

**BUFFALO POUND WATER TREATMENT PLANT
60TH ANNIVERSARY – KEY NOTE SPEECH (DR. BILL BRENNAN)**

From Rivals to Partners: Regina, Moose Jaw and Buffalo Pound Water, 1882-1955

Regina and Moose Jaw were part of the new urban landscape the Canadian Pacific Railway created when it decided in 1881 to build its main line across the southern prairies to the Kicking Horse Pass, far to the south of Battleford (then the capital of North-West Territories), Edmonton, and the Yellowhead Pass.

A transfer of the seat of government to a more southerly location followed naturally from this decision. Edgar Dewdney, lieutenant governor of the North-West Territories, and W.C. Van Horne, general manager of the CPR, chose a site close to where the railway line crossed a small meandering creek, Pile of Bones or Wascana Creek. The townsite was christened Regina in honour of Queen Victoria when first train arrived on August 23, 1882. (The official transfer of the capital from Battleford to Regina took place the following March.)

Dewdney's justification for the choice rested upon the fact that Regina occupied "a central position within the Provisional District of Assiniboia (which stretched from just south of Saskatoon to 49th parallel) and also on account of its being the natural centre of a vast and rich agricultural country."

But there was much objection in the press and in Parliament over the fact that Regina had been chosen instead of some other site. The *Saskatchewan Herald* (Battleford) declared:

"The choice of the capital has but one thing to recommend it—it lies on the line of railway, but that advantage is also enjoyed by hundreds of other places which have in addition both wood and water. Pile of Bones has little of the latter and none of the former, standing as it does in the middle of a bleak and treeless plain. However rich its soil many be, the lack of wood and water in the vicinity must militate against its becoming a place of very great importance." (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 11-12)

The winter of 1882-1883 was filled with uncertainty for Regina. There were rumours that the capital would be moved, and the precarious state of Regina's water supply gave them some credibility. In 1882 the CPR had constructed a dam across Wascana Creek, but this provided sufficient water for its locomotives only until freeze-up. The CPR then dug a well near its station (which was located north of the tracks and east of Broad Street).

Although Regina could claim 900 residents by year's end, it had not yet assumed any degree of permanence. Some wooden frame buildings had been erected across from the CPR station, but most Reginans spent the winter in tents. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 14, 17)

In the spring of 1883 another well was dug near the first. Water could also be obtained from the reservoir that the CPR had created by damming Wascana Creek. It was hauled to Regina in wagons. (Drake, *Regina*, p. 21)

In the meantime, of course, the "end of steel" had moved steadily westward. It reached what was to become Moose Jaw on September 6, 1882. Moose Jaw too was initially a haphazard cluster of shacks and tents, but it boasted something that its rival 40 miles to the east lacked: a visible and substantial water supply: the Moose Jaw River and Thunder and Spring Creeks. (Foster, "Moose Jaw," pp. 12, 17, 55; Larsen and Libby, *Moose Jaw*, p.4)

Regina might have become the Territorial capital, but Moose Jaw gained an important prize too: in 1883 the Canadian Pacific Railway decided to make it a divisional point on its main line, the first west of Broadview. As had been the case in the CPR's choice of Broadview (and subsequently of Swift Current and Medicine Hat farther west) an abundant water supply was key.

Construction of a passenger station, freight yards, and a roundhouse and repair shops was soon underway. (Foster, "Moose Jaw," p. 31, 201)

Moose Jaw's role as a transportation hub was further strengthened in 1892 when a Canadian Pacific Railway subsidiary, the Saint Paul and Sault Saint Marie Railroad, began laying track north from Portal, on the American border, to the CPR main line at Pasqua, 7 miles east of Moose Jaw. The completion of "Soo Line" in 1893 made Moose Jaw the most important rail and transportation centre in the eastern half of North-West Territories. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 21, 23; Foster, "Moose Jaw," pp. 210-11)

Regina gained a more modest prize. Construction of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway north from Regina began in 1885, but progress was slow. By 1886 only 20 miles of track had been laid. These things stood until 1889, when the unfinished line was leased to the CPR and completed to Saskatoon and Prince Albert. (Brennan, *Regina*, p. 21)

Local businessmen in Regina and Moose Jaw early sought municipal incorporation, as cities no less. This would enable them to enact bylaws, levy taxes, and borrow money to finance local improvements. The Territorial government was quick to oblige: Regina and Moose Jaw were incorporated as towns (not cities) in December 1883 and January 1884 respectively. (Brennan, *Regina*, p. 18; Foster, "Moose Jaw," pp. 78-79)

A major fire in 1891, which saw much of Regina's downtown destroyed, drew attention to the inadequacy of its water supply. The town council proceeded to hire H.N. Ruttan, Winnipeg's city engineer, to examine how best to increase it. He rejected as too expensive the construction of a pipeline to bring water from springs near Boggy Creek (several miles northeast of Regina). Instead he recommended that it sink additional wells nearer to the town, and it did. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 43-44)

At end of 19th century Regina was the largest town in the eastern half of North-West Territories: the 1891 Census put its population at 1,600. Moose Jaw was close behind, with a population of 1,200. But both were still little more than agricultural service centres, and the large-scale settlement of prairie west had not yet begun.

