

The Montreal, Ottawa & Georgian Bay Canal Company.

THE MOLSONS BANK CHAMBERS,

Ottawa, February 8th. 1896.

DEAR SIR,

I understand that His Worship the Mayor and the Council of the City of Ottawa have invited you to join the deputation which will wait on the Government on Tuesday, February 18th, for the furtherance of the project of opening the Ottawa River to navigation, and completing a through waterway along its course and that of the French River from Montreal to the Great Lakes. As it is desirable that no one to whom such invitation is addressed should neglect to take proper interest in the matter, I offer for your careful consideration a few thoughts with regard to the object for which the meeting in question has been called.

Anyone who has made even the most cursory examination of the subject is fully assured that sooner or later the Ottawa River must become one of the great commercial highways of the continent. The excellence of the route and its many and great advantages have been long recognized, and no argument is needed to show the importance and practical nature of the proposed canalization. Many causes which have operated in the past to hinder or prevent its becoming an accomplished fact have been removed by the progress of events, and there has never been a time so favorable for the prosecution of the undertaking as the present. A just appreciation of its consequence should lead every resident of the Ottawa Valley especially to actively interest himself in its promotion, the more so since failure to push it now would probably result in postponement of its completion for some time to come.

When the project was first mooted there were almost insuperable difficulties in the way to off-set the undeniable advantages the route offered. For the most part it lay through what was then a trackless wilderness known only to the Indian and the trapper, and accessible only by canoe. Supplies and material could be brought in only at enormous expense. The cost of operations was excessive as compared with to-day, because of the lack of modern engineering methods and appliances. Then apparently there was no large constituency to be served by the route when completed. All the northern part of Ontario and Western Quebec were looked upon as a barren wilderness with a climate little short of Arctic in its rigors. The north shores of Lakes Huron and Superior were almost as little known as Labrador. There was no Canadian North-West. Ontario consisted of a fringe of sparsely settled country