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Sparwood
the
clean
coal capital
of
Canada

Coal mining hub builds on stability

by
CRAIG WEIR
Special Correspondent

STATISTICS	
Population 1982	5,000
Population 1972	3,250
Income 1981	\$59,250,000
Income 1971	\$12,160,000
Trading Area Population 1982	65,000
Trading Area Population 1972	43,000
Trading Area Income 1981	\$763,490,000
Trading Area Income 1971	\$157,210,000
Construction 1981	\$20,025,542
Construction 1971	\$3,530,347
Assessment 1982	\$109,400,000
Assessment 1972	\$17,176,000
Retail Trade 1981	\$13,180,000
Retail Trade 1971	\$3,325,000
Industrial Plants 1982	12
Industrial Plants 1972	5

INDUSTRIAL SITES	
(a) Total Acreage	11,740
(b) Unoccupied Acreage	9,000
(c) Unoccupied Serviced Acreage	1,000

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES	
Railways	C.P.R.
Highways	No. 3
Truck Service	6 lines

UTILITY SERVICES	
Electricity	B.C. Hydro & Power Authority
Gas	Columbia Natural Gas Ltd.

RAW MATERIALS	
Coal, timber, aggregates.	

COMMUNICATIONS	
Weekly Newspapers	The Crowsnest Clarion Free Press

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES	
Parks	3
Golf Courses	1

YOU HAVE to go out of your way in Sparwood to find the usual signs of an economic recession. Jobs aren't begging to be filled of course, and you do hear small talk about cutbacks in government support for this or that. But as Mayor Henry Volkmann says, "Our coal must be mined to meet long-term contract obligations — and processed, and shipped. That keeps over 2,000 employees busy at B.C. Coal alone, not to mention other producers, contractors and suppliers.

"This is a rich community. Sparwood is at the hub of all the coal mining activity in the Elk Valley. Our Council has obligations to serve a big area and a lot of people including our Municipal District ratepayers. They want all the amenities here, and it's our job to see that they get them, recession or no recession," Volkmann declared.

The mayor's mood was one of anticipation during the Trade and Commerce interview. Minutes later he would proudly officiate at a ribbon cutting ceremony opening an expanded and renovated municipal hall. A highlight of the public tours which followed was a scale model of Sparwood's proposed Elk Valley Recreation Centre.

Not surprisingly, the current edition of the Sparwood Crowsnest Clarion is headlining a significant aspect of the project: **B.C. COAL DONATES \$3 MILLION TO CENTRE**. The story reads: "A special open meeting of Council was called . . . primarily to announce that B.C. Coal has pledged a donation of \$3,000,000 for the proposed centre.

"In a letter to the mayor from Gary K. Livingstone, president of B.C. Coal

Ltd., the conditions of the grant were outlined: "Our commitment is conditional upon our financial commitment not exceeding 40 percent of the total projected cost of the project . . . and a contribution by the provincial government equal to their activities in other resource communities, either existing or developing . . . and equitable contributions being pledged by other resource companies in the area . . . and a successful initiative by Council with the citizens of the area to raise some of the funds required . . ."

Livingstone congratulated Sparwood on its efforts toward developing a recreational complex and said, "We believe that if your plans become a reality, the residents of the community would indeed benefit from such a facility."

Volkmann said in response, "We are delighted by B.C. Coal's generous contribution . . . (which) is, of course, conditional . . . We realize that times are hard for the government. But we also ask the premier to take note of the extraordinary contribution the Elk Valley is making to the provincial economy. We may well be the most economically viable area of B.C., and we simply would like Victoria to recognize this fact."

More good ink appeared in the Fernie Free Press, no doubt inscribed by the newspaper's Sparwood resident editor, Bruce Ramsey. Referendum day for the family leisure centre in Sparwood will probably be May 8 . . . If the referendum is passed, Sparwood will have a six lane 25-metre pool, a leisure pool with toddlers' area, saunas, a therapeutic whirlpool, a solarium, racquet centre, fitness and activity centre, a new public library, a day care and youth centre, and a social area which would include a

world. We are the best coal operation and we expect to stay the best.

