
RETURN

To an Address presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, requesting him to cause to be laid before the House copies of any further correspondence which has passed between his Government and the Government of the Dominion of Canada, with reference to the question of the removal of the Indians from the Songhees Reserve, since the Return dated the 17th March, 1897, was presented to the House.

JAMES BAKER,
Provincial Secretary.

*Provincial Secretary's Office,
5th May, 1897.*

Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency on the 10th April, 1897.

The Committee of the Privy Council have had under consideration a Despatch, dated 16th March, 1897, hereto attached, from the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, transmitting a certified copy of a Report of His Executive Council with regard to the removal of the Songhees Indians from their present reserve.

The Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, to whom the said Despatch was referred, observes that, with the exception of one paragraph, the Government of British Columbia concurs in the statement of the scope of the proposed commission in the matter of the removal of the Songhees Indians, which was embodied in an approved Minute of Council of date the 23rd February, 1897, and transmitted to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

The paragraph objected to in the statement is that numbered "1," which provides that the proposed commission should value the land which may be selected as a new reserve for the Indians and the lands comprised in the present reserve, assessing the difference in valuation, such difference to be made good by the Province either by a money payment to the Dominion Government as trustee for the Indians or by the allotting of additional land to the satisfaction of the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs.

The Minister, although anxious to meet as far as possible the views of the Government of British Columbia and the Legislature of that Province in respect to the removal of the Songhees Indians to another location, submits that he cannot, without disregarding the interests of the Indians for the management of whose affairs he is responsible, agree with the proposition that the site which may be selected by the Commission as a new reserve for the Songhees should be accepted in exchange for the valuable tract at present occupied by these Indians, even if the Indians themselves should be willing that such an exchange, without additional compensation, should be made. As the guardian of the Indians the obligation is upon the Government of Canada of protecting them against their own acts of improvidence, and it is therefore necessary that in the reference of the question of the removal to the proposed commission ample and clear provision should be made so as to obviate the possibility of any loss accruing to the Indians in consequence of their removal.

The Minister therefore cannot see his way to vary the terms of the paragraph objected to.

The Committee, on the recommendation of the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, advise that a certified copy of this Minute, if approved, be forwarded to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

JOHN J. MCGEE,
Clerk of the Privy Council.

VICTORIA, B. C. :

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