

**Report of the Commissioners for Niagara
Falls Park, 1885-1886.**

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS, 16TH MARCH, 1886. 15

To the Honourable Arthur S. Hardy, Q.C.,
 Secretary of the Province of Ontario.

Dear Sir,—The undersigned regret that the unavoidable delay which arose in commencing the arbitrations with the owners of the lands taken for the Niagara Falls Park, not only postpones the giving of the awards by the Arbitrators, but, of necessity, prevents the Commissioners from submitting their final report until after the prorogation of the present Session of the Legislature.

This has caused the Commissioners to very carefully consider the effect that is likely to be produced by the postponement of the Park project for at least another year, the result of which consideration it is important to at once communicate to you.

The active measures taken since the appointment of the Park Commission, and the progress made to the stage of arbitrations, as well as the publicity given to the proceedings, inspired the general belief that the Government of Ontario, evidently with public approval, intended to carry out the Niagara Falls Park scheme without any delay. Postponement, therefore, for another year, will cause general regret and disappointment, and to the owners of the properties taken for the Park, very serious dissatisfaction.

In the cases of some of the properties yielding a revenue, the owners will be prevented from making repairs, improvements and other contemplated arrangements for carrying on their business. Others again, whose properties are included in the Park boundaries, seeing that the establishment of a free reservation on the American side had not only increased the value of property there, but had created a desire to own property within view of the Falls, cannot avail themselves of the favourable opportunity thus presented to offer their holdings for sale. To such it is quite evident that the delay will cause not only dissatisfaction, but possibly loss.

Another, but in our judgment still more important reason against delay, is the present unusually favourable period for obtaining the necessary funds to carry out the project; the existing condition of the money market, with the very large amount of accumulated capital seeking safe investment, offer rarely occurring advantages for the disposal of first-class securities on most favourable terms. This unusual state of things, not only in Europe, but in the United States and Canada, is not likely to continue. The Commissioners therefore think it extremely desirable not to lose so favourable an opportunity to obtain the necessary funds for establishing the Park.

Although the results of the submissions to the Arbitrators are still unknown, yet the evidence presented by both sides in the eight cases closed and only awaiting awards, with the additional information obtained in the course of these arbitrations, warrant the Commissioners in believing that the entire cost of establishing the Niagara Falls Park to the extent represented on the map already submitted and filed, will, in their opinion, not exceed \$500,000.

This sum will cover the cost of the expropriated land, enclosing the same, buildings, bridges to the islands, changing roads within the

16 Park, construction of elevators from the top of the bank to the water level, planting trees, laying out the grounds, and all preliminary expenses connected with the undertaking.

Assuming, therefore, that the entire cost of establishing the Park will not exceed \$500,000, the next most important point to consider is the question of obtaining sufficient revenue for the payment of interest on the bonds issued for founding the park, and maintaining the same. In this connection there are two very important considerations to which the Commissioners desire to give special prominence: Firstly, that the project shall entail no financial burthens whatever on the Province, but in the near future become entirely self-sustaining. Secondly, that the promise made shall be strictly kept, that the Niagara Falls Park shall be as free to the public on the Canadian side, as the Niagara Falls Reservation is on the United States side of the river.

The data already in possession of the Commissioners, although more than sufficient to establish the accuracy of their opinion on the ability of the Park scheme to become self-sustaining, are not yet complete, but when further collated will materially strengthen the opinion expressed in regard to the subject, as they will add to the sources from which revenue will be derived.

Attaching, therefore, the fullest importance to the points referred to namely a free Park, yet with a revenue sufficient to meet the interest on the bonds, and the cost of maintaining the Park, as well as the creation of a sinking fund to extinguish the capital debt, the Commissioners propose that the Park shall be absolutely free to all visitors who enter it in order to enjoy its natural beauties, and such views as it affords without artificial aid, not needing machinery, structures, guides, etc., but to charge a fee, not exceeding thirty cents, the first year (to be reduced hereafter) to all who may wish to see the magnificent and wonderful sights requiring guides and artificial aid.

This course will be substantially in harmony with that pursued on the United States side where charges are made for the use of the inclined railway, for visiting the "Cave of the Winds," and we are informed that other points of interest are to be made available to visitors for which additional fees are to be charged.

