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SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 9.
(First Session, 1968).

NEW TOWNSITE FOR SETTLEMENT OF RAE

DISPOSITION

Tabled	To Committee	Accepted as Read	Accepted as Amended	Deferred (to Session)	Rejected	Noted not Considered

NEW TOWNSITE FOR SETTLEMENT OF RAE

At its 35th session in November, 1967, Council adopted a motion requesting a complete report on the new townsite presently under construction opposite the settlement of Rae, N.W.T.

The decision to provide a school and pupil residence in the Yellowknife-Stagg River area was made by the Council of the Northwest Territories in 1964, at which time the District Engineer of the Public Health Engineering Division, Department of National Health and Welfare, prepared a report on the existing site of Rae for presentation to the Northwest Territories Council. The report called attention to the insanitary conditions which prevailed in the settlement and to the difficulties of effecting any improvement, and concluded that Rae was not a suitable location for the new school and hostel.

Certain works had been initiated to improve conditions in the existing settlement, for example, the provision of a water supply system including a small treatment plant. In the light of the report on site conditions, it was decided to seek a better site for the school and hostel. It was apparent that despite any improvements which might be made in Rae, the additional load on the area, attributable to the proposed school and hostel, would be far more than the water supply and sewage disposal facilities could support. Council decided that it wished to see the school and hostel built in Rae and that Rae should be understood to include Russell Lake, which is two and one-half to three miles from the existing settlement. Council's motion gave no indication of its intentions for the settlement. If the school and hostel were located at Russell Lake, children from the settlement would have to be transported to and fro indefinitely unless the Rae settlement could be relocated close to the school. There was no mention of offering incentives for residents to move, nor was there any request that the Indian Affairs Branch construct housing in the new location.

It was also necessary to establish whether the Russell Lake area was capable of supporting a new town and whether it would be a substantially better location from an engineering standpoint than the original settlement. In August 1965, Associated Engineering Services Limited was engaged to prepare a feasibility study on sites in the general area of Rae. The consultants were on the site in the last week of that month. About the same time, representatives of the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration visited Rae together with representatives of C.M.H.C. They were of the opinion that Indian housing for the Rae band of Indians was urgently required and directed a request to this Department asking if any consideration had been given to a new townsite in the vicinity or to development of the present townsite, and stressing the need for a "planned village".

In September 1965, the report from Associated Engineering Services Limited was received. The consultants had considered four sites:

1. Rae
2. Russell Lake
3. An inland site known as "Cut-line Site"
4. The West Channel Site

With reference to the existing site, the consultant reported that the site did not offer the chance of better things that the community deserved. The usable area in the Russell Lake site consisted of approximately 33 acres, of which only 20 to 25 could be described as good. The problems associated with the site were the lack of depth in the lake (5 ft. for a distance of 900 ft. from the shore), the lack of road access and the lack of a satisfactory place in which to discharge waste water.

According to the consultants, "In summary, this is a small area with few attractive features. It should be rejected on the basis of size and also difficulties of access, water supply and sewage disposal." The "cut-line site" is a large flat area two to three miles from Rae, and while it is good land, the consultants were of the opinion that the area should be rejected on the basis of its distance from the water front and the unavailability of a potable water supply. Site 4 on the West Channel, while approximately eight miles from Rae by road, is only about two miles by lake and was recommended as the site of the school. Ground conditions are good for foundations and buried utilities, the topography permits relatively easy development, the site adjoins the existing highway and has sufficient area to permit much larger development if necessary, the water supply is much superior to that at Rae and sewage disposal and buried pipelines can be provided quite readily. In recommending the location of the school and hostel at the West Channel site, the consultants advised that any movement of population should be voluntary. They were of the opinion that if the new development provided better facilities than those provided in Rae, many of the existing inhabitants would locate near the school and that in a period of ten years possibly only 100 persons would remain at Rae. The existing site would be sanitarily capable of accommodating this reduced number.

Associated Engineering Services Limited was working in cooperation with D.L. Makale of Makale, Holloway & Associates Limited. On March 31, 1966, Mr. Makale submitted a proposal for a new town on the West Channel site. The proposals included:

- (a) a school and a 200-bed dormitory,
- (b) an administrative center, community center and medical center.
- (c) a site for residential development with single family and multiple family residences,
- (d) retail and highway commercial areas,
- (e) camping grounds, dock area and dog compound,
- (f) adequate utilities and services.

The development was carefully staged and was aimed at producing a self-contained and well balanced townsite offering a living environment comparable to that of small organized communities in other parts of Canada.

Page 4 of the Makale report states:

"The fact that the plan for the new townsite is being prepared does not mean that a drastic relocation of the present settlement of Rae could be and should be anticipated. The settlement still represents a home town to some 700 inhabitants and the break with the past is as a rule very difficult, especially for the older generation.

The matter of relocation, therefore, has to be one of encouragement and with the provision of good quality amenities, educational facilities and possibilities of employment and individual business enterprise, the new site could become exceedingly attractive to members of the band. Not only would it provide sanitary and proper living facilities but it also would assist greatly with the transition from a semi-nomadic way of life into that of a rather complex industrial society. Therefore, the resettlement is visualized as a process of inducement and encouragement, but essentially one of personal choice.

The new town was designed to accommodate some 2500 inhabitants. This figure included provision for the present population of Rae, approximately 700, and an additional 400 to 500 members of the Dogrib tribe living a semi-nomadic life in the channel of lakes north of Marion Lake. Provision was also made for natural increase resulting from the high birth rate in the area.

The general form of the community consists of a commercial area on the north side of the Mackenzie Highway, with a park and administrative center at the west end. Immediately north of the business area lies the school complex with sites for residential development surrounding the school site. Docking, camping grounds and the dog compound lie to the east adjoining the West Channel. To the south of the highway, provision will be made for future residential development when further expansion dictates. The general layout of the community is very attractive and provides good circulation without traffic penetration into the residential areas. Stage 1 would consist of the school, five or six apartment buildings, seventeen residential lots, an R.C.M. Police building, a church, a hostel and limited commercial facilities.

There has been close consultation with the local inhabitants throughout. Associated Engineering Services Limited discussed the problems with the local inhabitants and were accompanied on the field trip by Mr. Peter Baker. In June copies of the consultants' report were circulated for review. At that time Mr. Sivertz wrote, "I am very keen on this site. It seems to me excellent in every particular. The way in which the consultants have dealt with it seems good and in the absence of any defect or amendment you may advise, I would say that this plan is acceptable and the work should be put under way at the earliest possible time."

In November 1966, Associated Engineering Services Limited was engaged to design utilities for the site and in September 1967, Fraser and Rice of Edmonton began road construction.

The decision to make the study was made by the Territorial Council and was paid for out of Territorial funds. There have been frequent consultations to ensure that the residents are fully informed not only on the progress but also on the policy for development of the new community. The Government is committing itself to a heavy investment in this area which must be used to provide the best possible services for the future residents. If for sentimental or other reasons further settlement in an insanitary area such as the existing settlement is encouraged, not only are the newcomers exposed to known health hazards, but unsatisfactory conditions for existing residents are further aggravated. The decision to provide new facilities on a better site having good road and water access must be considered the correct solution. The present proposal will make housing or sites for housing available to any local inhabitants (whether they live in Rae or in the surrounding area) who wish to live near the new facilities. Nevertheless, the services at present provided in Rae will be continued, but without further expansion, as long as a reasonable demand exists. If members of the younger generation move from the existing settlement to the new one, this alone will contribute much to the improvement of conditions in the existing settlement.