

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE HURON AND ONTARIO SHIP CANAL.

The select Committee to whom was referred the Petition of John Gordon and twenty thousand others, of the Province of Ontario, praying for the construction of the Huron and Ontario Ship Canal, with power to send for persons and papers, and to report as to the practicability and expediency of the work, have the honor to report,

That this project has, for many years, engaged a large amount of public attention. In 1855, surveys of the route were made by Mr. Kivas Tully, C. E., who reported favorably thereon, and his report was confirmed by that of Col. R. B. Mason, an eminent American Engineer. In 1856, the Parliament of the late Province of Canada, incorporated a Company with powers to construct the work. In 1857, a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the late Province of Canada was appointed to enquire into and report on the projected work, and on 9th June of that year, the Committee, through the late Joseph Hartman, Esq., M.P.P. for North York, reported strongly in favor of the enterprise, and stated that no work yet projected in Canada has equal claims with the proposed Canal, to a liberal grant of land. In 1864, a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the late Province of Canada was appointed to consider the practicability and propriety of constructing this Canal, and on 31st May of that year, that Committee, by their Chairman, Thomas D. McConkey, Esq., M.P.P. reported, approving of the Report of the previous Committee, and stating that to Canada the project is scarcely less than vital, and having regard to the magnitude and importance of the work, the Committee suggested that a grant of land commensurate with the importance of the undertaking, should be made as one of the best means of securing the construction of the work.

The Committee have to report that they have had submitted to them a large body of evidence in reference to the expediency and practicability, in an Engineering as well as a financial point of view, of the projected Canal.

The Committee have had under their consideration a full and comprehensive Report of Mr. William Sykes, C. E., the resident Engineer of the Canal Company, on the general merits of the proposed Canal, containing a large amount of valuable, commercial and other statistics bearing on the subject, and a full description of the engineering features of the work, and the prospects for traffic to render it remunerative.

Mr. Capreol, on behalf of the Canal Company, submitted a proposal of a number of capitalists in the United States, to undertake one half of the contract for the construction, taking in payment, one half of the capital stock of the Company—say twenty millions of dollars—provided that the remaining half be undertaken by British or other contractors, and that the Company be aided by the grant of ten millions acres of land.

The Committee have had submitted to them letters from Messrs. John Hawkshaw and A. M. Rendel, eminent Engineers of London, England, expressing their confidence in the engineering practicability of the work, and from Mr. George Wythes a prominent and reputedly wealthy English contractor, offering to undertake the remaining half of the contract for construction, on the basis of the proposal of the United States capitalists already mentioned.

The Committee have also had submitted to them a number of letters from various parties, prominent and well-informed in matters of finance, expressing, confidently, the opinion that, in the present state of the English money market, the stock of the Company would be readily taken up, provided that a grant of ten millions acres of land were made to the Company, but, at the same time, unequivocally stating that, without such grant, the floating stock would be at present impossible.

The Committee had also important evidence from the Hon. Charles Tupper, C. B., Walter Shanley, Esq. C. E., the Hon. John Ross, and the Hon. James Skead, which is submitted herewith.

The Committee beg to report that they have no doubt as to the expediency of the proposed Canal. They are satisfied that, if constructed, it would be of immense value to the commercial and general interests of the Province of Ontario, and of the whole Dominion of Canada. The interests of Ontario would be greatly promoted by the local expenditure, and the development of the extensive region of unoccupied land north and west of the Canal, and the interests of the Dominion, by the introduction into the country of the large amount of capital, estimated at forty millions of dollars, required for its construction; by the encouragement of immigration; and by the completion of a most important link in the chain of thorough communication between the Great West and the Old World. The Canal, if constructed, as it would be wholly within British territory, would be a most important key to the trade of the West, and greatly conduce to the establishment and continuance of reciprocal trade between this Dominion and the United States of America.