But it soon would. In mid-1890s the price of wheat began to rise, and cheaper transportation rates on land and sea made the export of the commodity more profitable. With the free land of American West nearly exhausted, the "Last Best West" came into its own, and settlers began to arrive in much larger numbers. In 1901 the population of North-West Territories stood at 158,000; five years later the newly-formed province of Saskatchewan alone had a population nearly twice that.

Determined to benefit from the west's dramatic economic and population growth, both Regina and Moose Jaw were quick to obtain city charters that would expand their borrowing powers.

One of Regina's first initiatives was to augment its water supply, so long seen as a handicap to future growth. John Galt, the Toronto consulting engineer it hired, recommended that the city now utilize the underground springs that had earlier been discovered at Boggy Creek. Construction of a pipeline to Regina began in 1904. When it was completed a year later, the *Leader* hailed it as an important step in "making Regina a city in reality as well as in name." (Brennan, *Regina*, p. 47)

Water consumption increased so rapidly that it soon began to tax the capacity of the pipeline from Boggy Creek. Laying a larger diameter pipe and adding a pumping station overcame the immediate difficulty, but the city also took steps to further augment its water supply. It hired another consulting engineer (R.O. Wynne Roberts) to locate additional underground springs at Boggy Creek and elsewhere, and he identified several promising sources. The City of Regina decided to expand the capacity of its Boggy Creek springs as a first priority. So successful was its well-drilling program that by 1912, when Regina's daily average consumption of water had reached 2 million gallons, the Boggy Creek springs were capable of supplying 3 million gallons per day and 4.5 million gallons if further wells were sunk. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 88-89)

During this period Moosejarians obtained their drinking water from private shallow wells and the Ross Creek Wells. (As was the case in Regina it was delivered by wagon.) As the demand for water increased, Spring Creek in the town, Britannia Park Reservoir just west of the town, and Snowy Springs south-west of Moose Jaw began to be utilized. Then in 1911 the city of Moose Jaw sought the advice of Walter J. Francis Consulting Engineers of Montreal. They concluded that these sources would no longer meet the city's water needs when its population reached 20,000 (It was then 13,800) and that the city would then need to develop a new source. In 1912 the City built the Rosedale Reservoir and Water Tower and a pipeline from Sandy Creek near Caron to supplement the City's water supply. (*Moose Jaw: The Buckle of the Greatest Wheat Belt in the World*; Report of Walter J. Francis Consulting Engineers, Montreal, 1911; *Brief History of Rosedale reservoir and Water Tower.*)

As it turned out, Regina was able to outdistance its rivals to become the dominant city in Saskatchewan and the fourth largest in the entire prairie region (after Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton) by the eve of World War I.

Regina first sought to woo the new transcontinental railways: the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific. The Canadian Northern entered the city in 1906, when it acquired the line that had been built from the territorial capital to Price Albert in 1890, and then constructed another line from Brandon to Regina in 1908. The Grand Trunk Pacific built a line from Yorkton and Melville to Regina three years later. The city also provided land for the construction of new freight yards for both the Canadian Northern and the GTP. In subsequent years each built additional lines, and so did the CPR. By 1913 a total of 12 railway lines radiated out of Regina. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 55, 57).

By eve of World War I Regina was a major shipping and distribution point, particularly for farm implements. 30 of the 67 wholesale firms in the province were located in Regina, and in 1913 they handled more than half of Saskatchewan's wholesale business. Most major banks and trust and insurance companies also established their provincial head offices there.

Local boosters claimed for Regina the title of "The Undisputed Business Centre of the Wheat Fields of Canada," but their ambition did not end there. Their ultimate goal was to attract new industries to Regina. The Board of Trade proved an aggressive propagandist, and city council a willing ally. Winnipeg and some mid-western American cities had become major meat-packing or flour-milling centres, and Regina's businessmen and local politicians were confident that their city could too, thanks to its central location and its good rail connections.

