

Throne certain amendments to the Northwest Territories Act. These will not involve major changes in legislation, nor will they prejudice or interfere with the work of the Advisory Commission. Measures designed to facilitate the establishment of a territorial public service in the Northwest Territories will be proposed, as will provisions to extend the franchise to all residents of the Northwest Territories. This we feel is obviously essential at this time to ensure a full voice for territorial residents in their government.

We will propose that the stipends for Council members of both Territories be raised to more closely reflect the scale of indemnities paid to members of other legislatures in the country and the special conditions which the members face in the service of the people of the north.

In the development of these plans, the Government is very conscious of the importance of the northern areas to the entire country. The purpose is to ensure maximum opportunity for the people of the north and the full development of the physical resources. The report of the Advisory Commission will, we hope, form a basis for the framing of a continuing development program for the Northwest Territories.

**Mr. Gene Rhéaume (Northwest Territories):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome, as will the people of the north, this announcement of the Government's plan to continue with a vital program of northern development which was launched some seven years ago. The most important part of the Minister's statement in these days of civil rights struggles is that all the residents of the Northwest Territories are to be given the right to vote in territorial elections, a goal that has been my stated objective since entering this Chamber two years ago and a project that I know has been close to the Minister, as it was to the Ministers of Northern Affairs before him.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is well for the House to recall at this point that it is only since 1962 that there has been a Member of Parliament for the entire Northwest Territories, and that it is only since 1962 that all Canadians have had the right to vote in Federal elections. Members of this Parliament should also recall that it was through the vehicle of the Nielsen bill, sponsored by the hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen)—a man who daily impresses us with his many facets and interests—and with the full support of the then Prime Minister that this legislation granting the vote was passed.

#### *Northwest Territories Advisory Commission*

The right to vote in local elections is a completely necessary and logical step toward equality of rights and responsibilities of those northerners, who will now for the first time be heard in the Councils of the Northwest Territories on those things that most closely touch their lives.

The step announced today is both the result and the vindication of the concepts of the previous administration which were rooted in the belief in our northern people and the belief in the northern destiny of this country.

The appointment of the Advisory Commission is noteworthy for other reasons. It is in keeping with the recommendations of the Council of the Northwest Territories, and will have on it a resident of the Northwest Territories in the person of His Worship Mayor John Parker of Yellowknife, a man who has spent years in the north and who has a special knowledge of the mining industry. This is an industry which will surely provide the economic base for this part of Canada. The Commission will also, if it follows its terms of reference, consult with northerners wherever they may be found. In this regard I would emphasize the necessity for the Commission to meet with the Indian and Eskimo people who bring 5,000 years of northern experience to the problems of the area.

The terms of reference of the Commission I believe are sufficiently broad to include consideration of the possibility of representation in the Senate for the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Until such time as these two areas of northern Canada are represented in the other place, the north country will not be fully represented in Parliament. I hope the terms of reference are broad enough to include a consideration of the role of the territorial Governments at Federal-Provincial Conferences. In the Commission's examination of the Northern Affairs and National Resources Act, it will conceivably and hopefully touch upon the problems in respect of the administration of the Quebec Eskimo people.

There are two other features that I believe are worthy of note. The provision for setting up a territorial public service makes sense. We must have in this country locally oriented administrations with a backlog of northern experience. The proposal to increase the stipends of the Councillors of the Northwest Territories is also well taken. The Northwest Territories consists of approximately 1,353,000 square miles of this country and, if I understood the Minister's statement correctly, about seven elected Councillors will be required to travel this area.