

# A NEW PARK FOR CANADA

GARY W. SEIB, 3625 Grassick Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4S 0Z3

An historic event took place in Regina on 19 June 1981 with the signing of an agreement to establish a Grasslands National Park in southwestern Saskatchewan. The signing follows 16 years of discussion, public hearings and negotiations since the idea for the park was put forth by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.

The agreement to establish the park was signed by Senator Hazen Argue on behalf of the Honourable John Roberts, Minister Responsible for Parks Canada, and the Honourable Reg Gross, Minister for Saskatchewan Tourism and Renewable Resources.

To create Canada's 29th national park, Saskatchewan will transfer to Parks Canada a maximum of 350 square miles in two blocks, an East block in the Killdeer area, and a West block in the Val Marie area. The two blocks will be connected by a road.

There will be no expropriation of land. Parks Canada may only acquire land through the voluntary sale process, and the federal government will pay relocation costs to any vendor who has sold his land to Parks Canada. Canada will pay 100% of the costs of acquiring leasehold interests and relocation costs. It will pay 50% of the cost of acquiring freehold lands and existing mineral rights, and Saskatchewan will pay the other 50%, transferring their freehold interests to Canada at no cost.

Under a separate agreement, Saskatchewan has five years, subject to approval from Canadian and Saskatchewan environmental authorities, to conduct and complete an oil and gas exploration program. At the end of this time the province must identify for the park a minimum of 100 square miles, with at least 36 square miles in each of two core areas. Where oil and/or gas reserves are discovered, these lands will



... signing. Left to right: Ralph Goodale, Sen. Hazen Argue, Reg Gross, John Kowalchuk.  
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*Killdeer Badlands.*

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*Killdeer area.*

*Frank Bellamy*







*Prairie dog town in the Frenchman River valley.*

*Gary W. Seib.*

*Prairie Dog Butte, overlooking Frenchman River valley.*

*Gary W. Seib*







*Clay hilltop, Killdeer Badlands, Grasslands Park.*

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not be immediately available to Parks Canada. Cost of the oil and gas exploration programs will be shared on a 50/50 basis up to a maximum of approximately 10.6 million 1981 dollars. Saskatchewan will reimburse the federal government from net profits for its financial contribution if oil and gas are produced. Once Saskatchewan has identified lands for the park, neither the province nor the government of Canada will explore or exploit any minerals, oil or gas which may be there.

Existing water use agreements and international commitments will be honored. Where landowners' and lessees' access roads are cut off by the park boundaries, Canada will provide alternative access routes to the nearest public road.

Both the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan have agreed to form a federal/provincial consultative committee to make decisions on the development and maintenance of the park, including grazing administration, fire protection, road maintenance and other areas of management. Saskatchewan agreed to manage the propos-

ed park areas to maintain their existing natural state prior to transfer of the land to Canada.

The establishment of the Grassland National Park sets aside the first representative portion in North America of the original short-grass prairie. The park will preserve the area so that present and future generations can experience its grandeur, beauty and solitude.

Naturalists worked long and hard to bring the park into being, but must now rest on their accomplishments. Initially the park will be small, only 10 square miles, and that is at least five years away. It will take more years to grow to its 350 square mile size, and during that time we must be involved in the master planning process to ensure that the park fulfills its potential for preservation of a unique area.

We congratulate the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan on reaching the agreement for the park, and wish them that we will be following their actions with renewed interest in the coming years.