

Without entering into any calculation as to the saving in time, which would be a great object in the consideration of the question, I shall merely allude to a few points bearing upon the actual construction of either of these means of communication.

The descent from Lake Winnipeg to the sea is about 100 feet greater than the whole fall from Lake Superior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The boat route by Oxford Lake and Hays's River would be impracticable for a canal, owing (amongst other causes) to the small supply of water and the continuously rapid descent all the way from Swampy Lake.

The Nelson River has the advantages of an ample body of water, some navigable stretches, and but little variation in its volume at different seasons of the year. Probably about 250 out of the total rise of 710 feet between the level of the sea and that of Lake Winnipeg, would require to be surmounted by locks. These would need to be cut through Laurentian gneiss, one of the most expensive kinds of rock to excavate. Then a canal would be open for only half the year or less, whereas a railway here could be used at any season, the snow-fall in this region being lighter than in some of the more southern parts of Canada. In constructing a railway, few or no rock-cuttings would apparently require to be made, and there would even probably be but little earthwork. No rivers or lakes are known to cross any part of the route, and the line might be constructed in almost a straight course from Sea River Falls to York Factory or Port Nelson. Some swamps, small lakes, and a few brooks, such as the head branches of the Foxes River, would, in all likelihood, be the most serious obstacles encountered.

The cost of building a railway through this region would, perhaps, not exceed thirty thousand dollars a mile, in which case the following table would exhibit approximately the total sum necessary to open the best kind of communication between the sea and our North-West Territories :—

	Miles.	Cost at \$30,000 a mile.
Sea River Falls to York Factory or to the mouth of the Nelson River.....	301	\$9,030,000
Sea River Falls to head of river navigation on the Nelson River.....	208	6,240,000
Robinson Portage to the same point.....	172	5,160,000
Robinson Portage to York Factory or to the mouth of the Nelson.....	243	7,290,000
Robinson Portage to The Rock (on Hayes' River).....	142	4,260,000

The fine clay soil along the upper half of the Nelson River has been already referred to. All accounts agree in representing that an equally good clay soil, with occasional interruptions of rock, extends thence north-westward through the region drained by the Burntwood River and all the way to the Churchill.

A similar country may be said to extend all along the boat route from Norway House to York Factory. In the northern half of this distance the surface, except close to the rivers, appears to be generally level, wet and covered with sphagnum, but it supports a growth of rather small spruce and tamarac timber. Looking from the top of Brassy Hill, near Hill River, the surface of the country appears level, in a general way, in all directions, but minor undulations and banks of earth, interspersed with small lakes, are also visible. This view is said to represent a good average example of the whole region between the Laurentian area and the sea, from the Weenisk to the Churchill River, embracing, perhaps, upwards of one hundred thousand square miles. Good land is reported to extend over a considerable area southward from this boat route, including the country around God's Lake and the head waters of the Severn River. But the district lying east of Lake Winnipeg is reported to be generally rocky and swampy. The southern limit of the perpetually frozen ground is said to cross Hill River about The Rock, but there is much doubt as to the correctness of this theory, since any observations hitherto made have been on exposed