



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 50/25

THE UNFOLDING PATTERN OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

An address by Mr. Robert H. Winters, Minister of Resources and Development, to the Alberta and Northwest Chamber of Mines at Edmonton, Alberta, July 5, 1950.

At a time when national economic development is in the foreground of public interest our meeting today accords me an opportunity to review briefly the unfolding pattern of development of our northern region.

Economic Significance of the North

I speak of an area containing nearly 1,500,000 square miles - one quarter of the entire area of Canada. Potentially it is one of the richest sections of the continent in terms of natural assets.

From the earliest times fur production has been a mainstay of the northern economy. In 1948 the harvest of over half a million fur pelts in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon produced over two million dollars. The fur trade continues to provide the chief source of income for native Indians and Eskimos as well as for many white residents of the Territories.

But it is the mining industry, more than any other, that has been responsible for the opening up and permanent settlement of Canada's northland. I refer to the industry in all its branches - but particularly to gold, silver, base metals, oil and uranium.

Mining possibilities were believed by early explorers to exist in many areas of Canada's North. But transportation difficulties, as well as climate, hindered development.

The aeroplane proved to be the key to unlock substantial amounts of the metallic treasures of the Shield - the same Shield which in mineral areas of the central provinces has added so enormously to the wealth of Canada.

Fortunately there are few places in the Northwest Territories in which it would not be possible for aircraft to find a safe landing on water or on ice - depending on the season. These favourable conditions and, above all, the invaluable efforts of pioneering bush pilots, based on this city, ushered in a new era of expansion north of the 60th parallel.

The spectacular discovery, on the shores of Great Bear Lake, of uranium, the present source of atomic power - has focused world attention on the North.

But there has been much else besides. The discovery of gold deposits in the Yellowknife area and of base metals on the south shore of Great Slave Lake finally dispelled the myth that the Canadian northland was a barren, unprofitable wilderness.

The white man is definitely in the North to stay! For the business of mining precious or base metals is seldom a seasonal one. Actually the mining industry, by and large, provides the least interrupted employment of any primary industry in Canada.

These northern mining developments are not any flash in the pan. The continued intensity of prospecting and mining in the Territories made 1949 a banner year. The value of the industry's production increased by more than fifty per cent over that of the previous year.

The most recent mining reports from the Northwest Territories are favourable. Companies are continuing to increase production totals and more men than ever are employed. One mine in the Yellowknife field now employs 500 men and is erecting some of the finest buildings to be found in any mining camp in Canada. This particular gold mine is presently milling 420 tons of ore per day and it is expected to reach 750 tons per day before the end of next year.

Developments in the Pine Point area on the south shore of Great Slave, are most encouraging. A year or two ago there was widespread interest and dissatisfaction in the announcement that at least two large companies were planning to spend \$200,000 on a three-year period of prospecting and exploration. In the present season alone one company, I understand, is planning to spend \$200,000 to determine the most favourable structure for its mining operations in the Pine Point area.

There is no doubt that the basic long-term development of the North will depend on the continued discovery and use of its mineral wealth. Drilling programs continue to multiply and the spirit of the men active in northern mining enterprises is definitely optimistic.

In addition to metal mining, there is the matter of oil production. You are all familiar with the Fort Norman field. Permits have been issued this year covering new drilling for petroleum and natural gas in the vicinity of Fort Providence and Big Island. Should these efforts meet with success, the whole mining outlook in Canada's sub-Arctic would be rapidly transformed.

Unlike minerals and furs, it is improbable that the forest resources of the Territories will be developed on an export basis. But the presence of valuable stands in the Mackenzie District and in the Yukon is vitally important to the protection of watersheds, to the production of wood for fuel and building purposes, as well as in providing cover for wildlife.

Assistance Given by the Department

Ever since Confederation there has been a steady growth of federal government services designed to aid in the development of Canada's resources.

First, under the Department of the Interior, then under the Department of Mines and Resources, these federal services expanded until it became apparent that a new grouping of administrative duties was necessary.

