program to assist those who are totally unable to care for themselves; and my ministers are now in a position to conclude the necessary federal-provincial agreements to bring this humanitarian measure into operation.

Although the national economy is in a generally healthy condition, the relatively poor wheat crop is being reflected by a small decline in the total national income. Some unemployment of a regional and seasonal nature is being experienced. To help meet this situation work on public construction projects already approved is being accelerated and you will be asked to make financial provision for construction in the programs of various departments and agencies on a scale that will make possible a substantial increase in the total expenditures for this purpose.

The government proposes to introduce legislation immediately for the amendment of the Unemployment Insurance Act to provide for an increase in the duration and scale of supplementary winter benefits. It is also proposing to introduce, during the session, broader amendments designed to make unemployment insurance a more effective instrument in providing financial support to unemployed workers.

The National Housing Act, 1954, enacted early in the last session, which authorized lower down-payments and larger loans, and which enabled the chartered banks for the first time to make loans on the security of residential mortgages, has been an important factor in stimulating the construction of a record number of houses in the past year. The prospects are favourable for a high level of house building in 1955.

It is proposed to bring into general operation on the first of February the provision of the act under which loans may be made for home improvements. In accordance with an undertaking given at the last

session, this section was proclaimed for small holders under the Veterans' Land Act with effect from the first of this year.

You will be asked to consider amendments to the Railway Act relating to the elimination of level crossings. The government also hopes to lay before you during the present session a measure to consolidate the legislation affecting the Canadian National Railways.

Amendments to the Electricity and Fluid Exportation Act and a measure to control works which affect the normal flow of rivers which cross the international boundary will be proposed for the purpose of ensuring that natural resources are developed in the best interests of the Canadian public.

You will be asked to consider a measure to implement a convention between Canada and the United States relating to fisheries research on the great lakes.

You will also be asked to consider legislation to provide facilities for loans to fishermen similar to those provided to farmers by the Farm Improvement Loans Act.

The government will submit amendments to the War Veterans Allowance Act to raise the basic rates as well as the ceiling on permissible incomes of recipients of allowances.

You will also be asked to consider amendments to the Blind Persons Act, to lower the age of eligibility and raise the income ceilings.

A measure which will provide for amendments to the National Defence Act and the Defence Services Pension Act will be placed before you.

Legislation will be proposed to replace the Meat and Canned Foods Act by measures to provide for the inspection of meat and for the establishment of standards for all agricultural products.

You will be asked to approve a convention signed by the members of the international civil aviation organization which fixes the responsibility for damage caused to third parties by foreign aircraft.

A joint committee of both houses will be proposed to examine, in the light of the Municipal Grants Act and possible amendments thereto, the financial and other relationships of the government and the federal district commission with the city of Ottawa and neighbouring municipalities.

Among other measures you will be asked to consider amendments to the Defence Production Act, the Government Employees Compensation Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act, the Historic Sites and Monuments Act, the Radio Act, the Territorial Lands Act, the Library of Parliament Act, the Canada Grain Act, the Northwest Territories Act, the Yukon Act, the Canada Shipping Act, the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act and to the Municipal Grants Act.

Members of the House of Commons:

You will be asked to make provision for the public service for the next fiscal year.

Honourable Members of the Senate:

Members of the House of Commons:

I pray that Divine Providence may guide you in the discharge of your responsibilities.

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister) moved:

That the speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be taken into consideration later this day, and that this order have precedence over all other business, unless and until otherwise ordered, except introduction of bills and government notices of motions, until disposed of.

Motion agreed to.