

Grand Trunk Pacific and the Establishment of the City of Prince George, 1911-1915

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Students of urban history in western Canada have long acknowledged that railways played an important role in determining the location and, to some extent, the nature of communities along their respective lines. During the past decade, however, many scholars have accorded this factor scant attention and followed the lead of Alan F. J. Artibise in concentrating on the activities of local elites as the key element in urban growth.¹ The major sources usually consulted for this type of urban biography — newspapers, Boards of Trade and municipal records — impart a bias which obscures or diminishes the role of external factors.² An examination of part of the legal records of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company (GTP) concerning the establishment of the city of Prince George permits a broadening of the scope of analysis to include the actions of transcontinental railway company officers as well as those of local leaders.³

¹ Artibise divides the factors of urban growth into external large-scale forces and internal civic responses in "In Pursuit of Growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development in the Canadian Prairie West, 1871-1913," *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, eds. G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise (Ottawa, 1982), p. 117. For a clear expression of his interest in the personal response, see Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914* (Montreal, 1975), p. 1. The exceptions which seek to examine the activities of railway companies in the development of particular communities include N. MacDonald, "The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900," *BC Studies* 35 (Autumn 1977), pp. 3-35; and J. W. Brennan, "Business-Government Co-operation in Townsite Promotion in Regina and Moose Jaw," *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, ed. A. F. J. Artibise (Regina, 1981), pp. 95-120.

² For his emphasis on these sources, see Artibise, "Researching Winnipeg," *Urban History Review* 2-72 (June 1972), pp. 14-18. Others have noted this bias in both the sources and Artibise's findings. See N. H. Lithwick, review of *Winnipeg: A Social History . . .*, *Urban History Review* 3-75 (February 1976), p. 59; W. Magnusson, review of *Town and City . . .*, *BC Studies* 53 (Spring 1982), p. 83; W. Baker, review of *Town and City . . .*, *Urban History Review* 11-3 (February 1983), p. 85; and, more generally, D. F. Davis, "The 'Metropolitan Thesis' and Canadian Urban Historians" (unpublished paper, Canadian Historical Association, 1983), pp. 6-10.

³ Studies which make extensive use of unpublished railway records to examine the

Like Artibise's recent overview of urban growth on the prairies, this study is episodic. But a discussion of two events corresponding to those which Artibise investigates, the determination of city boundaries and incorporation, allows one to examine critically in a British Columbia setting two elements in his notion of boosterism. In the case of Prince George both the conclusion that "local people played a key role in shaping the pattern of . . . urban development" and the underlying assumption that the impact of a transportation system on a particular community represented an "impersonal or mechanistic force" do not hold.⁴ A comparison of railway records with provincial government files and with the local sources suggests that the railway company exerted a decisive influence not only on boundaries and incorporation but also on the choice of civic name, street layout and the policies of the first city council. Since the GTP adopted a deliberate policy of disguising its actions or the motives behind actions which were necessarily public, this view departs from earlier interpretations of the city's origin.⁵

As does Artibise, this study regards these municipal events as a response to the "development context," a term which apparently includes the

activities of railway company officers in Western Canada include A. A. den Otter, *Civilizing the West: The Gals and the Development of Western Canada* (Edmonton, 1982); and T. D. Regehr, *The Canadian Northern Railway: Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies* (Toronto, 1976). Other than the Van Horne and Shaughnessy letterbooks, den Otter does not make use of CPR material after the transcontinental entered the Lethbridge region in 1893. Regehr does not focus on the Canadian Northern's impact on a particular community.

⁴ Artibise, "In Pursuit . . .," pp. 122, 120.

⁵ In the only published history of the city of Prince George, Reverend F. E. Runnalls assigns the GTP a secondary role in his discussion of the formative years. *A History of Prince George* (Vancouver, 1946), pp. 78-150. See also his earlier article, "Boom Days in Prince George," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, VIII, 4 (October 1944), pp. 281-306. W. J. West, "The 'B.X.' and the Rush to Fort George," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, XIII, 3-4 (July-October 1949), pp. 129-230, offers a hostile view of the GTP's activities in the district. N. B. Holmes, "The Promotion of Early Growth in the Western Canadian City: A Case Study of Prince George, B.C." (BA essay, University of British Columbia, 1974), explicitly applies the notion of boosterism to organize his data and support in part his conclusion that local businessmen were largely responsible for the incorporation of the city. Dorryce Smelts provides a useful introduction to the H. G. Perry papers concerning incorporation, *Issues in Townsite Development: Government and Railway Involvement in the Incorporation of Prince George, 1914-1915 . . .* (Prince George, 1981), pp. 1-13. For the railway company's view of the district before it acquired a suitable parcel of land in late 1911, see F. A. Talbot, *The New Garden of Canada: . . . Undeveloped British Columbia* (London, 1911), pp. 160-78; and *ibid.*, *The Making of a Great Canadian Railway . . . Grand Trunk Pacific Railway . . .* (London, 1912), pp. 226-31.

