

TELE-FACTS

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A Water Development Plan For Alberta

AN ADDRESS BY

Hon. Harry E. Strom

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Hon. E. C. Manning:

Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome once more to another "Tele-Facts" program.

One of the most important, and certainly one of the most valuable resources that we possess in this Province is our water supply. During the last number of years, there has been increasing concern all over this continent, and a growing realization that progressive steps must be taken to conserve the water resources of our land if we are going to avoid serious troubles in the days that lie ahead. We, in your government, in this Province, are very conscious of the importance of this resource, and we therefore are taking steps to see that Alberta's water resources are properly cared for and conserved so that they will be available for all our necessary uses in the future. Tonight, I have asked your Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Mr. Harry Strom, to talk to you about this vital and important natural resource. Ladies and Gentlemen, here's Mr. Strom . . .

Hon. Harry E. Strom:

Good Evening:

Today, throughout the world, there is a growing awareness, at all levels of society, of the vital importance of water resources, and the need for sound, intelligent development and management of these resources to ensure the continued growth and future economic stability of our country. In Canada, and particularly in Alberta, because of our geographical location in relation to other Provinces, this awareness is emphasized by the conditions we observe in our

neighboring country of the United States, where the water situation has been labelled as a national crisis. We in Canada are not experiencing a shortage of water, except on a very limited regional basis that can be rectified by proper water management.

However, in recent months, much attention has been focused on various water plans that envisage the development of the water resources lying within the boundaries of Alberta. Recognizing Alberta's responsibility in the field of water development, our Premier announced last fall that our Province was prepared to proceed with a Water Development Plan. To further substantiate our desire for action, the Speech from the Throne has also stated that we will be proceeding with our Water Development Plan and funds will be provided if approved by the Legislature.

Since making these announcements, we have been criticized by some for moving too fast and without regard to the other Provinces. Our government feels that it is imperative that we set up our program in order to avoid the need of crash development programs later on as the needs arise. The decision of our Government commits us to a long-range plan that was originally conceived by the Reclamation Service of the Federal Government with certain modifications instituted by our Water Resources Branch.

In Alberta, there are two principal drainage basins — one flows northward into the Arctic Ocean, and the other flows generally north-easterly to the Hudson Bay. These, in turn, may be divided into some ten major basins, which, in turn, can be sub-divided into any number of smaller basins, the size and nature of each sufficiently versatile to satisfy the desire of any resource development planner. The distribution

of our Province's water resources, in relation to the population and water-use demand distribution, immediately establishes a general course which a water plan should follow. As water utilization in the southern areas of the Province is developed to the maximum without satisfying demands, additional supplies can be introduced from more northern regions of greater water abundance and lesser demand. As stated, this is a general course, since it will not always be physically feasible to make diversions to serve all areas in which excessive demands may arise. Efforts will be made therefore, to fully utilize the available resources for use within that area, rather than to transport water to some other downstream location which could be feasibly served from other sources.

These considerations will be particularly applicable to the supply of inter-provincial waters. In making diversions from northern watershed areas, these should be in harmony with the potential of that area in order that water supplies are not depleted to the detriment of any area.

Recently, considerable concern has been expressed regarding certain diversions proposed in the Red Deer River Diversion Project. It has been feared that present streams will be depleted in order to provide water for the "have-not" regions. Our plan provides for the building of dams that will store water during flood seasons, and so will provide flood protection so urgently needed at the present time. The water so stored, will be used to augment low-flow periods in existing rivers and also to be diverted as available.

May I emphasize again, our policy will be to improve flows of our rivers through diversion and storage. It is evident, therefore, that any watershed management on a development pro-

gram must be flexible to bend with, and accommodate the trend of the period. Planning must be based on realistic evaluation of human needs. This planning must receive the approval stamp of engineering practicality, economic justification, and financial feasibility. We recognize that our plans must have social acceptability in all areas that are involved. This will involve a high level of presentation of engineering facts to convince public agencies that the proposed development is not only needed, but has a favorable probability of success. We hope to assure private owners that the work proposed for their property can, in many instances, be beneficial to them, and also for the long-term benefits of our Province. We propose, at all times, to meet with individuals or groups and to explain to them what we are trying to do in their particular areas.

Much of the water resource information necessary to complete plans for a water development program has already been accumulated for some areas of the Province and is ready for application to a watershed-basin-oriented type of program. In other areas, more work is yet required, some of which is underway. Plans of the watershed basins are being drawn, on which is super-imposed data as it becomes available. In other cases, projects have been studied which are of a specific nature, rather than pertaining to general water resources development. These projects are associated with existing problems such as flood control, water supplies, drainage, and erosion. The obvious immediate need for such projects is sufficient justification for their implementation without elaborate studies such as those related to economic benefits.

It is our intention to step up our fifty-fifty program for the implementation of drainage pro-

jects throughout the Province. On smaller projects, such as the drainage schemes that are being constructed in the Peace River area, there is a growing realization that these too must be orientated towards an overall basin plan. Co-ordination of activity between the Water Resources Branch, the Department of Lands and Forests, our Department of Highways, and the Northern Alberta Development Council, has encouraged this type of planning. This year, the Water Resources Branch, with the help of our Northern Development Council, proposes to construct several drainage projects in the Peace River area. To implement our proposals, it will be necessary to increase the staff of our Water Resources Branch. Approval will be sought for some forty new positions, and it is expected that by 1972 our Water Resources staff will be doubled. Additional space is being arranged for in our Calgary office to house our expanding staff. In Edmonton, our Water Resources Branch will also need additional space and this is being negotiated for at the present time. It will be necessary to seek out and engage, and be prepared to pay for the services of specialists with experience in the various component fields of the overall program. It will be necessary to engage the services of consulting firms to undertake specific studies and investigations, particularly those related to potential damsites and storage reservoirs. The use of private consulting firms will avoid the undesirable growth of a complex organization and permit the establishment of an organization of administrators and planners to guide and direct the various aspects of the program.

The next two years have been designated as a "tooling-up" period during which intensive preparation will be undertaken. In the Premier's

statement of last fall, it was stated we would be beginning a stage development of the Red Deer River Diversion, or the Pearce Scheme, as it is more commonly known. It is proposed the necessary storage reservoirs be constructed in the upper reaches of the rivers as a first stage of development, and that later this water will be channelled to the east central area of our Province. The Red Deer River Diversion Project at this time is planned as a stream flow control project that will give protection in times of high flow or flood, and will provide water to east central Alberta for various needs and developments.

In the Southern part of the Province, the P.F.R.A., at the request of Alberta, has for some time been investigating sites on the Old Man River system. Investigations at the Gap site, long thought to be ideal, disclosed certain foundation conditions which prompted the decision to look for an alternate site. Alberta therefore, requested that studies be made of what is known as The Three Rivers Site, located north of the town of Pincher Creek, below the junction of the Castle and the Crowsnest Rivers with the Old Man River. Although these studies are not yet complete, they have progressed sufficiently to virtually assure engineering feasibility. As a stream flow regulator, this project would provide all manner of downstream Provincial and inter-Provincial benefits. It is proposed that, once the final report is received from P.F.R.A., assuming it is favorable, consideration be given to an early start on the construction of this project. Alberta expects that because of the inter-Provincial benefits Federal participation will be arranged for.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope with the little

information I have been able to give you tonight, you will recognize that we are indeed moving forward on a Water Development plan for the Province of Alberta. Thank you and Goodnight.
