

The following extracts from a report made by the Hon. Sir Alexander Galt, G.C.M.G., the High Commissioner for Canada in England, upon his visit this year (1881) to Manitoba and the North West, contain much valuable information on the subject :—

With reference to the climate the evidence obtained from every person interrogated was eminently satisfactory. The weather was undoubtedly cold, but dry, with little wind; the snowfall not heavy, rarely exceeding twelve to fourteen inches during the winter; scarcely a day in winter when a man could not do outdoor work all day, and generally preferable to the milder weather of Ontario, where wet, mingled with the cold, produced much greater discomfort and positive loss of time. With reference to the alleged prevalence of early frosts, the experience of the settlers leads them to sow very early, as soon as the surface of the soil is free from frost, the continued thawing of the subsoil furnishing moisture to the plant, which the warm dry weather brings to maturity by the middle of August. One point in this connection may be stated, which is not generally considered, that the high latitude of the North-West gives a much longer day and continued sun-warmth than in Ontario, and consequently produces a much more rapid growth to maturity.

In respect to the water supply, it is abundant in the district visited, but inferior in quality. . . . It was, however, found that the settlers experienced no difficulty in procuring good water for their own use by simply sinking wells to a depth of eight to ten feet, the soil acting as a filter and leaving pure cold water free from deleterious substances. On this point also there seems no ground for anticipating future complaint or objection. . . .

With regard to timber for building and fuel, there appears to be sufficient for the present wants of the early settlers. All the banks of the rivers and streams are wooded, and the small lakes are almost uniformly fringed with belts of small trees. . . . With reference to timber for building purposes, it will certainly be had at reasonable rates, as the facilities for obtaining it far surpass those of the prairie States of the Union, where the absence of forest has not yet been found to offer any sensible bar to successful settlement.

Lastly, there is the important question of fuel supply—an article of primary importance in a climate as severe as the North-West Territory of the Dominion. For the present, in many parts of the districts visited, and for periods more or less limited, there will undoubtedly be found a supply of firewood from the existing growth of timber, and no hesitation in promoting immediate settlement need be felt on that point. . . . Providence has however provided for the future supply of this essential article, through the vast deposits of coal and lignite which are believed to exist very generally, and which have already been discovered on the Souris River, about 200 miles from Winnipeg, and also for several hundred miles from Edmonton to Fort McLeod, along the skirts of the prairie, near the base of the Rocky Mountains. . . . I am therefore of opinion that no apprehension need be felt as to the future fuel supply of the North-West.