"That can't help but make for a bright future for everyone."

B.C. Coal, by the way, has formed a new wholly owned company, B.C. Coal International Ltd., to take over all sales and marketing of company products when the present marketing contract with Kaiser Resources ends in the first quarter of 1982.

Closure of the Bunker Hill Company's base metal operations at Kellogg, Idaho, and with them an outlet for coke, prompted B.C. Coal to begin phasing out its coking facilities at Sparwood. One oven went down in January, and the last will go down in May of this year. But that's not a notably sad undertaking except, perhaps, to some nostalgic oldtimers. Coking employees are being absorbed into other operations, and while coking has been a feature of the Crowsnest Pass area for about 80 years, albeit an environmentally damaging one by modern standards, its loss will be the historic Natal-Michel zone's esthetic gain.

MINING TRADITION

Of some concern to Sparwood and district residents is the emphasis being placed by the provincial government on northeastern B.C. coal development. Won't competition from northeast coal destroy the profitability of B.C. Coal? they wonder.

However, B.C. Resources Investment Corporation officials don't think that will happen. B.C. Coal is not afraid of competition, they say. That's the best thing to keep a company on its toes. B.C. Coal also has advantages over northeast coal.

For instance, railways, highways and towns are already in place in the south-east. Besides, B.C. Coal is already a very efficient producer, and it will take some time for the new mines to reach an equivalent level of productivity. B.C. Coal has always had to face competition . . . It has competed successfully in the international market and won many long-term contracts.

East of Sparwood in the Crowsnest Pass, Byron Creek Collieries Ltd. continues a mining tradition that dates back to 1908. By the summer of 1978, facilities were in place to produce 1.2 million tonnes per year of high grade bituminous thermal coal. Much of it was shipped to the Lakehead and by ship from there to Ontario Hydro thermal power stations.

Esso Minerals has undertaken extensive drilling on the Byron Creek property. Estimated exploration expenditures were \$4.5 million. This is expected to result in mine expansion and a capacity of some 3.6 million tonnes per year. Many employees live in Sparwood which would enjoy growth based on an increase in Byron Creek's workforce of about 250 employees. The company's head operating office is in Coleman, Alta.

The Clean Coal Capital of Canada is Sparwood's official designation. In late winter, high as the community is in the Rocky Mountains, it might also be called the Cold Clean Capital. Surprisingly to those of us who remember how dirty the Crowsnest Pass area used to be, Sparwood and its picturesque surroundings appear anything but unclean. Even the piles of plowed snow, beginning to melt under the warm sun in March, lacked the "freckles" that once characterized all the snow in the valley from November right through to dust-devil weather.

No more! Coal has regained its respectability as an economic source of energy, and gained a reputation, thanks to modern mining and processing methods, of being easy to live with right next door.

Clean Sparwood is quite content with its industrial neighbours.

Sparwood

a progressive community

The discovery of coal near Sparwood in Southeastern British Columbia nearly a century ago led to the start of the coal mining industry here that has endured since the 1890's. Although the mining technology has changed dramatically through the years, the industry still depends on people, their skills, their communities.

BC Coal is proud to be a part of the progressive community of Sparwood and to be participating in the development of its quality housing programs, commercial and recreational facilities.