conditions for the establishment of a transportation system in a region.⁶ In the case of Prince George, however, the most significant element in this context was not an impersonal transportation process. Rather it was the struggle of the railway company with a rival development organization for real estate profits in the district and its expression in the station site dispute. If one is to understand the motives for the establishment of Prince George, this dispute must be briefly reviewed.⁷

Like the other new towns along its line, the GTP regarded Prince George, the major divisional point between Edmonton and the Pacific coast, as a real estate proposition as well as a necessary component of its transportation system. For most of its townsites in British Columbia, the railway company simply made an arrangement with the local owner to acquire without charge the land it required and then share the proceeds of lot sales. By taking the unusual step of purchasing townsite land outright at the same time preliminary railway surveys were made, GTP President Charles M. Hays expected the returns from lot sales at Prince George to be as handsome as those from the company's principal real estate venture, Prince Rupert.

Although the chief engineer had settled on a parcel of land as the major divisional point in April 1908, the tardiness of the company's British Columbia land agent in registering its claims prevented the GTP from obtaining a suitable townsite in the district for three and a half years. Only in November 1911, after three previous unsuccessful attempts, did the railway company acquire an alternative parcel, Fort George Indian Reserve No. 1. During the long interval other individuals and organizations entered the district and purchased land surrounding the reserve, often at inflated values. These parties intended to "boom" their property, i.e., to sell lots at greatly inflated values, as the railway approached the district. While hastily assembled Boards of Trade attempted to convince outsiders that new townsites were already "going concerns," real estate speculation rivalled railway construction as the major economic activity in the district before 1914.

Two townsites preceded the marketing of the railway townsite in 1913. Founded as a speculative venture in 1909, the compact townsite of South

⁶ Artibise defines this term as "that which is the produce of large-scale forces such as the settlement process, the external demand for staples, population movements, the state of agricultural and transportation technology, etc." "In Pursuit . . .," p. 117.

⁷ I have discussed the station site dispute in detail in "The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company and the Development of Prince George Townsite, 1908-1915" (PhD research paper, York University, 1982), pp. 33-65.

Fort George quickly became the home of most of the white inhabitants of the district and served as the centre of a thriving steamboat traffic until 1914. In the dispute which followed, the surviving sources have generally obscured the role of the townsite owners though the townsite newspaper, the *Fort George Herald*, clearly supported the GTP.

More significant was the development of Fort George Townsite on the west side of the reserve. Starting with 200 acres obtained from the original purchasers in 1909, the Natural Resources Security Company, Ltd. (NRS) eventually gathered more than 2,000 acres on nine district lots. This development company marketed its property through an extensive advertising campaign in which the townsite was billed as the Chicago of western Canada to which ten railways had been chartered. Although its ebullient president, George J. Hammond, frequently claimed that his company championed the interests of the people of the district in a struggle with a mercenary external force, i.e., the GTP, evidence in land title records suggests that the company served as a Vancouver-based selling agency for a number of holding companies spread from Vancouver to Winnipeg.⁸ No evidence directly refutes the convention that NRS was the effective controller of the property in its townsite.

Although a railway commissioner later denied it, the precise location of the district's railway station would determine its business centre and, by proximity, lot values in the three townsites.⁹ It is therefore not surprising that NRS issued a series of pamphlets in 1910 which claimed that the GTP had decided to locate the station on or adjacent to the eastern boundary of its townsite. The railway company rejected this claim as "wild speculation" and probably encouraged the journal *Saturday Night* to run a series of articles on the questionable advertising techniques of NRS. When a judge dismissed an NRS injunction against the Toronto paper and noted that a series of NRS maps featuring a peripatetic station had no basis in fact, Hammond attempted to restore his company's credibility by purchasing a commitment from the railway company concerning the location of the station. Although Hammond offered \$200,000

⁸ Anna Bumby has begun an investigation of this important source. "The Sales Campaign of George J. Hammond and the Natural Resources Security Company" (undergraduate paper, College of New Caledonia, 1981).

⁹ In his study of the promotion of Maissonneuve, P.-A. Linteau observes that the shift in location of transport facilities by a few blocks could spell the difference between prosperity and ruin for real estate promoters. *Maissonneuve ou Comment des promoteurs fabriquent une ville* (Montreal, 1981), p. 38. N. MacDonald notes that the placement of the CPR station and wharf along the Granville Street axis pulled the centre of the city of Vancouver well to the west of the existing townsite. "Canadian Pacific . . ." p. 13.

on terms for a written undertaking to locate the station within 20 chains (1,320 feet) of the NRS townsite, Hays was not disposed to share the profits of divisional point lot sales with an interloper. Recognizing that Hammond's advertising probably made NRS liable for selling lots under false representation, the GTP president decided to let NRS "stew in their own juice" and "await the return we are sure to have by reason of the advantage proposed by controlling the location of the station and the other terminal facilities."¹⁰ This strategy informed GTP actions in the district over the next four years and ultimately led to the elimination of Fort George Townsite as a serious rival.

