

## **A FEDERAL DISTRICT FOR OTTAWA**

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A proposal for a Federal District which attempts to overcome previous objections to such a project by providing for the control of the physical features and public utilities only of Ottawa and Hull, leaving all other provincial and municipal prerogatives undistributed.

### **The Capital City of Canada**

The completion of the new parliament buildings may be accepted as a sign that Ottawa is to remain the capital city of the Dominion of Canada for all time. The planning, therefore, of the capital city is a matter of more than local interest. Every Canadian citizen who visits Ottawa has the right to feel that in some real sense he is a citizen of the capital city and he has a right to expect that some effort will be expended by the Dominion Government to make the national seat of its operations conform to the dignity, order and beauty which every country demands from its capital city. The town planning history of the two greatest capitals of the Anglo-Saxon world - London and Washington - is the history of plans rejected at critical points of their development and later repentance in terms of millions of dollars of useless expense.

Ottawa has grown to its present dimensions without a plan beyond the provision for the parliament buildings and the elementary conception of an ever extending checker board where houses, manufactories, business premises, churches and schools have been planted on some handy piece of ground that happened to be vacant, with a continuous destruction of home values. It has subdivisions of this character at present for a population ten times its present number. Many fine buildings have been erected without reference to any scheme of composition and in juxtaposition to property that will degrade their splendour so long as bricks and mortar hold together. Some of the environs of the river have been saved for public enjoyment by the foresight of the Dominion Government and some excellent parkways have been constructed as a special contribution to the city of Ottawa in lieu of taxes.

There is, however, no sense in hiding the fact that whole districts of slum development have been allowed to grow up both within and without the city which seriously threaten not only the physical aspect of the capital and its reputation as a city meant to be beautiful by nature and by the prophets of its destiny who gave it its present privilege, but threaten also the health of the community and the welfare and wholesomeness of family life.

### **The City of Hull, Que.**

Across the interprovincial boundary which is an imaginary line in the middle of the Ottawa river the city of Hull, which cannot be dissociated from from the social activities of the Capital and which cannot be shut out from its chief view points. In the development of its physical features the city of Hull has not been very fortunate and so far it has not profited by any concessions to its adornment on the part of the Dominion Government. The once beautiful stretch of its foreshore

was early monopolized by a large manufactory behind which the city of Hull hides its physical existence and its community life in a planless congeries of buildings. The development of the city of Hull is an abiding testimony to the need of a provincial town planning department which should have the power, in the interest of and for the protection of the Canadian people, to insist upon a plan of development wherever there are signs of the beginning of communal life. In the province of Saskatchewan such a law is in operation as it is in the mother country.

## **A Federal District.**

Discussion of a Federal District in the past has always taken for granted that such a project would involve legislative union between the two cities of Ottawa in Ontario and Hull in Quebec under the control of the Dominion Government, which seemed to involve the disfranchisement of the citizens on both sides of the boundary and the complete loss of municipal autonomy. Those who have studied the government of the District of Columbia have realized, with something of a shock, that the Capital of the great republic has forsworn in its own administration those democratic principles which are the *raison d'être* of the nation and in the government of its Federal District has disfranchised its citizens. The Federal District of the United States is practically a sovereign state governed by the collective authority of the other states and not by the votes of its resident citizens. Possibly the next shock is the realization that the system works very well.

In the new proposal for a Federal District of Ottawa as the capital, submitted to a subcommittee of the Senate by Mr. Noulan Cauchon, consulting engineer and town planner and illustrated in this issue of *The Journal*, it is suggested that a Federal District Commission should be created by an enabling act of the Dominion parliament to control and develop the physical features and public services of a large area embracing the two cities of Ottawa and Hull and environs. It is proposed that under this act the municipalities be given the power to transfer voluntarily to the Federal District Commission the exercise of such of their powers, granted under their respective provincial acts, as they may see fit. It is claimed that this proposal would not involve the immediate appropriation of large sums of money by the Dominion Government. It would mean the creation of a small body of experts to plan and guide development; to see that what was done was done right and as an integral part of a larger plan which would be considered and developed when circumstances required and permitted. Each feature of the plan would only be undertaken on its own merits and as necessity justified its inception.

## **Plan in Detail.**

The plan of the Federal District presented with this issue covers key factors only of town planning in relation to the Capital.

### **1. Railways.**

The reorganization of the railway trackage and terminals, as shown on the accompanying [map](#),

would eliminate all the unnecessary duplications of trackage, maintenance and overhead expense. This organic plan of the terminals gives the maximum of efficiency in convenience and operation; it includes the elimination of all level crossings on running tracks - industrial spurs apart. The railway plan includes a new railway crossing of the Ottawa for heavy power, a short line west and the abandonment of the present bridges to electric and highway purposes.

The City Council of Ottawa, 17th October, 1921, on recommendation of the Board of Control, endorsed the effort of the Plan Commission of Ottawa (provincial authority) "towards negotiating with the railways a tentative plan for the reorganization and improvement of the railway entrances and of the terminal facilities of Ottawa, such plan to be submitted for consideration of the Council as soon as progress can be reported."

