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REPORT
OF THE
SELECT COMMITTEE

OF THE

Honourable the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada,

ON THE PETITION OF THE

TORONTO AND LAKE HURON

RAIL ROAD COMPANY.

MONTREAL, FEBRUARY, 1845.

THE Committee to whom was referred the petition of the TORONTO and LAKE HURON RAIL ROAD COMPANY, beg leave to represent, that by an Act of the Parliament of Upper Canada, passed on the 10th day of April, 1836, the said Company was incorporated, with power to construct an iron or wooden Rail Road or way, between the City of TORONTO and some portion of the navigable waters of LAKE HURON, within the limits of the *Home District*.

That stock to a very large amount was taken up, and the Company provided with the necessary surveys, and had plans and specifications of the entire route made and completed at a very heavy expense. The undertaking having thus been commenced, with every prospect of success, the unhappy troubles of 1837 began, and owing to the depressed state of the country consequent thereon, your petitioners state they were compelled to abandon their intentions for some time; but that within the last twelve months public attention has been called to the subject, and that it has been suggested to them that a Planked or Blocked Road would better suit the present circumstances of the country. That it would at the same time have an almost equal tendency to develop its resources. That a Rail Road would mainly depend for support on foreign travel and traffic, whilst a Planked or Blocked Road would be of immediate benefit to the districts and counties through which it might pass. That it would be much less expensive, and might be brought into use at a much earlier period.

In this view of the case, your petitioners pray for an amendment in their Act of incorporation, so as to put it in their power, if they think fit, to construct a Planked or Blocked Road, or a Rail Road in their discretion, which your Committee beg leave to recommend to the favourable consideration of your honourable House.

Your Committee beg leave also to recommend, in pursuance of the prayer of the petitioners, that the said Act may be farther amended, by leaving it in the discretion of the said Company, to fix the terminus of the proposed Road to LAKE HURON, at such point as they may deem most advisable, without confining it to the *Home District*, and that the time limited for the completion of the said Road, which will expire in less than two years, be extended to a period of four years.

Your Committee have been led to recommend the terminus of the said Road to be in the discretion of the said Company, not only from a conviction that it will be important to make the route as short as possible, but that it will be desirable to lay it down in such a manner as will, in addition to the benefit which will be derived from it in opening an unsettled country, be calculated to invite to the Province and through it, foreign traffic and foreign commerce.

Upon the subject as regards its bearing in these respects, and with a view to the advantage of all sections of that vast and fertile portion of Canada which lies between LAKES HURON and ONTARIO, in a *northerly and westerly direction from TORONTO*, your Committee have devoted a good deal of time and consideration. The prominent places on the southern shore of LAKE HURON, within the limits of this Province, which are now attracting much attention, are *Penetanguishene, Owen's Sound, Saugin, and Goderich*. The main travelled Road leading from Toronto to the interior of the country in a northerly direction, is the natural line of communication in connection with the inland waters of Lake Simcoe with Penetanguishene on Lake Huron. This Road has been much improved within the last four years, and from its being one of the main travelled Roads of the Province, there can be little doubt but that this route in a short time will be made complete.

A Road has been also laid out and made passable by the Government, from the Township of Nichol, a distance westerly of about fifty-five miles from Toronto to Owen's Sound on Lake Huron, and it has been suggested, and your Committee have reason to believe that it is in contemplation, to lay another Road from the Township of Woolwich, about ten miles farther west to Saugin on Lake Huron, about twenty miles above Owen's Sound. These two Roads, when the latter is completed, will pass through a most fertile and eligible tract of country for settlement, and which is yet in the hands of Government, and in an entirely wild state. *In the course of their inquiry it was suggested to your Committee, and they see every reason to approve of the suggestion, that the contemplated Road proposed to be constructed by the TORONTO and LAKE HURON RAILROAD COMPANY SHOULD HAVE ITS TERMINATION AT GODERICH, a Town and Harbour established by the Canada Company upon the tract of land purchased by them from the Government some years ago, and that it ought to be undertaken and completed as a portion of the public works of the Province. Should this route be ultimately determined on and adopted, IT WOULD POSSESS MANY AND SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES OVER ANY OTHER.* The Roads already mentioned from Owen's Sound and Saugin, on Lake Huron, would intersect it, and thereby afford the inhabitants who may hereafter occupy the section of country, through which they may pass, the facility of an easy access to market, and besides they will enhance four hundred-fold the present value of the public lands in that section, which may be estimated in round numbers at 5,000,000 of acres.

Such an undertaking would unite all the various local interests in the north-western portion of this Province, which hitherto have been, as your Committee are willing to admit, of necessity neglected. The distance from Toronto to Goderich, in the probable direction which such a Road would take, is about 120 miles. On extending it from Toronto it would pass through the Townships of York, Etobicoke, Toronto, Esquesing, Trafalgar, Nasagawaya, and Eramosa, a distance of about 55 miles. The land in these Townships is of the best quality, and the lots are almost all occupied and in a state of advanced improvement; from thence it would pass through the Township of Nichol, which is also thickly inhabited, having the flourishing town of Guelph about six miles to its south, and from thence it would pass through the Townships of Peel and Maryborough, both of which are set apart for the support of the Clergy, though the former is as yet unsurveyed; thence its course would be through the unsurveyed and unappropriated lands of the Crown for the distance of about 50 miles, until it would reach the HURON TRACT, the property of the Canada Company as before mentioned; through this part it would pass about 14 miles, till it reached the harbour of Goderich.

The general advantages which this route would confer upon the country, by affording increased facilities to trade, commerce, and agriculture, would be immense. The foreign trade, as well as travel, which would, by the construction of such a Road, be drawn through the Province, would of themselves abundantly repay a much greater outlay than would be required. The course of trade from Chicago and the western shores of Lake Huron, is through Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair into Lake Erie, thence to Buffalo or through the Welland Canal into Lake Ontario. The length of time required to accomplish this journey has been found a great drawback to trade. After passing through Lake Huron to Sarnia, at the head of the St. Clair, the distance to Buffalo is upwards of four hundred miles, and by water to Rochester nearly five hundred miles. The distance

from Chicago to Sarnia is about the same as from Chicago to Goderich.* The distance from Goderich to Toronto has already been stated at one hundred and twenty miles, making in favour of the proposed route over the present a saving in distance of upwards of two hundred miles. The ordinary time which is now taken by a steamer to go from Sarnia to Buffalo is from seventy-two to eighty-four hours, whereas a traveller by way of Goderich, in the event of the proposed improvement being made, would be able to reach Rochester in twenty hours.

Besides, it is estimated, and your Committee believe correctly, that exclusively of the said Townships set apart for the support of the Clergy, there would be at least 70,000 acres of land at present unsurveyed and ungranted adjoining the said Road, the value of which, even if an ordinary Road were constructed through it, would not be more than 5s. an acre, or £17,500, would be immediately increased in value to £70,000 at least; and the land six miles in depth on either side of such a Road, comprising upwards of 400,000 acres, would be thereby trebled in value, and become densely populated, whereas it is now a perfect wilderness, and likely to remain so for many years to come, unless some efforts are made by the Government and Legislature to bring about the improvement to which your Committee have now called the attention of your honourable House, all of which is respectfully submitted.

* The distance from Chicago to Goderich is 70 miles nearer than from Chicago to Sarnia.