To prevent the railway company from using this power in just such a manner to the detriment of the local population, the federal government required that the GTP obtain the approval of the Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada (BRC) for its station locations. In desperation Hammond approached this agency and, in a hearing in 1912, obtained a ruling that prohibited the GTP from locating the station on the eastern 3,500 feet of its property and required further consultation before a final decision was taken. The railway company's foolish attempt to obtain an order for a location close to the eastern boundary of the 1912 ruling without consultation prompted the Board to hold another hearing in May 1913 and set the station site 3,000 feet *east* of the *eastern* boundary of Fort George Townsite, 3,700 feet *west* of the GTP location (see map, p. 00). The GTP objected to this order and fought it through four more BRC hearings and an appeal to the Governor-in-Council until it was quashed in 1921, long after the effective demise of Fort George Townsite.

Only when seen against this background of the railway company's struggle with NRS and its continued attempts to overturn the BRC station site location of 1913 do the municipal events of Prince George become understandable. In the development context for the establishment of this city, the station site dispute represents the essential element.

¹⁰ Because their authors did not consult the relevant railway correspondence, the major secondary sources ignore or interpret incorrectly the station site dispute. In an early, unreliable MA thesis, J. A. Lower suggests that NRS rejected the terms at Fort George which the GTP actually offered to a lot owner at New Hazelton. With no evidence he applies the railway company's general townsite policy to a special case. "The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and British Columbia" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1939), pp. 116-17. Runnalls' view that Hays accepted Hammond's offer and that the deal fell through only with the GTP president's death indicates that he accepted the NRS version of events. See "Boom Days . . .," p. 298, for a reference to one of the few surviving issues of the NRS newspaper, the *Fort George Tribune*, on this matter. West, Holmes and Smelts do not discuss the matter.

That the railway company had the power to choose the name of its townsite is not surprising. But its choice provoked controversy and requires explanation.

The district of Fort George, which embraced the three townsites, took its name from the fur trade post which Simon Fraser had established in 1807. After having popularized "Fort George" in its advertisements in 1910, NRS obtained a legal claim on the name in 1911 when it registered one of its district lots as Fort George Townsite.¹¹

At first glance the railway company's name for its townsite, "Prince George," seems as foolish and inappropriate as the name for the Pacific terminus. Accepting Judge Archer Martin's advice that a distinctive, original townsite name would benefit residents and tourists alike, the GTP adopted a policy in 1910 of selecting Indian names for some of its British Columbia townsites. Yet as with the Tsimshian name for Prince Rupert, the euphonious Carrier name for Fort George district, *Lheitli* ("where the two rivers join"), was not considered.¹²

In 1914 the company advanced two public explanations for its choice. Vice-President Morley Donaldson argued that the GTP had named the townsite after the king. But the choice of "Prince" makes this claim ridiculous. Somewhat more probable was the claim that the intent of the name was to connect the townsite to the larger GTP venture in Prince Rupert for advertising purposes.¹³ But the most convincing explanation comes from an internal company note from the GTP president, the individual who probably made the decision. Hays claimed that "Prince George" would give the company a townsite "permanently distinguished from the numerous towns now called Fort George, South Fort George, etc., which are in the vicinity" and make it clear that none of the others carried the company's endorsement.¹⁴

