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3rd Session, 5th Parliament, 20th Victoria, 1857

MESSAGE

From His Excellency the Governor General
with Despatches on the subject of a per-
manent Seat of Government in Canada.

Presented to the Legislative Council. Monday,
4th May, 1857.



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MESSAGE.

EDMUND HEAD,

The Governor General transmits for the information of the Honorable the Legislative Council copy of a Despatch which he addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in forwarding the Addresses of the Legislative Council and Assembly to Her Majesty the Queen on the subject of the Seat of Government; together with a copy of the Secretary of State's reply thereto.

Government House, Toronto,
4th May, 1857.

COPY No. 49.

“ GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TORONTO,
“ 28th March, 1857.

“ Sir,—I forward with the present Despatch two addresses to Her Most Gracious Majesty of an unusual character. They are respectively from the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, and the prayer of both is the same.

2. “ That from the Legislative Council is as follows:—

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Council of Canada in Provincial Parliament assembled, beg leave to approach Your Majesty with renewed assurances of devotion and attachment to your Royal Person and Government.

We desire, may it please Your Majesty, to express our opinion, that the interests of Canada require that the Seat of the Provincial Government should be fixed at some certain place.

We therefore respectfully pray that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to exercise Your Royal Prerogative, and select some one place for the Permanent Seat of Government in Canada.

3. The address from the Legislative Assembly is founded on resolutions passed in Committee of the whole House, which Resolutions contain the additional assurance that the House resolves to appropriate a sum not exceeding £225,000 for providing the necessary buildings and accommodation for the Government and Legislature at such place as Her Majesty may see fit to select.

4. You are aware, Sir, of the difficulty which in this Colony has long surrounded the question of the Seat of Government. After its removal from Kingston to

Montreal in 1843, certain circumstances caused the Legislature to adopt a migratory system by which Parliament was to sit alternately four years at Toronto and four years at Quebec.

5. The inconvenience of this arrangement has been strongly felt. It is attended by great expense, and by a periodical suspension of public business in every office. At the same time it is impossible to deny that it has done good; prejudices have been softened and misconceptions removed by it.

6. In the last session, however, the Legislative Assembly asserted the necessity of a fixed Seat of Government by a Resolution of their own, and a vote was carried in favor of Quebec. When the question of providing money for the erection of the public buildings at Quebec came up, a clause appropriating £50,000 for that purpose was struck out of the supplies by the Legislative Council, and the whole supply bill had to be introduced again in the Lower House. Practically, therefore, the main question at the commencement of this session remained yet undecided.

7. Yet my own conviction was, and is, that the time has arrived when the matter ought to be definitely settled. To keep it open is to maintain in full flow a constant source of local bitterness and sectional animosity, which by a little management can always be turned against the Government of the day. Nor is this the worst consequence of its unsettled condition. If the Province of Canada is to remain one, it is essential that its Seat of Government should be fixed and recognized by all.

8. There can be no doubt that Her Majesty's prerogative enables her to summon the Parliament wherever she may please; but Her Majesty, with a desire to meet the wishes of the people of *Canada*, has in practice generally left the matter to be determined by those most immediately interested therein.

9. It now appears to a majority of both branches of the Legislature that the question is one not likely to be arranged satisfactorily by themselves. They do not, I conceive, by their present addresses, in any way renounce or disclaim their own capacity for self-government, nor do they, by referring this question to the Queen, intend to establish a principle in any way inconsistent with the free and unimpeded action of Parliamentary responsibility in the Colony.

10. The matter itself is one of exceptional character. Nothing but this consideration and a strong conviction that its speedy settlement is of the utmost importance, would induce me to recommend that so soon as money necessary for erecting the public buildings at the spot which Her Majesty may select, shall have been placed at her disposal, the prayer of these addresses should be complied with.

11. Under any circumstances I apprehend that the Legislature and public officers will, in 1859, have to be removed again to *Quebec*, according to the present arrangement. What is asked of the Queen is, to select a site at which in the meantime fit and suitable buildings may be erected for the establishment of the permanent Legislative capital of *Canada*.

