

Quebec and James Bay Railway.

QUEBEC, 5TH APRIL, 1888.

To the Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, G. C. B.,

PREMIER, &c., &c.,

OTTAWA.

SIR,—

I am directed, on behalf of the promoters of the Quebec and James Bay Railway, to repeat the application which they had the honor of making to you on the 26th March, 1887, for a grant or subsidy to enable them to carry out their enterprise.

It is proposed to construct this railway from some point on the line of the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway, in a westerly direction, to the north side of Lake Abitibi, and thence to Moose Factory, James Bay, a distance in all of about 500 miles.

The advantages of this proposed location are:—1st. That the section from Lake Abitibi to Moose Factory could be used for and be common to the railways projected from Ottawa and Toronto to James Bay, and would be on the most direct location for these lines:—2nd. That it would form the most direct line between Quebec and Lake Abitibi, developing the country around that lake, which is said to be well adapted for settlement:—3rd. That when the requirements of the Great North-West will necessitate an additional outlet for its products to the seaboard, this will become part of the shortest possible line from Quebec to Winnipeg, a line more than 200 miles shorter than the Canadian Pacific, and an interior line forming a back bone, as it were for the Dominion, truly national in character, perfectly safe in the event of hostilities, and securing, with certainty, to the Maritime Provinces, in winter, the whole export trade of the country it will develop.

The promoters of this enterprise respectfully contend that the James Bay territory is worthy of railway development.

The territory enclosed in the area between Lake Mistassini to the East and Nipigon to the West, and from the height of land to the southern shore of James Bay, contains some 120,000 square miles, or about 75,000,000 acres. In other words a territory much larger than the inhabited portion of the Province of Ontario.

An erroneous impression has hitherto prevailed with regard to this country, owing to its connection with Hudson's Bay. It should not be forgotten that Moose Factory is very little further north than Winnipeg, that it is in about the same latitude as London and Berlin, 500 miles further south than St. Petersburg, which has 600,000 inhabitants; and that it is 600 miles south of Hudson's Straits, or about as distant from those straits as it is from Washington.

The annexed reports of the Government Meteorological Bureau at Toronto prove that the average summer temperature of Moose Factory is about the same as that of Chicoutimi in the Province of Quebec, of Dalhousie in the Province of New Brunswick, and more favorable than that of Rimouski, by several degrees. They also prove that the average snow fall at Moose Factory is about half that of Montreal.

The annexed letters from Professor Bell, of the Geological Survey, and the Revd. Fathers Nedelec and Paradis, Missionaries at James Bay, establish the following facts:—1st. That the James Bay territory is a level clay country capable of sustaining a very large population;—2nd. That it will have great value as an agricultural and stock raising country;—3rd. That it possesses valuable timber, minerals and fisheries;—4th. That in all these respects, as well as in climate, it may be considered as a similar country to Germany, Russia or Sweden, in Europe.

I am directed respectfully to request that the Government will be pleased to grant to the Quebec and James Bay Railway Company a subsidy of \$12,500 per mile for 130 miles of their road in the Province of Quebec, and of \$12,500 and 12,500 acres of land per mile, for about 370 miles from the boundary line to James Bay.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. G. SCOTT,
Acting Secretary.

Translation of a letter from the Rev. Father Nedelec, late Missionary at James Bay.

Mattawa, 15th November, 1887.

J. G. SCOTT, Esq.,

Quebec.

DEAR SIR, -

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 8th inst., in which you ask me for information about the vast Hudson's Bay territory:—the Siberia of Canada. In order to answer your questions satisfactorily one would have to be an explorer, a geologist, a mineralogist and even a farmer, in a word an expert in every branch of knowledge. I confess that I am only a missionary to the Indians and the shanty men of the Ottawa. Nevertheless, I shall always esteem it a pleasure and a duty to oblige you to the utmost of my capacity, to the depth of my knowledge and extent of my observations. Beyond this, I can but refer you to good authorities on each subject. But to answer your questions:—