In the interests of continuing efficiency, it was decided to divide up these numerous and varied functions among several departments. On January 18th of this year, the re-alignment became effective. On that day the Department of Resources and Development officially came into existence along with the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

The new Department of Resources and Development has retained administrative responsibilities in federal forestry matters, water resources, the Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, wildlife conservation, the national parks, the National Museum of Canada and special projects such as the Snare River power development.

In addition there has been transferred to Resources and Development the Canadian Government Travel Bureau and supervision of the Trans-Canada Highway Project...

The federal government recognizes the value of organizations such as the Chamber of Mines and of the actively interested Chambers of Commerce in the epic task of opening up and properly utilizing the natural resources of the great north country.

As a result of the marked expansion of services in the North, the picture of our northern regions is no longer one of the lone prospector painfully picking his way across uncharted wastes.

Today by plane, motorboat or snowmobile he is following the pioneering work of geologists, geographers and survey engineers.

The Federal Government offers a wide variety of services invaluable to the northern prospector, miner and metallurgist. Federal agencies are especially well equipped to assist in geological mapping, in surveying and otherwise advancing the industry, the New North and the nation. Scientific surveys have done much to help develop the Canadian North and are being continued.

The general uptrend in the mining industry of the north country finds its reflection in the number of additional requests received by the Department of Resources and Development for increases in highway facilities and in electric power production.

In the matter of power supply, the Northwest Territories Power Commission constructed a transmission line connecting the Yellowknife terminal of the Snare River line with that of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company adjacent to the town. This arrangement enables the Commission to deliver power to the Yellowknife Power Company for sale within the town limits. In addition good progress has been made in the construction of diesel-generated power plants at Fort Smith and Hay River.

Water and highway transportation into and through the Northwest Territories has also improved in recent years. Over 2,500 miles of river routes link together the main settlements north of Edmonton. The construction of the Mackenzie Highway has been of remarkable benefit to mining and fisheries enterprises in the Great Slave Lake area.

The Federal Government's Northern Transportation Company has acquired a score of heavy tugs designed to haul freight barges. The Company possesses sixty barges with a total carrying capacity ranging from 20,000 to 40,000 tons, as water levels vary. Freight rates have recently been reduced by the Company.

In the Yukon, water transportation, the Alaska Highway and various access roads expedite the movement of forest protection crews with the most modern fire-fighting equipment. In the Northwest Territories transportation by plane is added.

In the Yukon Territory significant developments are also taking place. The Federal Government is spending \$2,400,000 on road improvements in the Yukon during the present fiscal year. The building of the road link between Carmacks and Whitehorse will provide an access road from the Alaska Highway to Mayo.

The appropriation of \$500,000 for a power development at Mayo enables the Northwest Territories and Yukon Power Commission to make a start in the development of hydro-electric power at Mayo. This project is designed to facilitate the production of silver-lead ores in the Mayo and Keno mining district.

The ultimate cost of the project will be about \$3,000,000 and the maximum capacity of the plant will be between 6,000 and 8,000 horse power.

It is expected that the first stage of the project will result in the production of 3,000 horse power. Physical work on this power development should be completed by 1951. Because of the time required to secure and install machinery, it is not likely that power will be delivered until 1952.

Because the fur trade continues to provide the chief source of income for so many of the natives in the north, the Department of Resources and Development is particularly interested in wildlife management in the Territories.

Efforts are being directed toward the elimination of wasteful trapping practices. By registration of traplines, by the enforcement of proper regulations and by sound instructions in conservation, trappers are being taught that wildlife is, in fact, a crop to be harvested wisely.

The Canadian Wildlife Service has scientists working on a variety of matters directly related to the economic life of the North. Some of these scientists are permanently stationed in the Territories.

In March, 1935, you will recall that a herd of nearly 3,000 reindeer from Alaska were delivered, under Federal Government auspices, to a selected range on the east side of the Mackenzie Delta. These animals were the foundation stock of an experimental project.

The plan was to train young natives in reindeer herding and to build an industry which would provide food and clothing suitable to the climate.

The reindeer have increased considerably in number and are now divided into three herds estimated to total nearly 7,000. Large quantities of meat have been used for native welfare, including meat provided during an emergency last winter when illness struck natives of the Delta area.