12. In order to lay fully before the Queen the claims of the several places

which may be said to consider themselves entitled to selection as the Seat of Government, I have caused a circular (of which a copy is annexed to this despatch,) to be addressed by my Secretary to the Mayor of each of these cities. I have asked each Corporation to set forth the reasons in favour of their own city, and to forward the statement of such reasons to the Secretary of State before the 1st of July.

13. In doing this I have perhaps presumed too much on the probability of Her Majesty complying with the request of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. If so I must entreat forgiveness, but I have thought it important that no time should be lost. The question, of course, must be decided after calm and deliberate consideration of the interests of the whole Province, not of those of any particular city or place.

14 It would evidently be improper to convey to the Queen's advisers in England, any opinion or advice in this matter as on the part of the Executive Council here. The whole reference is, as I have observed, of an exceptional character, and if it were to be finally decided on the advice of persons, any of whom are responsible to the Parliament of *Canada*, the great object of removing it beyond the cross-action of local politics and sectional jealousies would be altogether frustrated.

15. I annex to this despatch copies of the votes and proceedings of the Legislative Assembly relative to this matter in this and the preceding session.

16 This dispatch has been shown to the Members of my Council and concurred in by them. With this observation I again submit my recommendation that Her Majesty may be advised to comply with the prayer of the addresses now transmitted.

I have the honor, &c., &c.,
(Signed.)

The Right Honorable
H. LABOUCHERE, &c., &c., &c.

EDMUND HEAD.

Copy.

Circular.

GOVERNOR'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE.
Toronto, C. W., March 28th, 1857.

SIR,—You are probably aware that the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Canada have addressed Her Most Gracious Majesty to exercise Her Prerogative in the selection of a permanent Seat of Government for the whole Province.

In the event of Her Majesty complying with the prayer of these Addresses, His Excellency is anxious that Her advisers in England should be enabled to place before Her a full and fair statement of the claim of each separate City, which may be considered a candidate for the honor of becoming the future capital of Canada.

As a matter of course, the final selection must depend on a comprehensive survey of the interests, not of any one place, but of the whole Province, as part of British North America.

The claims, however, of each City are likely to be stated by the persons most interested in supporting them better than they would be by any other party.

His Excellency therefore invites the Corporation of _____ to cause to be prepared a paper setting forth the reasons which may in their opinion favor the claim of that place to be selected by the Queen.

With every wish to afford full time for preparing these statements, His Excellency desires that it may be in the hands of the Colonial Secretary by the first week of July in the present year.

You will please, if you see fit to comply with His Excellency's desire, to address the packet to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State, London, and endorse it with the words "City of _____ Canada."

I have, &c.,

(Signed.)

R. T. PENNEFATHER,

Gov's Secretary.

To His Worship the Mayor of Toronto, Kingston,
Montreal, Ottawa, and Quebec.

Copy No. 50.

DOWNING STREET,
17th April, 1857.

SIR,—I have to acknowledge your Despatch No. 49, of the 28th ult., forwarding addresses from the Legislative Council and Assembly of Canada, praying that Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to exercise the Royal Prerogative by the selection of some place for the permanent Seat of Government in Canada. I understand the object of these Addresses to be the selection of some fitting place at which, under all ordinary circumstances, the Legislature of the Province should henceforward be called together, and where the necessary Public Buildings may be provided for that purpose as well as for the general administration of the affairs of Canada.

I have to inform you that Her Majesty, on the advice of her Ministers, and fully weighing the importance of the reference thus made to Her by the Legislative Council and Assembly of Canada has been graciously pleased to comply with the prayer of these memorials.

I shall wait the further information which your Despatch promises, and in particular the replies which may be received to the circular which you have addressed to the Mayors of the several Cities, before taking any further steps to initiate the necessary examination into the relative advantages of the places indicated for the information of Her Majesty.

I have, &c.,

(Signed.)

H. LABOUCHERE.

Governor

Sir Edmund Head, Bart., &c., &c., &c.

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