

Montreal Northern Colonization Railway.

REPORT

OF

C. LEGGE, Esq., C.E.,

AND OF

DUNCAN MACDONALD, Esq.

The following is the report of Messrs. Legge & Macdonald, which was presented at a meeting of the members of the City Council, and a delegation from Ottawa county, held in the City Hall, on Thursday, the 2nd March, 1871 :—

MONTREAL, 28th February, 1871.

Sir,—In accordance with instructions received from the Directors of the Montreal Northern Colonization Railway Company, we have visited and examined the country lying between the cities of Montreal and Ottawa, for the purpose of ascertaining, in so far as could be done by a cursory examination, the relative advantages presented for the location of the railway, on either the north or south sides of the Ottawa River. We now beg to furnish the following report, as the result of our investigations, extending from the 20th to the 28th of the present month.

In order to comply with the conditions generally admitted as necessary, that the line should be an independent one, or, in other words, proceed direct from the city of Montreal, in the direction of the Ottawa valley, and unconceded lands lying to the north of it, so fulfilling its functions as a colonization line, and unite with the Canada Central Railway, it was evident that no point of departure from the Grand Trunk line could be had, west of Montreal. The country lying between this city and Grenville, a point on the Ottawa about sixty miles from Montreal, being extremely favourable for railway location, and no great difference of opinion existing as to the route to be followed over the intervening space, our attention was more particularly directed to the country lying between Grenville and Ottawa city, and about which the utmost diversity of opinion existed in regard to its adaptability for a line of railway, particularly on the north side, both with reference to physical difficulties, as well as to the amount of traffic which would be obtained, were the line to follow that shore.

The failure of the Canada Central Company to obtain from the Province of Ontario a renewal of the Land Grant of 12,000 acres per mile, in aid of the work, if located on the south side of the river, between Ottawa City and Hawkesbury, a village opposite Gren-

ville; while at the same time the Quebec Government offered and gave a renewal of the Land Grant, to the extent of five thousand acres per mile from Montreal to Grenville, a distance of sixty miles, with an increased grant of fifteen thousand acres per mile from Grenville to Aylmer, a village on the Ottawa River about eight miles above Ottawa City, or a total distance from Grenville of sixty-eight miles; making an aggregate amount of assistance of 1,350,000 acres, coupled with the imperative condition, however, that the line should be located entirely within the Province of Quebec; it therefore became a question of great importance to the successful carrying out of the enterprise, to determine as to the possibility of complying with this condition, and so securing the grant.

On the other hand, a partial promise had been made by the Ontario Government of a money grant of from two thousand dollars to four thousand dollars per mile in aid of new railways, provided they headed in the direction of Crown lands, and opened them up; but not payable until the completion of the work. The uncertainty as to whether the line, if located on the south side of the river, between Hawkesbury and Ottawa City, could lay claim even to this moderate assistance, under the stipulations mentioned, will naturally cause the Company to view the north side with favour, providing the expense of construction be not so largely in excess of that on the south shore, as to exceed the value of the Quebec Land Grant.

Against the north shore it has been alleged that the Laurentian Mountains approach its margin, thus rendering the construction of a railway one of great cost,—that there is but little arable land, and that consequently no freight can be expected from agricultural productions; that, even in the great item of sawed lumber, the south shore