

# Power Rights Danger In Georgian Bay Plan Emphasized by Premier

*When Real Meaning of Application for Charter Renewal Is Known, Mr. Ferguson Says He Feels Sure Members Will Reject the Proposition*

## VITAL QUESTION FOR ALL CITIZENS

*Should Valuable Asset Belonging to the People Be Turned Over to Private Interests? He Asks—Ontario Requires All Its Power Reserves*

"If the real meaning of this legislation is made known to the members of the House, I feel quite sure that they will, no matter what Province they may have come from, nor to what party they may belong, promptly reject the proposition," says Hon. G. Howard Ferguson, Premier of Ontario, in a statement issued last night respecting the application at Ottawa for the renewal of the Georgian Bay Canal charter.

The Premier declares that "in our view" power rights belong to the "people of the Provinces." If a half-million horsepower in the Ottawa River belongs to Ontario, that fact alone shows how vital the question is, he says.

The question is not a party one, he says, but it is whether a valuable asset belonging to the people should be turned over to private interests.

### "Critical Situation."

Mr. Ferguson's statement follows: "The application at Ottawa for renewal of the right of the Georgian Bay Canal Company to canalize the Ottawa River creates a critical situation for this Province. The promoters of the legislation claim that the right to construct a canal carries with it the right to develop and control the power on the Ottawa and French Rivers.

"This charter was first secured in 1894, and, although no move has ever been made toward constructing a canal, the parties interested have from that period up to the present secured thirteen successive renewals of their rights. The act now pending is the fourteenth request.

"The Provinces are, of course, strongly opposed to the granting of these rights for many reasons.

"Our view is that the power rights belong to the people of the

Provinces. The Federal Government has the right to use the water necessary for navigation purposes, but the surplus above that requirement belongs to the Provinces for power purposes.

### Vital Question for Province.

"If there is a million horsepower on the Ottawa River, 500,000 of which belongs to Ontario, that fact alone shows how vital the question is to this Province.

"Should a private corporation be handed this tremendously valuable public asset? The promoters may urge that the proposed construction of a canal at an enormous cost will be of great public service. It is doubtful if the canal will ever be constructed for navigation purposes, except, possibly, the French River section. We are spending millions to enlarge the Welland Canal. Even if the Georgian Bay Canal scheme be assumed to be a practical one, is there any necessity for it, or should we undertake enormous expenditures to enable us to compete with our own present system of navigation?"

### Need Power Reserves.

"The whole Province of Ontario requires all its power reserves. Eastern and Northern Ontario are urgently in need of an increased supply of power at the present time. The Hydro-Electric Commission of Ontario are prepared to undertake immediately to meet these demands, but no such development can be initiated with this canal charter carrying with it the power rights. It stands in the way.

"It is said that the canal company expect to pay the cost of construction through the sale of power. In other words, the power users must pay for the canal and pass the increased cost on to the general public, who may consume the various products of which power forms part of the cost.

"I am not at all sure that the development of power will not provide navigation with but very little actual canal construction work. For instance, I am advised that the erection of the dam at Carillon would raise the water level for 60 miles on the Ottawa River, and make it navigable right to the City of Ottawa, without a dollar's necessary expenditure for navigation. The same thing applies in other stretches of the river where power works would be installed; so that the story of the huge expenditure to create a canal will not bear very close examination.

### Mines Clamor for Power.

"The great mining development of the North is clamoring for power. Most valuable developments are located on the canal route. How is it possible to undertake the construction of power plants if this charter is renewed in the face of the claims made by the promoters?"

"The question is in no sense a party question, nor, indeed, is it an Ontario problem. The important question is whether a valuable asset belonging to the people and vital to the progress of the people should be turned over to private interests. If the real meaning of this legislation is made known to the members of the House, I feel quite sure that they will, no matter what Province they may come from, nor to what party they may belong, promptly reject the proposition.

"In view of the fact that nothing toward construction work has been done, the application, I have no doubt, will be viewed as if it were an original application; and that should be sufficient to condemn it."