- 1st.—The country is generally habitable, excepting a few places, chiefly along the coast. Along the East coast the fishing is good.
- 2nd.—All kinds of grain, except wheat and buckwheat, also fruit and vegetables, are, as a rule, grown with success, except in a few scattered places on the coast.
- 3rd.—I find it difficult to say what population might be supported in this territory. There is room for millions, with improved agriculture and the development of industries.
- 4th.—The extreme heat is 100° and extreme cold on the coast— 55° . Average in January 3° .
- 5th.—In some places the climate is better than that of the north of Germany, Poland, Norway, north of Scotland, Lake St. John, Newfoundland. In some parts the natural resources are magnificent, in others not so good. As a general rule it resembles Quebec and the district of Lake St. John. All that I can say is that the country is larger and more habitable than can be imagined.
- 6th.—The soil is in general of clayey nature. See "Les Relations des Jésuites;" Journey from Lake St. John to Hudson's Bay—Proulx. See also reports of Bowen, Stipendiary Magistrate, of Manitoulin Islands, Ontario—favorable.
- 7th.—Between Lake Temiscamingue and height of land, white and red pine, spruce and soft birch abound; on the other side of the height of land, spruce, soft birch and cedar.
- 8th.—See the report of Dr. Bell, geologist, as to minerals.
- 9th.—Any amount of fur, birds and fish; whales also abound. See the report of Captain Gordon, 1885, 1886-7.
- 10th.—The snow-fall is not excessive.

SUCH IS HUDSON'S BAY.

What was Canada 200 years ago? What were the United States? In my opinion it would be a good thing for the Province of Quebec to take possession of that part of Hudson's Bay that belongs to it. Your Company ought to establish Acadian settlements in the Bay. They are the very people for the country, and when the resources of the country are developed and wealth amassed, a steamboat should be sent from Quebec to further develop and explore the country, while waiting for the railway through the valley of St. Maurice.

Yours truly,

(Signed.)

J. M. NEDELEC, O. M. I.,
Indian Missionary.

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER FROM REV. FATHER PARADIS, FORMERLY MISSIONARY
AT MOOSE FACTORY.

"This territory is very suitable for settlement and the land is first-class. From Lake Temiscamingue, which is 650 feet above the sea, to Moose Factory, a distance of 300 miles is one black clay plain, very suitable for grain, and well wooded with maple and other hard woods. At the height of land, 920 feet above the sea, pine is found in abundance, also some very large poplar. From Lake Abittibi to James Bay the finest spruce in America is to be found, and on the south side of the mountains some red pine.

TEMPERATURE:—The thermometer has been as low as 50 below zero at Moose Factory—in summer as high as 100 above; at the height of land the summers are colder; average snow-fall three feet, which is much less than at Quebec.

PRODUCTS:—The best possible potatoes and all root crops, are grown here. Grain has not been tested to any great extent. I think wheat would succeed as well as in Manitoba. Oats, hay and barley would certainly succeed. Natural hay, excellent for cattle-raising, is very plentiful. Excellent beef is raised here.

GAME:—Wild geese and duck are abundant at Fort Albany, north of Moose Factory; 36,000 geese are killed there annually for provisions for the Hudson's Bay Company by the Indians, that being the number they are expected to furnish.

MINERALS:—See Dr. Bell's report. I find him very conscientious in his reports. Gypsum abounds at the mouth of the Abittibi River. I think there is coal and petroleum on the river. Iron is plentiful. Mineral springs abound.

Sturgeon abound in the rivers; and on the east coast, 30 miles from shore, porpoises and all fish found in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, are found in great abundance.

I have no hesitation in recommending the construction of a railway from Quebec to James Bay. Indians say that the land towards Lake Mistasini is also very level with a clay soil. Towards the height of land it is sandy and rocky. Some prairies, 4 to 6 miles wide, without trees, extend to the west of James Bay, according to the Indians some 1200 hundred miles.

I think this country might be compared to Germany in Europe, and the Fort Albany district with Russia.

The climate resembles that of Kamouraska, with the same flowers, wild fruits, such as gooseberries, strawberries, juniper berries, and cranberries.

At Moose Factory there are some splendid gardens, containing currants, gooseberries and all kinds of vegetables. In one of them there is an ash tree, planted ten years ago, that now measures 13 inches diameter.

Ice leaves the rivers about end of April, and the Bay is navigable from 5th to 13th May. Closes from 1st to 20th November. The highest tide is 10 feet."

(COPY)

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY,

Ottawa, 7th March, 1887.

J. G. SCOTT, Esq.,

Quebec.

DEAR SIR,—

Your favor of the 4th reached me this morning, and I beg to answer your questions *seriatim* as follows:—

1.—A considerable proportion of the territory southward of James Bay is fit for settlement.

2.—My own explorations have not extended eastward of the Basin of Moose River. In that Basin a great deal of good land is found between the watershed of the great lakes and the commencement of the low level country to the south westward of James Bay. This would comprise about one-third of the region between Lake Superior and James Bay. The soil is mostly brownish gravelly loam and light colored clay, with sand in some parts. In the coniferous forests, when the ground is level, the surface is apt to be covered with deep moss, but when this timber has been burnt off and replaced by deciduous trees, the ground is dry.

