

about four feet higher than the ordinary height of the wharves and of the liberal width of 300 feet, so as to give a large and somewhat elevated area especially adapted to the requirements of the rapidly growing coal trade. The bulk of the construction of the new wharf and the extension of the basin are already done and will be completed early in the summer.

The Guard Pier, which was built to within 1,000 feet of the Victoria Bridge in 1895, was last year lengthened 500 feet, reducing the opening between it and the bridge to 500 feet. The outer side of the Pier was also coated with rock dredgings, where not previously done.

The further improvement of the channel, carried forward by the Government, has reduced the water in the harbour below that available for deep draft vessels, and the Trust will continue this work until the same depth is secured throughout the harbour that may be available in the channel between Montreal and Quebec, a little over a foot having already been added to the depth of the harbour.

To meet the recommendation made by the Commission appointed in 1895 by the Department of Public Works, in which it was recommended that two piers should be constructed in the west end of the harbour instead of the four piers laid down in plan No. 6, the Commissioners submitted a plan for the construction of the two piers proposed, for the approval of the Department, upon which no decision has, thus far, been given; that work, therefore, has remained in abeyance up to the present time.

Since the large expenditure, involved in the adoption of plan No. 6, was under consideration the conditions of the trade of the St. Lawrence have changed somewhat, to the disadvantage of the St. Lawrence route, by the increased size of the later built vessels trading between Buffalo and the western lakes, that increase bringing the average of the capacity of the vessels up to about 100,000 bushels.

Some Canadian vessels have been built with a capacity of about 90,000 bushels, but when loaded to the limit of water line in the Welland Canal, about 60,000 bushels constitutes their present available capacity. Should the Government secure 17 feet of water in the Welland Canal those vessels, of the class named, would be able successfully to compete for lake trade.

The canals and harbours of the United States are entirely free from any dues upon vessels or cargo, while canal tolls and Montreal wharfage charges have become a serious detriment to the export and import trade via the St. Lawrence, since the rates of transportation, under the keen competition of the various routes available, have become so close.

I would respectfully submit to your Board that under the existing circumstances it would be more to the advantage of the trade of the St. Lawrence that, so far as the port of Montreal is concerned, the Government should assume the present obligations of the Harbour Trust, thereby making Montreal practically a free port, inasmuch as a reasonable charge for the allotments of wharf space would be sufficient to cover the current expense of harbour management and maintenance, and the gradual enlargement of wharf space as rendered necessary by increase of trade.

I remain, Sirs,

Respectfully yours,

HUGH McLENNAN,

*Harbour Commissioner for the Board of Trade.*