

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

5<sup>TH</sup> COUNCIL, 27<sup>TH</sup> SESSION

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 1-27

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## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 1, 1964 (First Session)

### COMMISSIONER'S ADDRESS

I open the 27th Session of the Council of the Northwest Territories by extending a welcome to new members. Mr. Lyle Trimble elected by the people far down the Mackenzie, on the Delta and Arctic coast; Mr. Peter Baker from that great country north of Great Slave Lake. Appointed by the Governor General to bring to the Council experience and judgement gained in various sections of Canadian life Air Marshal Hugh Campbell; Mr. Robert Harvey; Mr. Stuart Hodgson and Dr. Frank Vallée.

To those members who are not new, I extend welcome no less warm, - Mr. John Goodall, whose worth many Councils have known; Mr. Robert Porritt, who returns to represent the people of Mackenzie South after a four-year absence; - and Mr. W.G. Brown, Deputy Commissioner and knowledgeable steersman for the ship of state that is the Government of the Northwest Territories, - government of the exceedingly small population of 25,000 persons, in the exceedingly large land of a million square miles.

In 1962, a predecessor Council passed a resolution recommending the creation of a Territory of the Mackenzie that would have characteristics appropriate to the stage of development in that district. The Federal Government of the day were of like mind and prepared legislation to give effect to the change. Although the present Government introduced the Bills in the House of Commons last July and the subject was referred to a Parliamentary Committee for study, progress in the matter has not been such that early action can be expected.

The Northwest Territories and its antecedent Rupertsland have been an imagination-stirring feature of Canada for three centuries. It still is. The Council of the Northwest Territories is more recent, - but it nevertheless dates from 1875. It will not be far behind the oldest provincial governments in celebrating its centennial, - and considerably ahead of some.

Though the Government of the Northwest Territories has had a long life, it has not had a placid one. Changes have been many and radical.

In 1898, the Northwest Territories was diminished by splitting off Yukon to be a Territory by itself.

In 1905, it was further diminished by splitting off Alberta and Saskatchewan to become Provinces.

In 1912, the District of Ungava, i.e., what is now called New Quebec was cut out from the Northwest Territories and made part of the Province of Quebec.

In consequence of these and several other less extensive changes, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been altered in form and function more than once. After the creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, there was legislative authority for a Council, but none was appointed until 1921. The Commissioner governed in autocratic isolation. It would appear that preservation of law and order was almost the extent of government activity. The Council appointed in 1921 consisted entirely of federal officials and it remained so until 1951 (except for the appointment of a lone N.W.T. resident in 1946). The first real change toward representative government came in 1951 when three constituencies were created, - and increased to four in 1954. The number series by which this session is designated the

27th dates from 1951 when elected Council Members reappeared after there had been none for 46 years. There was reason for the Right Honourable Louis St. Laurent saying when he introduced the Northern Affairs and National Resources Act on December 3, 1953, that Canada had administered these vast regions of the north in a continual state of absence of mind. Since 1951, however, there has been very real growth. Members meeting today form a legislative assembly with a history meriting respect. Many distinguished members have served. They have moulded it into a jurisdiction analogous to that of a province. The Northwest Territories body of law stands reasonably adequate beside counterpart provincial legislation. Works enlarge each year. Perhaps it is worth noting that the Territorial expenditure in 1952-53 was \$433,762. This year it is estimated at \$8,900,000. The main difference in jurisdiction between the Territories and a province is in the matter of natural resources. Whereas provinces own their land and what is on and under it, the Territories do not. The Federal Government retains control of the land - and responsibility for resource development, - as they did in respect of the land of Alberta and Saskatchewan for 25 years after those provinces were created in 1905, i.e., until the Transfer of Resources Act was passed in 1930. The main difference constitutionally is that a province is sovereign within the functions assigned by the constitution. The Government of the Territories is not sovereign - it was created by federal legislation and the Commissioner, as the chief executive, can be required to act under federal instructions. This distinction, however, is in practice more apparent than real; you of the Council establish the legislation which I cannot override or amend and which indeed is binding on all persons in the Territories. Beyond this, you control the territorial purse; I can spend nothing from territorial funds without your concurrence and consent in advance. Indeed the most significant responsibility facing you during this, the first session of the new Council, is the consideration of the financial appropriations for the current fiscal year.

Members of Council, fifteen Bills will be laid before you including the Main Appropriation Ordinance for the fiscal year 1964-65, and Supplementary Appropriation Ordinance No. 1, 1964-65. It is unusual to deal with Main Appropriations at the Summer Session. Usually the budget is the main business for the Winter Session but none could be held from November to now for reasons that were laid before your predecessors at the time and which moved them to vote fiscal supply as an interim and undetailed measure.

The other Bills are not lengthy. Two of them relate to increased allowances for the blind and the disabled and for those in receipt of Old Age Assistance, to bring the allowances paid in the Territories into line with the rate in the rest of Canada. Two ordinances concern franchises for telephone service and electric power at various settlements. A new ordinance formalizes the making of loans to students to help meet the cost of higher education under the program, already approved by Council, of financial assistance for this purpose. Another new ordinance would give municipalities the right to hold referendums on the question of permitting commercial sports on Sunday. Minor amendments are proposed for other ordinances.

In addition to the bills, there are twenty-three Sessional Papers for the consideration of Council and several subjects on which the Commissioner asks Council's advice. A complete list of bills, sessional papers and references for advice has been prepared and distributed to members. Reports will be presented to Council on several departments of activity. There will be opportunity for discussion of each to the extent Council desires.

This list of sessional papers and references for advice is unusually long because there has been no full session of Council since last July and because the Territories faces many questions consequent upon the growth of local governments that is taking place.

The Director of the National Gallery of Canada has given us the use of this singularly appropriate Council room. It is with special satisfaction that I convene here this Council to deal with problems of a section of Canada that has engaged the attention of many artists, and whose people are themselves making notable contributions to the aesthetic character of Canada.

This first session of the new Council is one of two to be held in 1964. The second is usually in the Territories and you will be asked for advice on the time and place. It would be advantageous to make the session now opening one of two weeks' duration, carrying over to a fall session any business unfinished as of June 12.

Members of the Council of the Northwest Territories, I trust that our deliberations and our actions may be in the best interests of the people of the Territories whom it is our privilege to serve.

22 May, 1964.