A good start has been made in the mapping of northern forests by air photography. Forest maps have been prepared in this way covering an area of 1,500 square miles along the Peace River in Wood Buffalo National Park. In these stands there are many acres containing 50,000 board feet of lumber.

Forest management, though still in its infancy in the North, can play a leading part in maintaining the economic stability of the entire region. Cutting restrictions and fire protection measures help safeguard these far northern forests from rapid depletion.

In the North, as elsewhere, it is the human problem that is of first importance. In an effort to help solve the problem in its special aspects in the Territories, a wide variety of social services have been introduced.

Family allowances, old age pensions and special assistance to the blind and helpless have been carried to the native population of the North.

Family allowances are not paid in cash but in kind, according to an authorized list of goods. This list is so compiled as to bring the greatest possible benefit to growing children. Large quantities of powdered milk and other prepared foods are among the items supplied.

Medical services in the form of hospitals, nursing stations and periodic patrols have been established.

The expansion of educational facilities in the Territories has no counterpart in Canadian history. It is an inspiring story. Permanent schools are now functioning in most communities. Welfare teachers with special training and qualifications are giving excellent leadership. The educational system includes a school of opportunity at Yellowknife where promising students from every part of the Northwest Territories may pursue higher studies.

It is doubtful whether, twenty years ago, any citizen of the North thought in terms of tourist trade for the Territories. Nevertheless the existence of a fine new hotel in Yellowknife as well as in Hay River will help attract tourists to this New North.

Any increase in the flow of tourists to the northland or to the national parks is bound to benefit the Province of Alberta. As a matter of record, substantial gains have been registered in parks attendance in the twelve months ended March 31, 1950.

During that period 1.8 million visitors entered the national parks, representing an increase of about half a million over the total for the previous year.

Because of the value and importance of the national parks to the people of this province, I am taking the liberty to digress for a few minutes to speak on the subject of the parks.

I expect to leave in a few days time for a visit to the Territories. Before doing so, however, it is my intention to take part in the official ceremonies on July 8th at Jasper, in connection with the opening of the new Recreation Centre there. The completion of the various units of this project marks a main step forward in a broad program of national parks improvement.

It is the aim to develop Canada's national parks into areas of healthy enjoyment and relaxation, unmatched anywhere in the world.

Good roads are vital to the success of the parks. The Department has had under way an intensive program of highway improvement in the National Parks. For example, during the 1949 season on the Banff-Jasper Highway 42 miles of highway were cleared, 20 miles of new grade were built and 16 miles were gravelled.

Reconstruction of the Maligne Canyon-Medicine Lake Road in Jasper Park is continued and a new roadway to the Lake Edith sub-division was cleared, graded and gravelled.

Because of its proximity to Edmonton and because of the unique nature of its wildlife resources, the development of Elk Island National Park is followed, I know, with keen interest by Albertans generally.

I am glad to announce that not only have plans been completed in the matter, but arrangements have been made to build the first unit of the park historical museum this year.

This museum project will commemorate the early Ukrainian settlement of the district. It will consist of three units. The first will be a replica of an early Ukrainian farm home. It will house exhibits of early household furnishings as well as farm tools and equipment.

The second unit will be a larger modern structure to contain other historical exhibits and specimens of the flora and fauna of Elk Island National Park. This building will also serve as a central community hall for public lectures and concerts.

The third unit will be a replica of old Fort Victoria.

The establishment as a whole will be designated as a memorial to the life and service of Dr. A.E. Archer. It will bear the name of this pioneer medical man of the Lamont District, one of the most public-spirited Canadians of his generation...

Conclusion

In my remarks today I have touched on a number of features of the work carried on by the Department in the large and vitally important field of resources development.

Resources, climate and people - these are the chief elements in the growth of nations. What is done by individuals to make the land productive - helped or hindered by climate - determines the economic success of a country. In these efforts it is one of the tasks of enlightened governments to give any assistance possible.

There has always been vitality in the Canadian North - even when hopes were lowest. The challenge of early frontier life demanded the most of human energies and resolution.

Today, with the frontier far less formidable, the new pattern of development can be seen steadily unfolding. It reveals an even greater future for the North than the most optimistic pioneer could have envisioned.

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