Potash 12.4.3

Canadian shipments, all from Saskatchewan, amounted to 5.1 million tonnes of potassium dioxide equivalent in 1976 compared with 4.7 million tonnes shipped in 1975 (Table 12.18). Installed production capacity was 12.9 million tonnes of potassium chloride. In 1975 the industry operated at 64% capacity. During 1976 the Saskatchewan government continued a program of acquiring potash mines through the Crown corporation Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan.

About 95% of the world's potash output is used for fertilizers, the balance being used for industrial purposes.

In New Brunswick, Potash Co. of America suspended exploratory drilling and began development plans on a potash lease granted in 1973. A lease was issued to the International Minerals and Chemical Corp. (Canada) for exploration and development of potash and salt on a 200 square kilometre tract near Salt Springs. Of 10 holes drilled, seven made intersections in potash.

Salt 12.4.4

Canadian shipments of salt amounted to about 6.0 million tonnes valued at almost $76 million in 1976. About 70% of the total was rock salt used principally for snow and ice control on streets and highways and for chemical manufacturing. The remainder is fine vacuum salt and salt as brine used for producing caustic soda and chlorine.

There are three rock salt mines, one in Nova Scotia and two in Ontario. Salt is also produced as a byproduct of potash mining in Saskatchewan. The two companies drilling for potash in New Brunswick were also exploring for salt, and would continue development. Fine salt evaporator plants and brining operations are located in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Quebec government through Seleine Inc., a subsidiary of Quebec Mining Exploration Co., advanced its plans to develop a salt mine on Grosse-Île in the Magdalen Islands. Total capital costs for the mine and an associated port were forecast to exceed $45 million. The viability of the project depends on federal funding of the required port near the mine. Quebec Mining expects initial production at the rate of about 900 000 tonnes a year to begin in 1980.

Sulphur 12.4.5

Canadian sulphur shipments in all forms in 1976 amounted to 4.6 million tonnes valued at $79 million (Table 12.20). Shipments decreased 4% in volume and 22% in value compared to 1975. Reduced volume reflected the world economic downturn which began in late 1974.

Canadian sulphur is obtained from three sources: sour natural gas and petroleum, including the tar sands, which produce elemental sulphur; smelter gases which produce sulphuric acid; and pyrite concentrates used in the manufacture of sulphuric acid. Small amounts of elemental sulphur are recovered as a byproduct of electrolytic refining of nickel sulphide matte and a small quantity of liquid sulphur dioxide is produced from pyrites and smelter gases. In Canada 83% of sulphur shipments in 1976 were in elemental form, nearly all from sour natural gas.

Canadian production of sulphur in all forms peaked in 1973 at 8.1 million tonnes, 7.4 million tonnes in elemental form. In 1976, total output was estimated at 7.1 million tonnes, the 12% decline reflecting reduced output from sour natural gas in Western Canada. Since 1968 Canada has been the world's largest exporter of elemental sulphur.

Gypsum 12.4.6

In 1976 Canadian production of crude gypsum decreased to 5.6 million tonnes from 5.7 million tonnes in 1975, most of it exported to the Eastern US. Exports were mainly from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland quarries operated by Canadian subsidiaries of US gypsum products manufacturers.

Nine companies produced crude gypsum in Canada in 1976 at 14 locations, while five manufactured gypsum products at 18 locations. Production of gypsum in Canada is closely related to the building construction industry, particularly residential building in both Canada and the Eastern US.