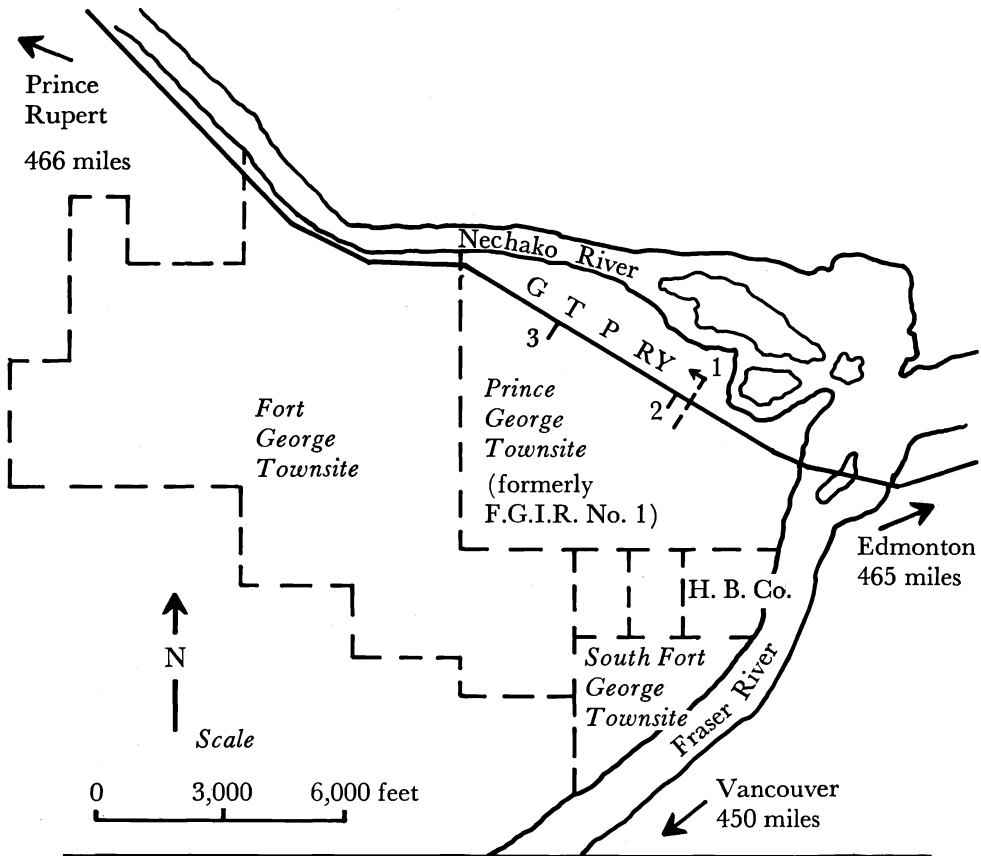
In a private note to British Columbia Attorney-General W. J. Bowser, however, GTP solicitor Hugh H. Hansard expressed his distaste for both "Prince George" and "Fort George" and asked Bowser to suggest "something more musical." Bowser's less than lyrical compromise of "George"

¹¹ Runnalls, *History . . .*, pp. 107-09; Holmes, pp. 2-12.

¹² Public Archives of Canada [hereafter PAC], RG 30, Canadian National Railways, Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, v. 3310, f. 1060, Martin to D. Tate, 12 April, Tate to G. U. Ryley, 16 April 1910.

¹³ Provincial Archives of British Columbia [hereafter PABC], British Columbia, Department of the Attorney-General [hereafter A-G], f. 2919/14/13, Donaldson to H. Hansard, 6 August, Hansard to W. J. Bowser, 10 August 1914. Donaldson's explanation would apply to the GTP steamship, *Prince George*, christened early in 1910.

¹⁴ PAC, RG 30, v. 3267, f. 426, Hays to E. J. Chamberlin, 18 December 1911.



- 1 BRC ruling, 5 March 1912. The GTP must build *west* of this line, 3,500 feet *west* of river bank.
- 2 GTP location, 24 January 1913 (George Street). 6,715 feet east of Fort George Township, 331 feet west of 1912 ruling.
- 3 BRC order, 14 May 1913 (Maple Street). 3,000 feet east of Fort George Township.

*Townships and Station Sites
in Fort George District, 1913*

prompted the railway company to insist upon the original choice. Donaldson argued that “‘George’ was insufficient for a townsite, why should an outside American [Hammond] have the power to rob the company of a vast expenditure . . . ? We are entitled to first consideration.”¹⁵

When Hays’ successor, E. J. Chamberlin, announced “Prince George” as the official name of the railway townsite in the spring of 1913, those interested in Fort George Townsite protested in Victoria. Businessmen located on the NRS townsite persuaded Provincial Archivist R. E. Gosnell to attack the GTP name as a demonstration of the callous disregard of the railway company for the heritage of the district. “Fort George is one of the most historic points of the northern interior; Prince George means nothing to anybody.” More important was the threat of GTP advertising of the new name to the value of investments in Fort George Townsite. “If there is one thing B.C. has stood for in the past,” a district petition declared, “it is that the works of those who have rough graded the paths of progress . . . shall not ruthlessly and unreasonably be torn from under them.” The NRS protest was more succinct. “The change [in name] produced injuries by creating confusion and uncertainty in the minds of the investing public.”¹⁶

The response of the provincial Attorney-General to these complaints was equivocal. Trumpeting a policy of even-handedness in the treatment of competing names, Bowser soothed the worried investors with the assurance that his department would not allow the GTP to register a townsite plan under the name “Prince George.” Yet the Attorney-General had directed the provincial inspector of legal offices to reserve the name for the exclusive use of the railway company in 1912.¹⁷

The Department of Lands policy was just as unresponsive. During the spring of 1913 Lands minister W. R. Ross informally approved the GTP townsite plan, including the station site. In September the department registered the GTP townsite plan under the title “District Lot 343.” In

¹⁵ PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, Hansard to Bowser (personal), 10 June, Donaldson to Hansard, 6 August 1914. Although born in Canada, Hammond had gained notoriety through his activities in the confidence rackets of the American Mid-West. See John Hill, Jr., *Gold Bricks of Speculation* . . . (Chicago, 1904), pp. 29-35.

¹⁶ *Fort George Herald*, 11 January 1913; PABC, British Columbia, Department of Lands [hereafter Lands], f. 2436/12, Gosnell to Bowser, 3 May 1913; A-G, f. 2919/14/13 Petition, 14 April 1914, R. S. Lennie to Bowser, 14 April 1914.

