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Papers relating to the Conferences which have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and a Deputation from the Executive Council of Canada, appointed to confer with Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Defence of the Province.

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Copy.  
CANADA.  
No. 14.

DOWNING STREET,  
21st January, 1865.

MY LORD,

Her Majesty's Government are unwilling, under the present circumstances, to press upon the Government of Canada any decision which can with prudence be postponed upon a subject of so much importance to the future welfare of the British North American Provinces, as the subject of the defence of Canada. They are sensible of the considerations which render it expedient to wait for such a decision, until some further progress shall have been made in the discussion of the proposal for the Union of those Provinces, and until it shall have been ascertained whether the question is to be considered by the Ministers of the United British North American Provinces, or by the Ministers of Canada alone.

But without anticipating that any causes of differences are likely to disturb our present friendly relations with the Government of the United States, they think it necessary to bear in mind the vast accession which has recently been made, and still continues to be made, to the military Forces of that powerful country. They cannot forget the very small proportion which the numerical strength of British Troops on the North American Continent bears to the Force which might at any moment be brought into the field against them. It would be a cause of just reproach against the British Government if those Troops were suffered to remain in a position which, on the outbreak of war, they might not be able to hold until the military and naval resources of the Country could be made available for their support.

These considerations seem to Her Majesty's Government to render it absolutely necessary that the defences of Quebec should be materially strengthened and without delay. They intend, therefore, on their own part to include in the Estimates of the present year a vote for improving the defences of Quebec.