Of course Regina was not the only Saskatchewan city which fancied itself becoming a great flour-milling or meat-packing centre. Moose Jaw ("The Buckle of the Greatest Wheat Belt in the World") had similar ambitions and was prepared to offer similar concessions. So was Saskatoon, fast becoming the most important distribution centre in central Saskatchewan.

Regina took a modest step toward the development of a meat-packing industry in 1905, offering a parcel of land and a special water rate to a local man, Hugh Armour, to establish a small abattoir. Moose Jaw gained a bigger prize in 1910, when a Winnipeg firm, Gordon, Ironside and Fares, agreed to construct a much larger meat-packing plant there.

Moose Jaw and Saskatoon also proved more successful than Regina in attracting flour mills. Robin Hood Mills built a large facility in Moose Jaw in 1911. When it was completely destroyed by fire within a few months, Regina's hopes were raised but then quickly dashed as Moose Jaw offered more generous concessions to the company to rebuild there. Regina also courted the Quaker Oats Company, offering a free site and tax exemptions. Quaker Oats decided instead to acquire an existing facility in Saskatoon and accept the more generous concessions that city was prepared to offer.

When the federal government announced its intention to construct a number of large grain storage elevators on the prairies in 1913, there was another scramble. Regina offered a 50-acre site, but lost out to Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Calgary. (Brennan, Regina, pp. 55-57, 61; Richan, "Boosterism and Urban Rivalry," pp.136-59)

The other prize that Saskatchewan cities coveted was to be chosen as the capital of the new province created in 1905. Federal legislation--The *Saskatchewan Act*-- had named Regina as the provisional capital but stipulated that the local legislature, once elected, would make the final choice.

Reginans were supremely confident that their city would be chosen. It had served as capital of North-West Territories for more than 20 years. It was the largest city in the new province. And it could count on the support of Walter Scott, its Liberal Member of Parliament since 1900, who in September 1905 had been sworn in as Saskatchewan's first Premier.

But these calculations were nearly upset by the outcome of the first provincial election. With the constituencies north of the CPR main line solidly Liberal and those farther south evenly divided, it seemed that the government might choose a northern community as the capital. The bustling town (and soon to be city) of Saskatoon proved to be the most serious rival. Regina's claim was further weakened by the fact that when the ballots were first counted it appeared that voters there had elected a member of Frederick Haultain's Provincial Rights Party. (Moose Jaw had too.) Even Walter Scott was forced to admit that "by giving an adverse majority they have put the Gov't in a mighty precarious position on this question." But the final count gave the Regina seat to the Liberals by 3 votes.

Once Regina was safely in Liberal hands, and the danger of political embarrassment was removed, Walter Scott was able to have his way, even if he had to crack the party whip to do so. When the Legislature met to decide the matter on May 23, 1906 Regina was confirmed as the permanent capital by a vote of 21-2. (Brennan, "Visions of a 'City Beautiful,'" pp. 20-21)

The great boom that had fueled the intense rivalry among Saskatchewan's largest cities began to wind down in 1913, and came to an end the following summer, when Canada went to war.

Saskatchewan's urban hierarchy changed little over the next three decades. Regina continued to be our province's largest city; Saskatoon overtook Moose Jaw in 1916 to claim second place; Moose Jaw fell to third. In 1951 their respective populations were 71,000, 53,000 and 24,000.

While Regina and Moose Jaw continued to see each other as rivals, some of the challenges they faced during the 1920s and 1930s forced them to take a more co-operative approach. This was certainly true when it came to augmenting their water supplies.

A series of dry years during World War I reduced the available water supply for both Regina and Moose Jaw, and in 1919 they approached the provincial government for assistance in constructing a pipeline to bring water from the South Saskatchewan River. Recognizing that the cost of such an ambitious project would be beyond the means of either or even both cities, they also enlisted the support of adjacent towns and villages and the rural municipalities through which the proposed pipeline would pass.

The province appointed a royal commission, and it concluded that a pipeline would be feasible though expensive. It estimated that the initial construction cost would be \$5.7 million; subsequent expansion to meet anticipated increases in water needs would require an expenditure of an additional \$1.3 million within five years.

To construct and manage the pipeline, the Saskatchewan Water Supply Commission recommended that a Regina-Moose Jaw Water District be established. The Water District would have the power to issue debentures to cover construction costs. The revenue realized from the sale of water to these and other communities would enable Regina and Moose Jaw to make the interest payments on these debentures and retire the principal amount when it fell due.

The royal commission also recommended that the province take no steps to implement this scheme until the residents of the cities, towns and adjoining rural municipalities had had an opportunity to show their support for it. The vote took place on July 20, 1921.