¹⁷ PABC, A-G, f. 11726/13/13, Bowser to Reid, 29 October 1913; *ibid.*, f. 2919/14/13, Bowser to McKay and O’Brien, 13 April, McKay and O’Brien to Bowser, 26 April 1913; PAC, RG 30, v. 3267, f. 426, Harrington to Tate, 2 February 1912.

private correspondence officials acknowledged the name of "Prince George" and finally published it in conjunction with the lot number to advertise the sale of government lots in the spring of 1914. In August the railway townsite received a post office.¹⁸ "Prince George" had acquired legal status.

The NRS dispute provides an explanation not only for the townsite's name but also for its design. After completing a topographical survey of the Indian reserve during the summer of 1912, the railway company sent the results of the survey to Brett, Hall & Co., the Boston landscape architect firm which designed the townsite of Prince Rupert. One of the architects visited the site in September, and the plans for the new railway townsite were largely complete two months later.¹⁹

An examination of the architects' plan for Prince George Townsite reveals two outstanding features: the greenbelt in the south and the crescent streets in the west (see map, p. 00). These features undoubtedly led O. Saarinen to conclude that the architects had applied the principles of the Garden City movement to the plan.²⁰ Such may have been the case with the greenbelt, although Connaught Hill actually occupied the largest part. The crescent streets, however, served the railway company's interest in the NRS dispute. During the 1913 BRC hearing a lawyer noted that the curved streets were designed to increase the distance between the station and the centre of Fort George Townsite. They represented "a proposition the object of which is absolutely to kill the present population [of the NRS townsite]."²¹ In one of his many letters to the BRC, A. S. Norton, a New York investor in Fort George Townsite, supported this interpretation.

... it was a monstrous thing to do, to throw artificial obstacles in the way of the growth of the town in the one direction left open by nature. But this is precisely what these experts did do by creating the artificial barrier known as the crescent to the west. . . . Any man who knows anything about cities can

¹⁸ PABC, Lands, f. 2436/12, Ross to Donaldson, 9 April, R. A. Renwick to Clive Pringle, 3 October, Renwick to Ryley, 9 October 1913, Ross to Clive Pringle, 28 March 1914; PAC, RG 30, v. 3437, f. 2858, pt. 1, Ellis to Hansard, 8 August 1914.

¹⁹ *Herald*, 29 June, 7 September 1912; CN Real Estate, Prince George Registration, pt. 1, Ryley to Donaldson, 2 November 1912.

²⁰ The *Herald* first published a plan of the townsite on 12 April 1913. O. Saarinen, "The Influence of Thomas Adams and the British New Towns Movement in the Planning of Canadian Resource Communities," *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City*, eds. A. F. J. Artibise and G. A. Stelter (Toronto, 1978), pp. 272-73.

²¹ PAC, RG 46, Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada, v. 79, f. 175, p. 3198.

see by a glance at the plan that a vicious angle was interposed to block traffic . . . going west. . . .²²

Such thoughts must have informed the instructions of the company to the architects.

Although the company's instructions to the landscape architects have not been located, one can see that the street layout depended on a fixed location of the station. The main street which led from the station to an octagonal block set aside for city hall received the name of George Street. The station location itself on the plan was 6,715 feet from the eastern boundary of Fort George Townsite and only 331 feet within the boundary set by the BRC ruling of 5 March 1912.²³ Although the planners later declared that the railway company did not dictate the station site, it is probable that they received and implemented Hays' views on the importance of station location in the growing dispute with NRS. George D. Hall, one of the firm's senior partners, was Hays' son-in-law.²⁴

Disregarding the May 1913 BRC order setting the station site at the foot of Maple Street, far from the business centre of George Street set out on the plan, the GTP president decided on an immediate lot sale and instructed surveyors in laying out the lots to adhere to the plan including the original station site. In early July 10,000 copies of the plan were printed, although the date of sale was not published. The last legal condition was satisfied in early September, when GTP Land Commissioner G. U. Ryley presented the British Columbia Department of Lands with a plan for registration bearing the title, "Lot 343," the department's district lot number for the Indian reserve.²⁵

Since it had begun an appeal of the BRC order to the federal cabinet in June 1913, the company recognized the danger of marketing its lots under false representation while the case was *sub judice*. Consequently Ryley instructed the auctioneers to read a memorandum before each sale which concluded with the following prediction:

