

INTRODUCTION

FIRST established in order to deal with an emergency situation of great consequence to the efficient prosecution of the Dominion's war effort, the Office of the Commissioner of Defence Construction was later re-established under the more comprehensive title of the "Ministry of Works."

Though information of the work carried out under the supervision of the Commissioner of Defence Construction was for security reasons not available for publication, enough of it was seen by the public for there to be some general understanding of the nature of the supreme effort that was made at that time by the Dominion to provide defence works, camps, hospitals, air-raid shelters, and a hundred other types of constructional works needed by a nation at war. That the rapid and efficient provision of all these requirements should call for some form of higher control and organization was fairly obvious, though no detailed account of what was actually done has hitherto been made public.

While removing the atmosphere of crisis and lessening the urgency and tempo of wartime, the advent of peace can hardly be said to have removed the major problems facing the building and constructional industries of the Dominion. Six years' arrears of house-building, factory-building, school-building, hydro-electric construction, bridge renewals, land development, highway maintenance, and many other forms of peacetime building and construction must now be made up before the physical capital of the Dominion can be properly related to her expanded and redistributed population. The organization of resources and general oversight of the Dominion's effort to meet these urgent peacetime needs in their proper order is the immediate and pressing task of the Ministry of Works.

Constructional work is creative work. Once carried out it fixes for many years, perhaps for generations, the pattern, the surroundings and environment, and the direction and flow of activity. If well planned, its power of conferring benefit on society is almost unique; if poorly planned and unco-ordinated, it can quickly lead to a vast amount of unnecessary waste, ugliness, inefficiency, duplication, and lost opportunities for those who must live and work throughout their lives amongst the results of what is done.

Planning, co-ordination, administration, and research of a high order are therefore necessary if the building and constructional industries as a whole are to carry out their task in the manner best designed to serve the interests of the Dominion. The task of co-ordinating the activities of the many authorities, interests, and agencies involved in this work of planning, so that an harmonious whole shall emerge from the total of their separate efforts, has also been entrusted to the Ministry of Works.

In the following paragraphs it is proposed to deal at greater length with each of the above aspects in turn. This report is divided into three parts. The first part covers the events of the war period; the second describes the immediate post-war problems and the steps being taken to deal with them, and also the placing of works programming and long-term physical planning on a practical working basis; Part III deals with the administrative changes which have followed on the establishment of the Ministry of Works and its relations with other Departments and authorities.