

# THE CANADIAN Illustrated News

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## PUBLIC OBLIGATIONS.

Last week we endeavoured to show that Canada would make a serious mistake if it undertook to fulfil the obligations entered into by the Coalition Government delegates of 1864-5, with the Imperial Government, regarding fortifications. The money at stake—somewhere between a fifteenth and a twentieth of the public debt of Canada—might, however, be profitably employed in other works. If it is to be borrowed at all, and perhaps it would be better that it were not, there are other objects on which it might be much more profitably expended than in setting man-traps for our own people against a conjunction of circumstances which, if they ever occur, will only place us in a worse position for defence than we are at present. Canada wants no fortifications; but she does want increased means of communication between her distant Provinces. No country is perhaps more unfortunately situated than this, with respect to its existing avenues of

inter-communication; and hence we think that the first and most urgent of the public obligations resting upon its shoulders, after that of protecting the National Credit, is to increase the number of its railways and canals.

The present generation can well afford to assume a moderate increase of taxation to pay the interest of such loans as might be required to commence a general system of public improvements. But we are strongly convinced that by a well-devised system of policy between the General and the several Local Governments, the waste and, at present, unproductive lands of the Dominion might be turned to such account as would secure the construction of nearly every great public work which the Dominion requires, without costing the country a dollar. The Provinces in which these works have to be built would benefit to an extent that would fully warrant their giving such a portion of their wild lands as would guarantee their construction. But apart from any considerations of

provincial enterprise, the Dominion, having the whole North-West under its control, ought to be able to trade off its broad acres by the million for hundreds of miles of railway or canal, as science or experience may prove to be best adapted to the wants of the country. It ought not surely to be a hard task to prove to the local governments that the giving away of lands, in return for the construction of needed public works, is an actual gain to their Provinces. Suppose, for instance, that to a responsible gravel road company were ceded, in alternate blocks, every other mile square along a line through what is now an unbroken wilderness in return for the construction of a good road, is it not clear that the Province would more than double the value of its land through the enhanced price it would obtain for the reserved portion? Extend the same principle to canals and railways, making the land grants proportioned to the value of the works, and there is not a doubt but that skill and capital



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