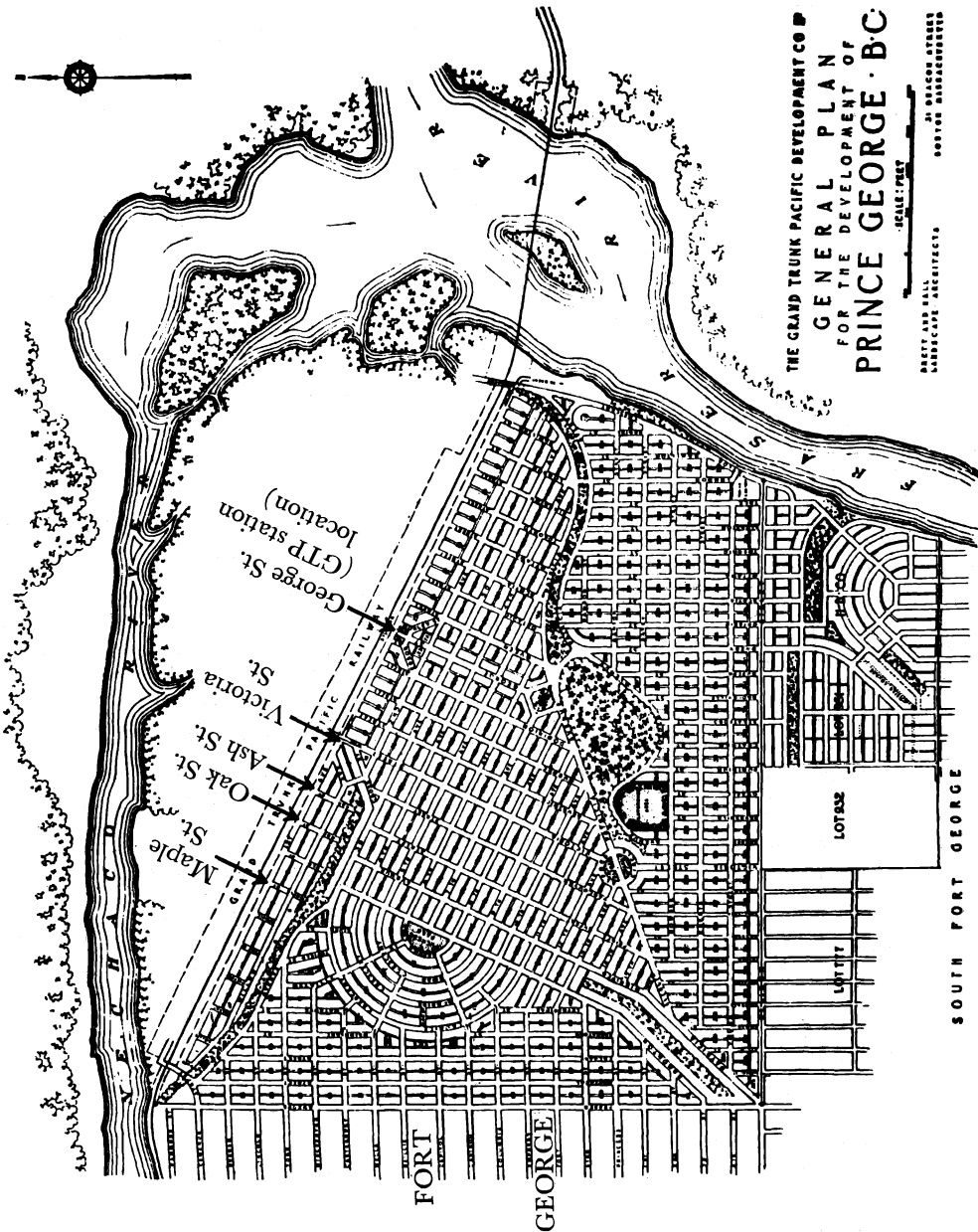
It is confidently expected that the [GTP] petition [for a George Street site] will be granted as every unbiased person who has been on the ground

²² *Ibid.*, v. 1432, f. 21418, Norton to BRC, 12 June 1915.

²³ Precise distances of various station sites appear in PAC, RG 46, v. 79, f. 175, p. 3096.

²⁴ Brett, Hall & Co. to editor, not dated, printed in *Prince George Post*, 16 January 1915; George D. Hall, Jr. to author, 29 July 1983.

²⁵ CN Real Estate, Prince George Registration, pt. 1, H. Philips to Ryley, 12 May, Ryley to Donaldson, 14 July, Chamberlin to Donaldson, 23 July, Ryley to Renwick, 12 September 1913; GTP Development Company File, "Lot 343" [plan], 4 September 1913.



