FEATURES SERVICE

Date: October 11, 1968.

MANITOBA

Manitoba Government
Public Information Branch
Legislative Bldg., Winnipeg
Phone 946-7439

Official Opening of Red River Floodway

Friday, October 11th, 1968

Timetable of events.

11:00 a.m.	Opening remarks by Harry J. Enns, Minister of Mines and Natural Resources.
11:05 a.m.	Remarks by Premier Walter Weir of Manitoba.
11:10 a.m.	Remarks by J.J. Greene, federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.
11:15 a.m.	Two plaques unveiled simultaneously by Premier Weir and Mr. Greene.
11:20 a.m.	Planting of three memorial trees by Premier Weir, Mr. Greene and Mr. Enns. When the three trees have been planted, an Otter water bomber of the Manitoba Government Air Services fleet, carrying water from the Red River and its tributaries will fly over the floodway channel and dump its load to symbolize the diversion role of the Floodway.
11:25 - 11:45	The official party and guests will walk to the Inlet Control Structure.
11:45 a.m.	Premier Weir and Mr. Greene will raise the flood-control gates and inspect the Inlet Control facility.
12:15 p.m.	The official party and guests will board the Paddlewheel Princess for luncheon during a cruise on the Red River.
3:00 p.m.	The Paddlewheel Princess will return to the Inlet Control Structure.

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Address by Harry J. Enns, Minister of Mines and Natural Resources.

Mr. Premier, The Honorable Mr. Greene, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the official opening of the Red River Floodway.

I am pleased so many of you are here today, especially those from out of town.

All of you know how vital this floodway is to the safety of the people of Winnipeg and surrounding municipalities.

The floodway is truly an outstanding achievement in the fields of engineering and construction.

All the impressive statistics that make up the construction story are contained in a booklet which all of you will receive later this morning.

However, think for a moment of the Panama Canal and the Canadian section of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Red River Floodway, in terms of yards of earth excavated -- 100 million cubic yards -- is 40 per cent as great as the Panama Canal and 30 per cent bigger than the Canadian section of the Seaway.

I think it is worthwhile to recall briefly the steps that led to the building of the Floodway.

After the disastrous flood of 1950 a federal government inquiry, the Red River Basin Investigation, was set up at the request of the Manitoba Government to investigate the flood hazard in the Greater Winnipeg area.

Its report was issued in October of 1953. It set out the physical possibilities of providing flood protection and the likely benefits to be obtained.

In 1956, the Royal Commission on Flood Cost-Benefit was appointed. Its report was issued in 1959 and dealt with the flood-protection problems from an economic viewpoint.

The Royal Commission recommended three major steps:

1. Construction of a 30-mile floodway around the east side of Metropolitan Winnipeg.

2. Construction of a dam and storage reservoir on the Assiniboine River near the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. This is called the Shellmouth reservoir. When completed it will cost 11½ million dollars.

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3. Construction of a diversion channel to carry flood waters of the Assiniboine River from Portage la Prairie northerly into Lake Manitoba. This is called the Portage Diversion and will cost 17.6 million dollars.

The combined cost of these three projects will be about 92 million dollars. Used together, they will ensure virtually complete flood protection to all parts of Metropolitan Winnipeg behind the main dyking system.

On March 18 of 1959, the then Premier Duff Roblin told the Manitoba Legislature the government was prepared to build a 30-mile-long floodway around Winnipeg as soon as the necessary engineering and construction plans could be completed.

The federal and Manitoba governments reached agreement on how this huge project should be financed. The federal government provided 58.5 per cent of the 63.2 million dollar cost.

Overall planning, design and supervision of construction was carried out by the Water Control and Conservation Branch of the Manitoba government working with the Advisory Floodway Board.

On October 6, 1962, the big construction job was started.

The floodway was finished on schedule in March of this year.

After Premier Weir and Mr. Greene have unveiled the plaques, the three of us will plant trees as the first step in a long-range plan to turn this area into a park for the general public.

An Otter water bomber from the Manitoba Government Air Service will dump its load on the floodway channel. Its load will represent water from the Red River and its many tributaries.

