

BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA.

particular case of the Halifax and Quebec line, and forming the best estimate to be derived from the data obtained upon the exploratory survey, which under the circumstances of a perfectly new country, only recently explored, and still covered with a dense forest, is all that can in the first instance be done, it is considered that if the sum of 700*l.* sterling per mile be assumed as the probable cost of the proposed line, it will not be far from the correct amount.

The total distance from Halifax to Quebec will be about 635 miles.

	£.
635 miles at 700 <i>l.</i> per mile will be . . .	4,445,000
Add one-tenth for contingencies . . .	444,500
	£ 4,889,500

Or, in round numbers, 5,000,000*l.*

It is estimated, therefore, that the cost for construction and equipment of the proposed trunk line, from Halifax, through New Brunswick, to Quebec, will amount to 5,000,000*l.* sterling.

The question which presents itself next for consideration is a very important one, namely, the probable returns for such an expenditure.

The information to be afforded on this head can only be derived in a very general way, from a consideration of the present population and resources of the three provinces.

The direct communication between the two termini, Halifax and Quebec, is of a very limited nature.

By land, it is confined almost to the conveyance of the mails. Passengers proceed generally by way of the United States.

By sea, in 1847, the communication was by 17 vessels, which arrived at Quebec, having a tonnage of 1257, and 18 departed from that port for Halifax whose tonnage amounted to 1386 tons.

This amount of intercourse does not at the first view appear encouraging to expected receipts, but when it is made to appear that this limited intercourse arises entirely from the want of good means of intercommunication such as would be afforded by the proposed railway, it becomes a strong argument in favour of making the line rather than against it.

The communication of the provinces with each other is cramped and restricted beyond measure by the same want.

By sea the amount of intercourse may be judged of by the return given in Appendix No. 6, furnished by the Quebec Board of Trade.

The chief elements which enter into, and upon which depends, the success of every railway enterprise, are population, agriculture, and commerce.

At the extremities of the line, and for some miles along the St. Lawrence, there is an abundant population. External commerce there is in an eminent degree. In that of agriculture its deficiency is great at present, but as there are millions of acres of good productive land only waiting for the hands necessary to cultivate them, and the means of access to which will be afforded by the railway, this very circumstance may be made to conduce to the advantage of the line, and pay a large portion of the expense of its construction.

The population of Halifax (the Atlantic terminus) is estimated at 25,000 souls. It is the capital of the province—the seat of government,—and its commerce extensive. The value of its imports and exports is estimated at 2,500,000*l.*

The city of Quebec, the other terminus, according to the census of 1844, contained (including the county which is not given separately) 45,000 persons.

But this city derives additional importance from its being the one great shipping port and outlet for all Canada. By its port passes the whole trade of that province. It may be regarded as the focus of commerce for a million and a half of souls. The value of the imports and exports together may be estimated at 5,500,000*l.* sterling, giving employment to a very great amount of shipping.

This immense trade is of necessity crowded into six months, the navigation of the St. Lawrence being closed for the remainder of the year.

In addition to these two great termini there are lying on each side of the line two most important tributaries, viz., the city of St. John and Prince Edward Island. The former with a population in city and county together of nearly 44,000 persons, with a commerce of the value of 1,800,000*l.* in exports and imports, giving employment also to a great amount of shipping. The latter with a population of 50,000 engaged principally in agriculture and the fisheries. The exports and imports of this island are about 200,000*l.* annually.

Between the city of Quebec and the River Metis there are, settled along the south bank of the St. Lawrence, 75,000 inhabitants all engaged in agriculture. These people are French Canadians, and almost every family has a small farm and homestead.

A striking peculiarity of these farms is their elongated shape, the length being generally 30 times that of the breadth, oftentimes a greater disproportion exists. The houses and farm-buildings are always built at one extremity, that which adjoins the road dividing one set of concessions from another. There are generally three or four lines of houses and roads running thus along the St. Lawrence.

The effect produced by this manner of parcelling out the land and building has been to form what can only be compared to one long and continued village for 200 miles.

For the first 100 miles out of Quebec, as far nearly as the Rivière du Loup, the proposed line of railway will run through the centre of this extended village, and with a train of moderate length, the last carriage will scarcely have cleared the door of one house before the engine will