Brett, Hall & Co. Plan — Prince George Townsite

(first appeared in [South] Fort George Herald,
12 April 1913; street names have been added)

has expressed an opinion that the present site is entirely unfit for a station. . . .²⁶

That the message was effective is indicated by the success of the lot sales in September. Receipts for land purchased at auctions in Vancouver and Edmonton exceeded \$2,000,000. Lots on George Street sold for the highest prices.²⁷

Of course, the railway company followed Hays' instructions of 1911 concerning the advantage of controlling the actual location of the station in the district, whatever its legal status. As soon as the end of steel reached the district in January 1914, the GTP established a freight shed and temporary station at the foot of George Street. During the fall of 1914 the railway company demonstrated its determination to maintain the station at that location by fitting the shed with steam heat and electric light. When the NRS lawyer complained about the unofficial station during the November 1914 BRC hearing, Hansard explained that the building housed only ticket, telegraph and freight offices necessary for the construction of the railway. The railway company had to give the public some place in which to conduct business. The NRS solicitor complained: "That is just what stations are for."²⁸

While it is difficult to assess the exact effect of the George Street station on the economic activity of the district, the following figures suggest that it contributed to the rapid growth of the railway townsite. In May 1914 Hansard boasted that the combined traffic of Prince George and South Fort George accounted for 90 per cent of the railway's freight to the district. During the November 1914 hearing, a GTP freight agent reduced this figure to 75 per cent. A census made for the 1914 hearing showed the population of Prince George Townsite as 1,731, more than twice the combined population of the other two communities, when the railway townsite was just a year old.²⁹

James Thomson, the Hudson's Bay Company Land Commissioner, offered a graphic description of the railway company's success. Writing to the London secretary in 1915, Thomson declared that:

during the 12 months which have elapsed since the [Prince George] lots

²⁶ Prince George Registration, pt. 2, Ryley to Ellis, undated.

²⁷ *Herald*, 20 September 1913; PAC, RG 30, v. 3371, f. 1811, Ryley to Philips, 17 November 1913. The earliest surviving complete list of lot values is City of Prince George, Assessment Book, 1916.

²⁸ PAC, RG 30, v. 3371, f. 1811, Hansard to Biggar, 7 May 1914; *Fort George Tribune*, 7 November 1914; PAC, RG 46, v. 98, f. 212, p. 5748.

²⁹ PAC, RG 30, v. 3371, f. 1881, Hansard to Biggar, 7 May 1914; RG 46, v. 98, f. 212, p. 5748.

were placed on the market, the town of "Prince George" has risen phoenix-like from the ground. Probably no other new centre in the West can boast such rapid growth. In the matter of hotels, stores, and banks, Prince George has facilities which older cities with double the population do not possess.

He added that "business premises had so far been concentrated almost wholly on George Street."³⁰ The listing of the opening of numerous firms on or near George Street in the district newspapers of 1914-15 supports Thomson's description.³¹

The economic success of the railway townsite did little to improve the company's legal situation, however. The federal cabinet dismissed the GTP appeal in February 1914, Borden noting that the government should not consider real estate interests in this matter.³² Even though the company convinced the Chief Commissioner to hold another hearing in November 1914, the result was again unfavourable. Although the commissioners shifted the station site 1,000 feet eastward because of a depression at the foot of Maple Street, it was still 2,700 feet west of George Street.³³ If corporate pressure would not suffice, "spontaneous" civic action was necessary.

When P. E. Wilson and N. E. Montgomery, the local lawyers who represented the property owners of Prince George and South Fort George respectively, heard the BRC oral decision in November 1914, they turned to Hansard for instructions. The GTP solicitor drafted a petition of "property owners and residents" of both townsites and provided detailed instructions to serve notice on the railway company to prevent it from being found in default of the Board's order. He underlined the importance of the facade of independence: "You understand of course that my name and the Railway Company must be kept out entirely of this matter. Any evidence of collusion will defeat our object."³⁴

Two weeks later Wilson informed Hansard that notices of the appeal by the "Citizens Committee" had been sent to the parties that Hansard

³⁰ Hudson's Bay Company Archives, f. A 12/L Misc. 28, Thomson to Ingrams, 27 April 1915.

³¹ See, for example, *Herald*, 21 March 1914, which lists the opening of Ford, Massey-Harris, and International Harvester outlets within two blocks of George Street.

³² PAC, RG 2/8, Privy Council, Appeals from Decisions of the Board of Railway Commissioners, v. 1, f. 3, Appeal of the GTP Railway before the Governor-in-Council, 31 January 1914, p. 20; P.C. 374, 9 February 1914.

³³ PAC, RG 30, v. 3408, f. 2438, pt. 1, Haight to Drayton, 31 May, A. S. Goodeve, note, 11 August 1914; BRC order #22995, 17 December 1914, backdated to 23 November 1914.

³⁴ PAC, RG 30, v. 3408, f. 2438, pt. 1, Hansard to Wilson, 17 December 1914.

requested. At this time Hansard remarked to a GTP vice-president that the company could stay in the background while the "citizens" led the fight. "The matter was well in hand." In April 1915 Hansard's "citizens'" petition to the Governor-in-Council was circulated in the district.³⁵

However effective a property owners' petition might be in delaying the implementation of a BRC order, railway company officers had long realized that only a new legal party in the dispute had a chance of overturning the order. This view informs all railway company activity concerning incorporation and the conduct of early municipal politics of Prince George.