The aircraft will fly along the river, then bank sharply to the right and fly along the floodway to symbolize the Floodway's job -- to take flood waters around Winnipeg.

Premier Weir and Mr. Greene will raise the flood control gates in the Inlet Control Structure that you can see from here.

You are all invited to inspect the Inlet Control Structure and to take a look at some of the equipment used to build the Floodway.

And now I am pleased to call on the Premier of Manitoba to say a few words.

Ladies and gentlemen ..... the Honorable Walter Weir.

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Address by Premier Walter Weir

The Honourable J.J. Greene; my colleague Harry Enns; honoured guests; ladies and gentlemen:

A very different ceremony took place not far from this spot six years ago almost to the day ... October 6, 1962, to be exact.

On that rainy day, Duff Roblin, Premier of Manitoba at that time, climbed aboard a giant bulldozer. He was joined by Walter Dinsdale who was federal Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources at the time.

Together they stripped the first sod off the prairie to begin construction of the Red River floodway.

It was a day full of hope... the beginning of an exciting chapter in Winnipeg's long battle with the flood waters of the mighty Red River.

Today we are writing the end of that chapter.

Until the floodway was completed in March of this year, the citizens of Winnipeg were at the mercy of the Red River, despite a massive dyking system and many pumping stations.

Winnipeg's fight with the Red River stretches back over many years. There were disastrous floods in 1826, in 1852, and 1861.

But the 1950 flood is still fresh in our minds even though it happened 18 years ago .... 100,000 people were evacuated from Winnipeg ... 50 of the 63 schools were closed .... 10,500 homes were inundated .... the costs and financial losses associated with the flood totalled more than 100 million dollars.

Who can really put a price on the personal hardships encountered, the disruption of community life .... the loss of business.... the cost of bringing a city back to life from a sea of mud?

The tragic story was reported around the world and help came from every quarter.

Out of that disaster arose a determined conviction to muster men, money and materials in an unprecedented effort to protect the Metropolitan area against future floods.

You can see some of the results here today .... the inlet control structure, the floodway channel itself, the dykes.

But you really have to see the floodway from the air to appreciate its size and the job it has been designed to do.

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Even if future floods are 60 per cent greater than the one in 1950, Metropolitan Winnipeg will be safe.

It took years of investigation, negotiation, planning and designing before the six-year construction period began.

The floodway represents millions of man-hours on the drawing boards, at planning discussions, at financial negotiations.

At the peak of construction itself, in July of 1965, there were 1,000 men working on the project, a project 30 per cent greater in earth-moving magnitude than the Canadian section of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and 40 per cent as great as the Panama Canal.

Everyone connected with the floodway shared the credit, regardless of how large or small his role was for the successful completion of this massive project.

But I make special mention of the man who was the main driving force behind the floodway concept.

He knew the cost would be in the millions. He knew it would take years of hard work to build the floodway, and he knew that each spring our people living in the metropolitan area would cease to be concerned about whether or not the Red River would go on the rampage again.

Despite these and many other obstacles, he was determined that Metropolitan Winnipeg would be protected.

Thus, on March 18, 1959, he advised the Manitoba Legislature that the government was going to build a floodway around Winnipeg as soon as plans could be completed.

The man to whom I credit this foresight is my immediate predecessor as Premier of Manitoba, Duff Roblin.

The people of Winnipeg, indeed, the people of Manitoba are indebted to him for his courage and tireless efforts to make the floodway a fact and not just a paper dream.

It cost money to make such a dream come true. A lot of money.

Sixty-three million, two hundred thousand dollars to be exact.

Obviously it was impossible for Manitoba to finance such an expensive project by itself.

The federal government was asked to share in the cost .... in the design and construction .... and did so.

The federal government's share of the sixty-three million, two hundred thousand dollar cost was 58.5 per cent .... thirty-seven million dollars.

The whole concept of the floodway -- from initial discussions and investigation through to actual design, financing and construction -- is an outstanding example of co-operation between a provincial government and the federal government.

This is their floodway too, and I am happy to introduce to you the Honourable Joe Greene, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources of the Government of Canada.
