

THE SENATE.

Ottawa, Wednesday, April 16th, 1890.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 o'clock.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

FRESHETS ON THE FRASER RIVER.

ENQUIRY.

HON. MR. MCINNES (B.C.) rose to enquire:

1st. Is it the intention of the Government, during the coming summer, to devise such means as will prevent further destruction of property by the Fraser River washing away large areas of valuable land at Sumas and Chilliwack, and doing serious injury to navigation? 2nd. Has the Government received any information from the Government of British Columbia on the subject: if so, when, and what was the nature of it? 3rd. Has the attention of the Government been called to this matter by the New Westminster Board of Trade, or the Municipal Council of Chilliwack; if so when?

He said: Before asking these questions I desire to say, for the information of the House, that the two points indicated in the first question are situated between 50 and 75 miles from the mouth of the Fraser River, and that the Fraser River within the last sixteen years, to my own knowledge, has actually changed its bed over $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile. The settlements of Sumas and Chilliwack are situated in one of the most fertile, and probably one of the most beautiful valleys to be found in any country. The soil is all alluvial soil, of from 10 to 20 feet in depth, and, owing to huge logs, or rather trees, that are carried down with the spring and summer freshets lodging at certain points in the river, the current has been diverted towards the south bank of the Fraser, where it is composed of this rich alluvial earth, and enormous quantities of land are carried away each year. Not only are there large quantities of farm lands being destroyed in that way, but the chances are that unless some way is found to arrest this destruction of property it will gradually carry away the entire valley and convert it into a sandy or waste desert. Not only should steps be taken to prevent this great destruction of private property in consequence of the encroachments of the river, but something should be done by the Government to prevent it interfering with the free navigation of the river. A large amount of shipping passes up and down the river at these points, and my

private opinion—not only my own opinion but the opinion of a great number of competent men who have knowledge of such undertakings,—is that if a few piles were driven or a few large trees were anchored at the mouth of the Sumas River, at a certain season of the year, the current would be diverted, and the water would be thrown back in a short time into its original channel, thereby preserving the navigation of the river, and preventing further destruction of property.

HON. MR. ABBOTT—In answer to my hon. friend, I have to say that the Government has already expended very large sums on the navigation of the Fraser River, and it is quite prepared to do anything further that may be required to protect it, or to protect its banks from being destroyed, or to protect its channel from being diverted, which I hear there is some possibility may be done, by taking part of it through the territory of a foreign country; and at this moment they are making inquiries and obtaining information as to the precise nature of the work required to be done. The answer to the second question bears on that. The Government have received a communication from the Government of British Columbia respecting the necessity of taking measures of this description, but this communication does not give any particulars whatever—does not say where the injury is being done, or what the difficulty is that is to be dreaded, and it is precisely on those points that the Government is getting information.

HON. MR. MCINNES (B.C.)—When did you receive the communication?

HON. MR. ABBOTT—I am unable to say, but it is not long ago. The New Westminster Board of Trade had called the attention of the Department to the necessity of protecting the river near the mouth of the Sumas River, and that is where the work will be needed. A thorough examination is to be made to determine what is necessary to protect the navigation of the river.

MONTREAL BRIDGE CO.'S BILL.

SECOND READING.

HON. MR. GUÉVREMONT moved the second reading of Bill (97) "An Act to incorporate the Montreal Bridge Company."