The amount required to be collected from visitors to the Park to meet the interest on the bonds and the cost of maintaining the Park will be about as follows, viz:

Four per cent. on \$500,000	\$20,000 00
Annual cost of maintenance, say	15,000 00
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In all	\$35,000 00

To arrive at data on which to base the calculation of future revenue information has been obtained from the accounts kept of visitors by the Association which controlled the "Prospect Park" on the United States side of the river, showing that visitors were charged twenty-five cents for entrance to the Park, twenty-five cents for the use of the inclined railway, twenty-five cents for the view called "Shadow of the Rock" and one dollar for entrance to what was called "The Art Gallery," making a total of \$1.75 to those who wish to see all these points of attraction.

The following figures give the number of visitors in each year since 1882, viz :

Number of visitors in 1882 was.....	118,000
Number of visitors in 1883 was.....	128,000
Number of visitors in 1884 was.....	140,000
And up to the 15th July, 1885, the day on which the State of New York took possession and declared the reservation free	175,000
From the 15th July to the 2nd of October, inclusive, the number of visitors to the reservation, as obtained from Mr. Welch, the Superintendent, was	125,400
Making the total number of visitors for the nine months of 1885	303,400

The returns for the remainder of 1885 will considerably augment these figures. Nearly all these visitors were excursionists, several thousand from Canada, who remained only a few hours at the Falls, arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon or evening. The travelling community, who stayed at the hotels and visited the Falls a number of times, are not included in the foregoing figures. These numbered upwards of 40,000 persons during the season, but the correct numbers when received will add materially to the total of 303,400 visitors. To obtain \$35,000, the annual amount required to pay the interest on the bonds and cost of maintenance, will require 116,667 visitors at 30 cents each ; that number being only about 38 per cent. of the total number of paying visitors, chiefly excursionists, who visited the Falls last year. The Commissioners are warranted in entertaining the belief that the calculations submitted of the revenue are largely within the amount that will be realized.

When in addition to the great attraction the Niagara Falls always possessed to visitors, there is added the great boon of free access from importunities by hackmen, curiosity vendors, photographers and others who, in plying their trades, have become an acknowledged imposition and nuisance, there will be an immense increase in the number of visitors.

We have carefully considered the question of a Canadian Park at Niagara Falls in all its bearings, not omitting the importance of its proving self-sustaining, and we do not hesitate to express the opinion that, on the financial basis submitted, there can be no doubt as to the sufficiency of revenue to be derived to pay four per cent. interest on \$500,000 bonds, together with the cost of maintenance.

The Commissioners, therefore, do not hesitate to recommend that the sum of \$500,000 be raised by the issue of bonds, payable in forty years, bearing four per cent. interest, payable half-yearly, the bonds to be either Niagara Falls Park bonds, guaranteed by the Province of Ontario, or the bonds of the Province of Ontario, to establish the Park. Further details in relation to the issue of these bonds need not be enlarged upon until the advisability of issuing them is decided.

In bringing this letter to a conclusion, we beg to add that we strongly recommend that the surplus revenue, after paying interest on the bonds and cost of maintenance, be applied, firstly, to the reduction

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of the charges to the public, and secondly, to the creation of a sinking fund to pay off the bonds. The Commissioners venture to express their belief that within a very few years the amount so appropriated and invested on account of the sinking fund will be more than sufficient to pay off the bonds long before their maturity; leaving the Niagara Falls Park free from debt, a most valuable productive estate, a permanent monument to the liberal and wise policy of the Government that had the generosity, combined with good taste, to establish it.

In the report of 18th September last, it was suggested that the Niagara Falls Park should be the property of the Province and its management retained under Provincial control. The Commissioners would again most earnestly press this on the consideration of the Government as the only policy worthy of being adopted by the Province of Ontario, in which this great natural wonder exists.

The Niagara Falls Park should be cleared of every obstacle that interferes with its natural beauty as a locality from which to see the great Cataract, and the privilege of seeing should be made free to all.

We have the honor to remain,

Your obedient Servants,

C. S. GZOWSKI, Chairman.

J. W. LANGMUIR,
J. G. MACDONALD,

Commissioners.

GEO. R. PATTULLO, Secretary .

Office of the Niagara Falls Park Commission, March 16, 1886.

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