3.—The summer and winter temperatures resemble those of the County of Rimouski. The summers not so hot, nor the winters so cold as at Winnipeg.

4.—The average snow-fall is about 3 feet, or a little more, still not quite so great as about the City of Quebec.

5.—Potatoes and all other kinds of root crops have been found to do remarkably well. Hay also grows luxuriantly. Barley would, I think, be a sure crop every year, and rye could also be grown with advantage. Barley is sown every year at Moose Factory and Rupert's House, and it has ripened well every year that I have visited these parts. Still it is said to fail some years. However, these places are much further north than the region I have indicated, and what is worse for them, they are near the sea, which is said to have an unfavorable influence in the autumn. Mr. John McIntyre (now of Port William) says he has ripened wheat at Missinibi and New Brunswick House, within the above area. I have had experiments made at New Brunswick House and at Norfolk, on the Abitibi River, with a great variety of field and garden seeds, and the results proved that this region is capable of growing anything which can be raised, say in the County of Rimouski. I regard the region as well suited for stock raising and dairy farming, and it is not unlikely to prove fit for grain also.

The soil at Moose Factory is heavy and cold, still vegetables, &c., grow successfully here. Among the kinds may be mentioned potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, beets, carrots, cabbages, onions, &c., &c. As showing the absence of summer frost at Moose Factory in 1877, I mention at page 27 c of my report for that year, that, on our return to Moose Factory, (from the North) in the end of September, we found that there had been no frost there all summer and the most tender plants, such as melons and cucumbers, beans, balsams, tobacco, the castor oil bean, &c., growing in the open air, were still quite green and flourishing. That summer was however probably a finer one than usual.

It has been objected to this statement by some Hudson Bay Co's men, that I should have mentioned that some of the above plants had been started in the house. But all I wanted to show, was the absence of summer frosts that year. These plants are generally started under glass in other parts of Canada as well.

6.—White and red pine grow in the southern part of the basin of Moose River, but the timber most abundant throughout the whole country, consists of white and black spruce, tamarac, white cedar, (as far north as Moose Factory,) white birch, aspen, rough-barked poplar, "Jack" pine and bouleau. There is a little elm, and black ash, in the southern part, but it is not worth counting commercially. Some of the above woods are worth exporting.

7.—Minerals are to be found in this region; nearly all the metals are to be looked for in the Huronian formation, a belt of which is believed to run all the way from near Lake Abitibi, to the south of Lake Mistassini, and this would be crossed by any railway from Quebec to James Bay. Iron and gypsum are abundant to the north-west of Moose Factory.

The shores of Hudson's Bay that, would be tributary to the projected railway afford a variety of useful minerals in paying quantities.

8.—Coal cannot be said to have been found in the region under consideration. I found lignite in various places on the Missinabi and Moose Rivers; also indications of it on the Mattagami and Albany Rivers, but the quality was mostly inferior, and in a well wooded country like this, would not be in demand for fuel. I also found anthracite on a long island on the east coast of Hudson's Bay, but I do not think the quantity likely to prove great, although the quality was first-class. As far as we are yet aware, there is a chance, geologically speaking, of finding coal in the islands on James Bay, but we have no evidence, as yet, of its actual existence there.

9.—Among the fish found in James Bay and Hudson's Bay, may be mentioned a blue white fish, lake trout of Lake Superior, and some smaller species, sea trout, salmon, rock cod, capling, &c., besides strictly fresh water fishes in the rivers and lakes, such as speckled trout, Backs' grayling and pickerel, pike, &c. The fisheries of the bay will probably be found to be valuable. The oil producing animals, such as seals and porpoises, may be included under "*the fisheries*."

10.—I have not considered the subject sufficiently, as yet, to say whether I would recommend the construction of a railway from Quebec to James Bay, or not; but if it should be decided to go on with such a line, the objective point might be the mouth of the Rupert River, the southern extremity of Rupert Bay, or Hannah Bay. Deep enough water can, I think, be found at these points and leading out from them, although the south end of James Bay is shallow. If a railway were built to the south end of James Bay, steamers might run up the East main coast, which I believe (from experience) will prove attractive as a summer resort for the people of the United States and Canada.

For further information, I would refer you to some of my reports under page 27 c, with general survey reports for 1879,80 and page 7 c, on ditto for 1877-78.

I am, Dear Sir,
Yours truly,

(Signed,) ROBERT BELL, O. E., M.D.