BC Coal

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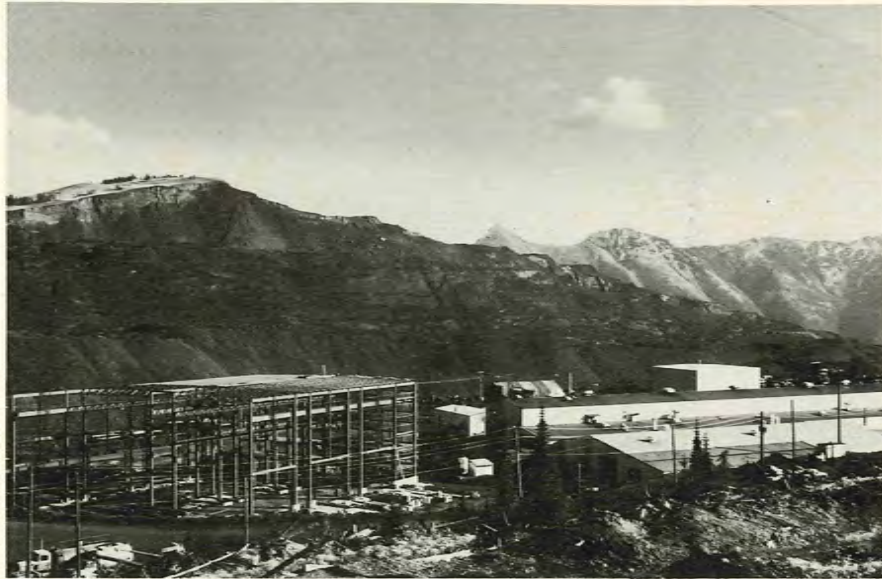
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B.C. COAL spent more than \$30 million on new construction in their Sparwood operations in 1981, including this eight-bay addition to the surface mine maintenance complex, costing \$10.8 million.

— Photo courtesy B.C. Coal.

restaurant and lounge, a viewing area and other facilities . . .

Alderman Toto Miller expressed little doubt that the leisure centre would welcome this correspondent's patronage in 1983. "Besides," he said, "you may well be able to stay in a hotel next door that's being proposed at a cost of about \$12 million. And right in the same area, we're looking at a Dominion Construction proposal for a 160,000-square-foot mall that would include a supermarket, department store and the rest."

As for housing, Sparwood has escaped from a bind imposed by limited flat land and an agricultural land freeze to develop Sparwood Heights which has an ultimate potential population target of 8,000 on 1,000 acres.

NEW PROJECTS

In 1981, Sparwood's total building permit value was \$20,025,542. Residential starts in the home category numbered 175 valued at \$10,078,100. In the apartment category, 96 suites were valued at \$2,600,000. Six industrial starts were valued at \$4,858,000. One institutional start was valued at \$168,000.

Heading the mayor's list of projects to realize in 1982 is expanded development of Sparwood Heights. That's followed in quick succession by such items as leading the lobby for improvement of


the Elk Valley highway, pressing for development of a regional airport, making major capital expenditures to meet current and growing needs including a new fire engine, improving the beautification of Sparwood, placing crosswalk lights for pedestrian safety, commencing development of new light industrial land, developing parks and recreation services, lobbying for improved communications services, improving drainage, continuing support for the golf course and a senior citizens' drop-in centre.

On and on the list runs," Volkmann said. "But what it all comes down to is that Sparwood set the wheels in motion with the promise of a new age. This year will see the birth of that new age built on the firm foundation of years past."

Other measures to be set in motion this year include the commencement of development of a new government services zone to include a new courthouse; expansion of commercial services; a promotional campaign to enhance public knowledge of Sparwood's strategic role in the Elk Valley and the province; the fostering of a historical society; revitalization of Centennial Square downtown; amendments to the community plan which will set the stage for 12,000 residents in Sparwood by 1986 and for 21,000 within the next 10 to 15 years.

Toto Miller, who is a teacher by profession and Council's public relations committee chairman by not unwelcome assignment, points out that the recession cannot stand in the way of new schools to serve the municipality's children. Sparwood Heights, he says, includes provision for two schools, and for churches.

West Sparwood Industrial Park, Miller says, has 12 acres serviced and 13



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acres for future growth. Kevin Whelan of Edmonton's Charles Michaels & Associates has filed a prospectus with respect to the park's development.

B.C. COAL

Inevitably, however, the big newsmaker at Sparwood is B.C. Coal. Spokesman Larry Stanwood pointed out that the company broke all production records in 1981, moving 7.1 million tonnes of coal.

In and around Sparwood, B.C. Coal expenditures of about \$50 million resulted in the construction of a new mine office and surface mine changerooms, an eight-bay addition to the equipment maintenance complex, and the purchase of 15 170-ton capacity trucks, the majority of which are scheduled for 1982 delivery.

B.C. Coal won its sixth award from the B.C. Reclamation Society for rehabilitation of areas at Sparwood disturbed by open pit coal mining. The company also sold world-wide rights to market its computer technology on a royalty basis to Honeywell Ltd., a major manufacturer of high technology computers.

