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THE PLAN OF IMPROVEMENTS TO TORONTO.

SPEECH OF MR. BYRON E. WALKER, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE, AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS.

Mr. President and Gentlemen: I have to thank the Ontario Association of Architects for giving me the opportunity of being here to-night and of speaking on this subject; one that has certainly been very dear to my heart for many years. I shall, I suppose, have to try to say something that has not been said before regarding this plan; but this is a rather difficult task after the very thorough manner in which Mr. Langton dealt with the subject and after what has been said by the Mayor and Sir Henry Pellatt. I think we should try to consider the reasonableness of bringing this plan before the people of the city of Toronto at this particular moment. The growth of a city begins generally with the cross roads in the country, developing into village and town and city; it has usually no shape, no rationale, no reason for being, except the gregarious instinct of man, and in a new country it is apt to grow a long time before people begin to think about its rationale at all—as to why it is there and what its purposes are. As Mr. Langton said, in the middle ages cities did not have sewers or other improvements and conveniences; they were mere habitations of men crowded inside a wall. Now there is nothing very unnatural to me in the position of Toronto at the present time. It has had in the last fifteen years an extraordinarily rapid growth. If we put ourselves back to the time when it was a little place clustered about the Don, and consider that it has now reached almost to the northern reaches of the Humber, we shall realize at what a tremendous pace Toronto has grown in the last few years; and if we suddenly find that we have outgrown our proportions and have to consider afresh the scope of our city, that I think is very natural and we need not spend time in deploring a mis-spent past. It occurs to me to say this because I have just spent three days at Ottawa listening to some very excellent speeches, some most instructive addresses, largely about the sins of Canada in wasting her forests in the past and as to what we are to do in the future; and it seems to me that deploring the past is after all a waste of time. The question now is whether Toronto has reached the point where it should consider its surroundings and its future, and whether it has the courage and intelligence to do those things which every one of us know ought to be done. (Hear hear.) Now we have 300,000 people—so the Directory says, and if it is not quite true, it is approximately true. One of the enterprising journals of Toronto recently started what is called “The 500,000 Club.” I believe most of the business people in Toronto believe it is quite practicable to give an impetus to this city which shall cause it to have 500,000 people a great deal earlier than it would have without this impetus. If we do not believe this, then we are not like the the rest of the people in the western world. In the

United States cities are often made by the efforts of 15 or 20 leading men. A small percentage of the people believe intensely in their city, their patriotism showing itself in an intense love of that particular part of the earth, and these men make it what it is.

The question that devolves upon the people of Toronto is, whether they believe in this scheme; not as a pleasant after-dinner diversion; not as a thing, which gentlemen who may be too enthusiastic have taken the trouble to develop into a coherent plan; but as something which the people of Toronto will take hold of and commit themselves to as a programme for the future, taking all the necessary steps by legislation, or otherwise, to ensure that this is the plan which Toronto proposes to follow for the next 15, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years, and authorizing, as far as they can, that money, in a natural way and so as not to be too great a burden, shall be spent year after year, in order to bring about its completion.

We need not deceive ourselves by imagining that if we go away from here to-night, and the Architects and all those who have been concerned in it have been thanked for their love of our city and the energy and intelligence they have displayed in the development of the plan, and we have got the assurance of the Mayor and others that in a general way all believe in it and hope to see it worked out—we need not imagine that any great result is going to flow from that alone. We are not going to have any result unless this plan, or something akin to it, takes the form of concrete legislation. This plan has been developed by the careful study of skilful men and is as perfect and intelligent as these gentlemen know how to make it. Doubtless, however, it has faults and may be altered to advantage in some respects, but let us say that a plan evolved by a little alteration of this should be accepted and confirmed by legislation, or otherwise, as the plan which Toronto proposes to follow in developing these important roadways and in developing its parks. (Applause.) When that has been done; when such a plan has with its consent been imposed by the Province upon the city of Toronto, at I hope the urgent request of the present Mayor and of the gentlemen who are around him; when we have all said as citizens—both as individual citizens and as we are represented in the Council—that this is what we propose to do; then I should like to see of this city—as there is in the Library at Washington, of that city—a plan modelled on a comparatively large scale and put in some public building of Toronto, so that every man who comes to Toronto may go and see it and realize what we are going to be 10 or 20 years from now. (Applause.)

When you think of people like the Americans, so impetuous and so ambitious that one can hardly imagine them projecting anything that will take more than a year to accomplish—when you think of a people like that, having a plan which will take a hundred years to carry out, at an expenditure of \$2,000,000 a year—when we realize as some of us can, as anyone who saw Washington 20 or 30 years ago can, that absolutely desolate mud-hole and sand flat on the banks of the Potomac, and consider what they have already done and what they believe they can do, not by natural advantages but by forcing beauty out of most unnatural situations—what kind of people are we in Toronto if we think we have not something serious to do? It would be absolutely