



Conditions in the Clay Belt of New Ontario

Toronto, 28th December, 1912

Honourable Clifford Sifton
Chairman, Commission of Conservation
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to your wishes I have made a rapid inspection of conditions along the National Transcontinental railway from Cochrane east and west for about 200 miles, and have pleasure in submitting the following statement.

Through the courtesy of Mr. H. M. Balkam, District Engineer, a motor car (power speeder) was placed at my disposal. This method of independent travel coupled with fair weather for at least four days afforded an unusually satisfactory opportunity for seeing conditions along the line, especially as at the season chosen (the week from October 15) the underbrush is leafless. At the end of my trip, however, I was stalled for two days in one of the engineers' residencies by the first snow of the season—15 inches on October 22.

Besides this personal inspection I had ample opportunity to overhear men familiar with the country.

Allow me to say at the very outset that I believe I have ascertained important facts as regards the condition of a part of the, so-called, clay belt, which, if properly realized, may be useful in its development.

1. *Forest Fires*

The railway line for 86 miles east of Cochrane is practically free from any serious fires. Whatever burned areas were seen, some five