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## RETURN

To an ADDRESS of the HOUSE OF COMMONS, dated 4th May, 1874; For the Report or Reports of the Commissioners named to enquire into the causes of the high Spring Floods of the St. Lawrence, between Quebec and Montreal.

By Command.

R. W. SCOTT,

*Secretary of State.*

DEPARTMENT OF SECRETARY OF STATE,  
OTTAWA, 22nd May, 1874.

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OTTAWA, May 21st, 1874.

SIR,—I am directed to transmit to you the enclosed return in reference to spring floods between Montreal and Quebec, called for by an Address of the House of Commons dated the 4th inst.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedt. servant,

F. BRAUN,  
Secretary.

E. J. Langevin, Esq.  
Under Secretary of State,  
Ottawa.

MONTREAL, December 8th, 1873.

SIR,—In accordance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 4th inst. we have suspended our investigations on the causes of the St. Lawrence River inundations.

I should like, however, to acquaint you with the preliminary steps we have taken towards conducting our enquiry.

As soon as possible after the issue of the Commission, we carefully inspected the river between here and Quebec, on board the Harbor Commissioners' Steamer *Richelieu*, making ourselves acquainted with its various currents and shoals, or any points likely to obstruct the ice when coming down in the spring.

We landed at the principal villages and personally examined the most experienced parties in them.

We found, however, that the attention they ever gave the subject was very superficial, and consequently valueless; we therefore, with a view to direct their attention to some definite points, prepared the enclosed circular and had it fully distributed, so that observations, conjointly with our own, would have afforded sufficient data upon which we could form our own report.

Since the close of navigation we have been closely watching the formation of the ice, how it effects the height of water, and in fact any phenomena produced in consequence.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed,) JOHN DICKINSON,  
Chairman of the Commissioners.

F. Braun, Esq.,

Secretary,  
Department of Public Works.

MONTREAL, 24th November, 1873.

SIR,—Being appointed to investigate the causes of the periodical inundations which occur on the River St. Lawrence, between here and Québec, we are anxious to obtain as much reliable information as possible on the subject during the ensuing year.

To that end we have now the honor to forward you this circular, requesting it may meet your careful attention, and that you would note the following particulars:—

- 1st. Date the ice forms in your district.
- 2nd. Locality where it first forms.
- 3rd. Any changes taking place during the winter.
- 4th. Date of its breaking up.
- 5th. Locality where it first appears to move.
- 6th. Locality where the jam takes place.
- 7th. Particulars as to where the ice comes from that produces the jam.
- 8th. The various heights the water rises to (accompanied by dates) at different times during the winter.
- 9th. Extent of land effected by flooding.
- 10th. The distance the water backs up the river in consequence of the jam.

Finally, that you would be pleased to give your attention to any further matters that may serve to throw light upon the subject of our investigations.

Hoping to have the pleasure of a personal interviews with you, from time to time during the winter,

We have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

(Signed,) JOHN DICKINSON, Chairman,  
CHAS. ARMSTRONG,  
JEAN NORMAND.

(Translation.)

THREE RIVERS, 20th Dec., 1873.

SIR,—By a Commission, dated 4th October last, I was appointed, conjointly with Messrs. J. Dickinson and C. L. Armstrong, a Commissioner to enquire into the cause of the inundations between Montreal and Québec.

Having communicated with my colleagues, we met at Ottawa on the 4th November, and prepared our plan of enquiry and examination. We decided to go down to Québec in the steamer *Richelieu*, belonging to the Montreal Harbor Commissioners.

Ascending from Québec we examined all the irregularities of the shore on each side of the St. Lawrence, and applied to a great number of the inhabitants of the shore for information as to the time when the ice took, as to the manner in which it formed, and as to the apparent causes of the jams in the various localities. In the enquiry which we

had resolved upon making, we had necessarily to be circumspect in accepting the testimony which was given us.

Many of the inhabitants of the shore, especially in places where the banks are high, and where they do not suffer from the floods, think only of the advantages resulting from the ice bridge and how its formation may be secured; but we considered that our duty was, above all, to ascertain the means of preventing, if possible, the disastrous overflowings of the St. Lawrence without interposing any obstacle to the free navigation of the river. And it was therefore towards that point that we directed our examination and researches.

After leaving Quebec on the 7th November, we more especially examined, on the upward trip, the following places:—St. Nicholas, Chaudière Narrows, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Les Ecurseils, the Platon, Grondines Point, Cap Charles or St. Jean Deschailions, Batiscan, Champlain and Three Rivers, at which latter place, on the 12th of November, approaching winter and large quantities of ice compelled us to suspend our labors. We then resolved to continue the examination of the river in winter vehicles, so soon as the condition of the roads would allow of our doing so.

Accordingly, on the 25th November I proceeded to Batiscan and Grondines, and on the 4th December I went down to Quebec to examine the ballast ground, where the ballast from sea-going vessels is deposited, and to observe the passing of the ice at St. Nicholas.

Upon my return from Quebec, I found a letter from Mr. Dickinson, informing me that the Commission was suspended, and directing me, in consequence, to proceed to Montreal, whither I proceeded some days later.

Although in the short space of time which we had at our disposal, I was unable to obtain all the information which could be wished, and to make as minute and detailed an examination as I could have desired, of the river between Quebec and Three Rivers, I consider, however, that I am in a position to point out the principal causes of the floods, and to suggest the most easy and the cheapest means to be adopted to prevent, in a great measure at least, the recurrence in the future of similar disasters; and I am ready, if you desire it to transmit you a report on the subject. I have the honor to enclose my account herewith, and to subscribe myself,

Sir,

Your very humble servant,

JEAN NORMAND.

To the Hon.  
The Minister of Public Works,  
Ottawa.