There were sizeable majorities in favour of the pipeline project in Regina and Moose Jaw and in most of the towns. But farmers in the adjoining rural municipalities were strongly opposed, and the provincial government used this as a reason not to proceed.

And so Regina augmented its existing underground water supply at Boggy Creek and began to develop another at Mallory Springs, five miles north-east of the city. In 1929 New York and Toronto consultants investigated other potential sources, including the South Saskatchewan River and two nearby lakes: Last Mountain to the north and Carlyle (now White Bear) Lake to the south. Both lakes were judged unsuitable due to the extreme hardness of the water there. While the South Saskatchewan River was recognized as Regina's ultimate source of supply, the consultants recommended that the city continue to concentrate on developing less expensive underground sources. These they deemed adequate to meet Regina's needs until its population reached 75,000.

Regina laid a new and larger pipeline from Boggy Creek to the city, and developed a third underground source at Mound Springs farther north. "When Mound Springs and other springs in the same district are developed," City Commissioner R.J. Westgate declared in 1931, "we will have enough water for a population of 90,000. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 133, 135)

Believing that its water needs could be met for the foreseeable future, Regina showed little interest when Moose Jaw attempted to revive the South Saskatchewan River pipeline project that same year. Widespread drought and falling wheat prices had begun to take their toll on Moose Jaw's economy. This project would provide work for unemployed men who could no longer support their families. Of course a substantial financial commitment from the senior governments was considered essential if the project was to proceed. When neither showed any willingness to help, it died a quiet death. (Brennan, *Regina*, p. 135)

In Moose Jaw, the hard times only got worse. Providing relief to its unemployed and making the interest payments on the debentures it had issued in happier times to finance civic improvements became a burden city council eventually decided it could no longer bear. In 1937 it threatened to stop making payments of interest and principal on Moose Jaw's outstanding debentures unless its bondholders agreed to refinance that debt at a lower interest rates. They refused to do so, and Moose Jaw was obliged to seek the protection of the province's Local Government Board. There things remained until 1945, when the new CCF provincial government amended the *Local Government Board (Special Powers Act)* to remove the bondholders' right to veto any settlement a city might propose. The city and its bondholders then came to an agreement on refinancing Moose Jaw's debenture debt. (R. Allan, "Populist in Municipal and Provincial Politics," pp. 17, 20, 34, 46-48, 76-79; Smith, "City of Moose Jaw Debenture Default," pp. 172-77)

For Moose Jaw the timing could not have been better. By the 1930s Moose Jaw's existing water sources had reached their limit. The City had then begun to develop the Caron Saturation Beds, drawing water from the South Saskatchewan River near Riverhurst via an open channel to Caron and then pumping it to the city's Rosedale Reservoir. This project had been completed in 1940, but the system proved to be unreliable and expensive to operate.

After 1945 Regina began to experience periodic water shortages, during the summer months especially. And so obtaining a larger and more secure supply of water now became a high priority of the provincial capital too.

With Regina's existing underground sources of water at Boggy Creek, Mallory Springs and Mound Springs apparently having reached their limit, in 1948 the city began again to give serious consideration to the feasibility of bringing water by pipeline from the South Saskatchewan River. Its initial preference was to construct a pipeline from the river to Regina. But this scheme was soon abandoned in favour of a less costly alternative: obtaining water from Buffalo Pound Lake nearby.

It was easy to enlist Moose Jaw's support. It also was in need of more water, as already noted.

But what about the senior governments? In 1950 the federal government agreed to augment the supply of water in Buffalo Pound Lake by pumping water from the South Saskatchewan River into the Qu'Appelle River. From there it would flow into Buffalo Pound Lake, which would, in effect, become a storage reservoir for Regina and Moose Jaw.

And the Province of Saskatchewan agreed to pay \$650,000 of the cost of constructing a filtration plant at Buffalo Pound Lake; Regina and Moose Jaw were to be responsible remainder, and for laying the pipelines that would bring water to these cities. (Agreement between the City of Regina and the City of Moose Jaw, December 11, 1951; City of Regina, Bylaw no. 2654, January 14, 1954)

By 1955 water from Buffalo Pound Lake was flowing into Moose Jaw and Regina homes and businesses, and the two cities were sharing the cost of operating the filtration plant and associated facilities through the Buffalo Pound Water Administration Board. (Brennan, *Regina*, pp. 181, 183)

60 years later we still are! Due to the dedication and hard work of the City Councils, City Administrations, the Buffalo Pound Water Administration Boards and the Plant Staff.