## **II. Released Railway Rights of Way and Rapid Transit Railways.**

Long rights of way radial to the city which become released from railway use will be converted into fast radial highways. Embankments will be broadened out to accommodate electric trackage in the centre and motor roads alongside; grade separations will be maintained and further added to, whilst the right of way will be maintained free of access except approximately every half mile to enable rapid communications with the city. This rapid facility is designed to extend the time-distance and thereby multiply the area available for homes; to keep down the capitalization of the "home" rendering the area accessible to more people and enhancing its standard. There will eventually materialize about 25 miles of R.T.H. by this method.

Mr. Cauchon has long advanced the principle that all "through" highways should, like through railways, be afforded independent rights of way and be as free as possible from level traffic crossings - that is, should, like trunk railways, enjoy grade separations. Beyond the fortunate opportunity here of utilizing obsolete railway rights of way the through highways - rapid transit highways, as he calls them - this class of highway should be extended afar into the surrounding country alongside existing railways where they would the easier reap freedom from the numerous level intersections of public and private roads; where they could share in the future grade separation improvements of the railways, relieving by non-interruption and speed the delay and congestion of local channels and thus permitting true organic functioning.

## **III. Power and Industrial Development.**

The dam proposed at the Little Chaudiere will create from thirty thousand horse-power up, according to watershed regulation. This additional power, now much needed, would be available for developing industrial possibilities. Ottawa, due to its strategic location on the economic map of Canada, to its adjacent natural resources and available power and its magnificent scenic setting and physical relief, enjoys the unique possibility of developing in ordered progression, both as a superb residential area and a thriving industrial centre. London and Paris are what they are by reason of the variety and extent of their springs of life, the stimulus of many-sided activities, and the cosmopolitanism of their intellectual, vocational and recreational expressions.

Raising the water twenty-two feet at the Little Chaudiere to elevation 195, M.S.L. would, incidentally, flood out the Deschenes Rapids End power (8 feet head) and bring Lake Deschenes

level to the heart of the cities of Ottawa and Hull. The lake thus extended would become a suburb of the Capital, for 35 miles on either shore up to the Chats Falls. For five miles above the dam there would be relative flooding of areas undesirable for settlement and some undesirably settled. A park strip is proposed adjoining both shores. The dam is destined to accommodate a double track railway, highways and radial trackage.

#### **IV. National Parks.**

A spur of the Laurentian hills comes down to the shore of the Ottawa river at the point of the proposed power dam. It is intended that this mountain spur be made a National Park beginning from the highway across the dam and thence widening out as it extends including all the hilly ground further and further into the north as time and circumstances permit.

Besides the Mountain Park it is proposed that the Capital District be endowed with an extensive system of inner parks and parkways to assure health and amenity to the increasing population. The larger of these internal areas should be determined on the principle that land which is too low or expensive for natural sewerage should be reclaimed for public use and land which is too high to reach by normal average city water service pressure should be withheld from settlement and diverted to public park use on the ground of economy in saving expensive pumping of sewage and of relieving the larger areas of the city from the undue and expensive pressure that would accompany the supplying of water to a few high spots. It is felt that a city should be empowered to protect itself from a private use of property detrimental to community life.

#### **V. Ottawa-Cardinal Canal.**

The proposed Ottawa-Cardinal Canal, an all Canadian alternative to the St. Lawrence International deep waterway is shown diagrammatically in the north east quarter of the map bringing the level of Lake Ontario to Ottawa. The alignment of this canal to the St. Lawrence coincides with the alignment of the proposed irrigation main ditch to utilize the waters of the Rideau watershed. This latter scheme involves making an artificial reservoir of the Mer Bleu, for irrigation storage purposes.

The Cardinal-Ottawa navigation and irrigation project has been endorsed by the Ottawa Board of Trade and has been submitted to the International Joint Commission and to the Dominion Government requesting surveys and consideration on grounds of economy, policy and national advantage.

#### **Other Features.**

Other features of the plan such as the arterial highway system and many street enlargements and extensions and internal recognition cannot be shown satisfactorily on such a small scale and will be published later.

When the railway re-organization and arterial highway system have been determined it will be much easier to adjust legally, satisfactorily and definitely that very pressing need, the zoning of industrial, commercial and residential areas to obviate congestion, stabilize values and assure the

amenities of civic life to all home makers.

Tentative and alternative schemes have been studied for dealing with the Rideau Canal within and without the city and for distributing irrigation from the Rideau River throughout much of the district, to increase fertility and insure crops, to render gardens and small holdings tenable and profitable adjacent to the city and its markets.

The Railway Terminal Scheme on the plan published in this issue is the one upon which the present Plan Commission of the city is basing its appeal.

The Rideau River has been determined as the median line of the future between residential areas on the west and industrial activity on the east of it. The prevailing winds are from the west and northwest insuring the drifting away from the residential and business section and towards the open country of all objectional smoke, dust and odors. A substantial section of the open country referred to is a peat bog and sparse in population.

A large industrial area entirely below the city on the Ottawa River and a corresponding industrial area on the Hull side will hold between them the Harbour of the Federal District. It is proposed that this Harbour and harbour area will be controlled by the State as in case the Harbour Commissions of Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton.

The other industrial areas east of the Rideau River are also served by the "Union Terminals."