

Housing is, however, only one of the many forms of building which are competing at the present time for available man-power and materials. The high wartime birth-rate has greatly increased the number of children in the school ages, while the establishment of entirely new suburbs, the changed distribution of the population, and the raising of the school leaving age have further aggravated the difficult problem of school accommodation and rendered substantial measures of relief absolutely imperative. University student populations are now double their pre-war strength, while the increasing numbers at the oldest ages, where sickness rates are highest, combined with the effect of the war and the social security scheme, have taxed the Dominion's hospitals beyond capacity.

At the same time many industrial undertakings are being launched and others extended, these making high priority calls on building-capacity, whilst tourist accommodation, banks, insurance offices, warehouses, bulk stores, shops, community halls, churches, administrative office buildings, post-offices, courthouses, police-stations, and railway-stations compete with each other and with housing, schools, and hospitals for labour and materials.

7. THE URGENT DEMAND FOR WORKS

Partly competing with buildings for man-power, timber, and cement, and partly in a field of its own, hampered rather by a lack of imported machinery and equipment, the Dominion's need for certain classes of civil engineering works is scarcely less urgent than her need for houses and buildings.

Hydro-electric-power generating resources are already strained to the limit and unable to cope even with the present demand. A long-range plan for the construction of new stations at a speed sufficient to keep pace with the estimated rapid growth in demand had been drawn up and adopted by the Government some years ago, but its implementation was so badly interfered with by the war that an unprecedented construction effort will now be necessary to bring the position back to normal in this field. With large sections of industry, as well as transport, housing, and civic construction, all depending on an increased supply of electric-power it is clear that this form of construction must take an overriding priority.

Attention must be given to railway tracks, which have had to carry an enormous volume of traffic during petrol and rubber shortages, and to which replacements have been difficult because of the world shortage of steel. Railway electrification schemes, deferred by the war, are now rendered urgent by coal shortages. Rolling-stock, station-yards, signals, and track duplication work are all making urgent claims, while various railway extensions suspended during the war and new railway links opening up rural and industrial areas, timber resources, &c., are scheduled for early construction.

Highways, maintained at only half standard during the war, will now require a much greater volume of expenditure and work done on them as motor traffic again comes into its own. Bridges which would have been replaced but for the war have in many cases been repaired from year to year, but cannot be expected to last much longer. Replacement by modern reinforced-concrete structures is urgent, though difficult at the present time on account of cement shortages and on account of the high cement consumption involved. The position, however, in regard to some of the bridges is becoming urgent. Similar remarks apply to wharves and harbour structures at various points.