More recently, Balmer North, the oldest mining operation at B.C. Coal and one which was expected to be sidelined several years ago, has earned a new lease on life. A program to upgrade the mine at a cost of approximately \$2,500,000 is expected to begin this year. Last year the mine produced 195,000 tonnes of coal, and a quarter of a million tonnes this year "is not out of



A RECORD PRODUCTION YEAR occurred at B.C. Coal's Sparwood operations in 1981, with the company moving 7.1 million tonnes of coal. Here, enormous equipment works the Harmer surface mine.

— Photo courtesy B.C. Coal.

sight" according to underground superintendent Jazz Anderson.

What are the key factors in obtaining and holding coal markets? Asked that all-important question, B.C. Coal President Gary K. Livingstone said, "We are able to sell all the coal we are producing at present mainly because of two situations — the continuing work stoppages in the Australian coal mines and the Polish situation through which more U.S. coal is being sold in Europe.

"On the whole, the international market for coking coal is very soft due to the depressed economy around the world, especially in the U.S. As a result, the steel industry is depressed and exports from our major market countries are down. Add to that the number of new coal operations starting in the

world, and you have a highly competitive marketplace.

"While we produce a good quality coal at competitive prices, a major advantage is our reliability in production, transportation and port operation. We have never had a work stoppage at the port, Roberts Bank near Vancouver, and, over the years, have been able to meet most of our commitments.


"Coal markets are hard to come by but easy to lose, if you become unreliable as a supplier.

"I am very bullish," Livingstone said. "We are situated in a beautiful part of the world with one of the richest coal deposits in the world and, most important, we have one of the most experienced and talented workforces in the

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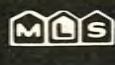
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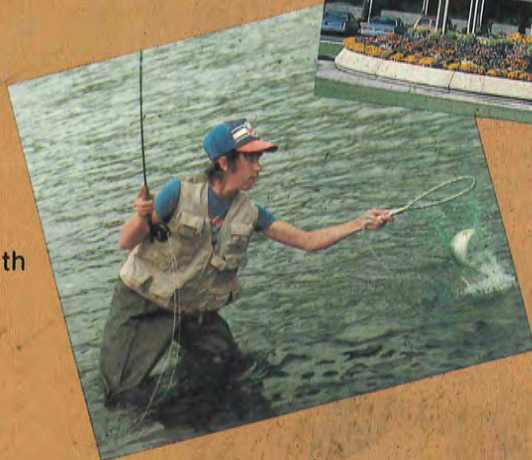
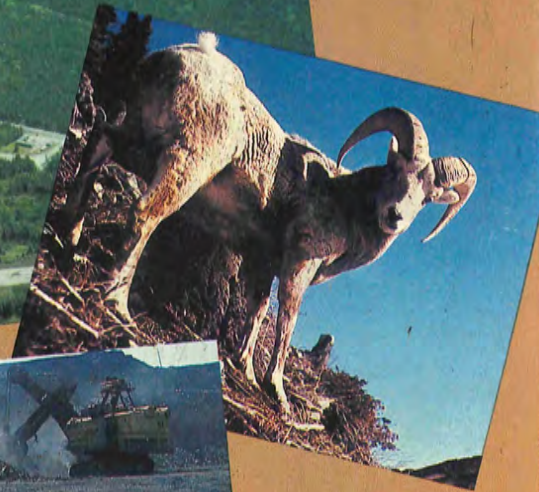
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Sparwood

The Clean Coal Capital of Canada

- ★ Emerging as the sub-regional center of the coal rich Elk Valley
- ★ Population to triple within the next 5 years
- ★ Coal mining activities to double within the next 3 years
- ★ A proposed major expansion to the shopping mall
- ★ The site of a future airport to serve the industrial and tourist interest
- ★ C.P. Rail and major highway service with immediate access to B.C., Alberta and U.S. markets
- ★ Abundant timber resources
- ★ A four season recreational haven

**We Welcome You
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In Building Beyond Tomorrow**



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