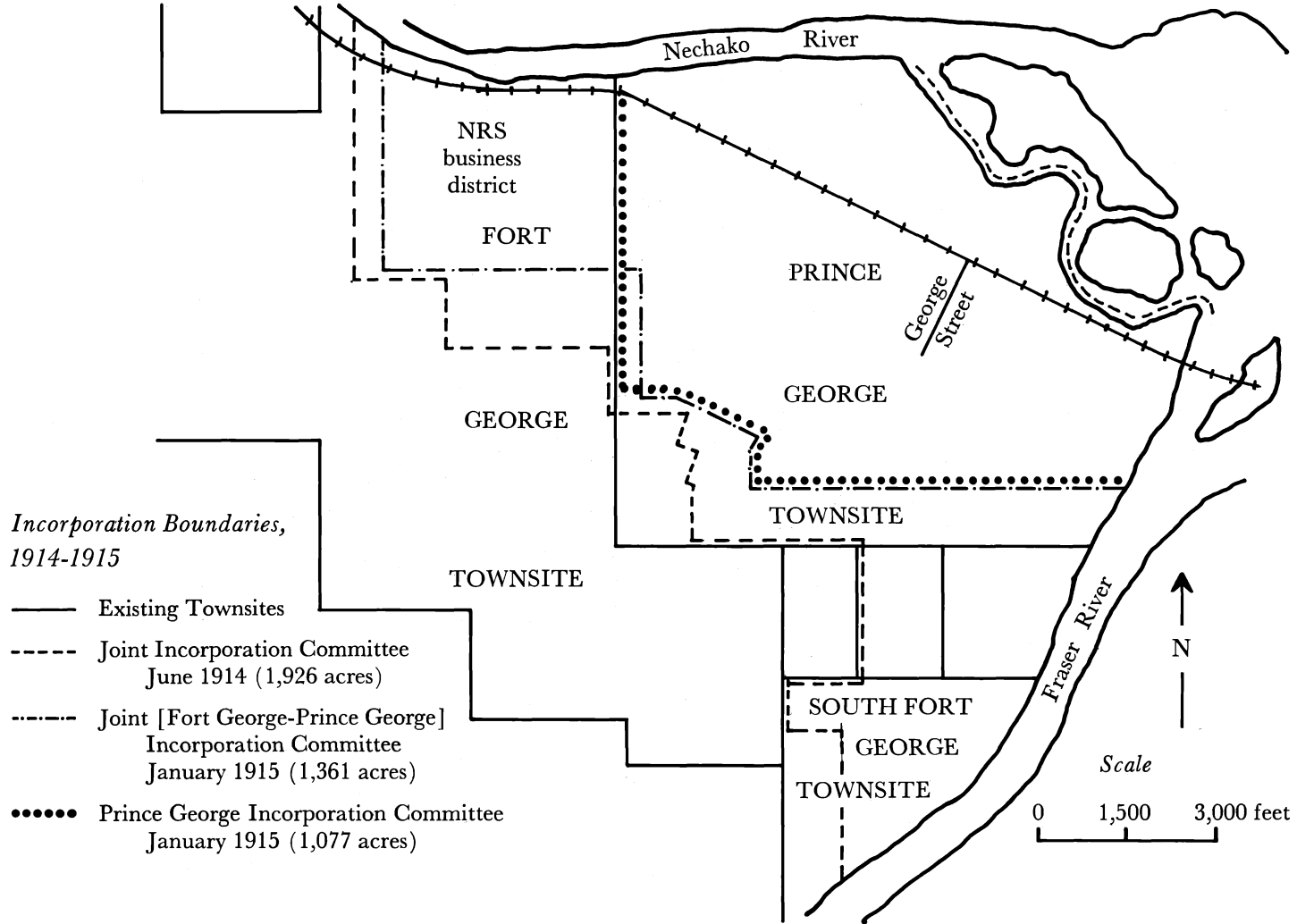
The first request for incorporation did not come from the office of the GTP, however. Arguing that the district required the extensive taxing powers of a municipality to deal with the growing problems of water supply, fire prevention and sewage disposal, the residents of South Fort George Townsite filed an application for incorporation in August 1913.³⁶ When the residents of the NRS townsite protested in the spring of 1914, the provincial government rejected the application but suggested that interested parties in the two townsites might combine with residents of the new railway townsite to establish a common incorporation movement. The Fort George Townsite Board of Trade arranged a truce and established a Joint Incorporation Committee with representatives from all three townsites. The committee quickly agreed on an area for incorporation made up of sections of all three townsites, a parcel of 1,926.4 acres.³⁷ Although it did not discuss the station site issue, the committee implicitly acknowledged that Prince George Townsite would be the centre of the proposed city by according it the largest acreage, 1,204³⁸ (see map, p. 00). To facilitate the preparation of the joint application, Bowser agreed to visit the district in July 1914.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Wilson to Hansard, 3 January, Hansard to Donaldson, 15 January, Hansard to McGregor, 23 April 1915.

³⁶ PABC, Lands, f. 2436/12, G. McGlaughlin to Ross, 8 September 1913. The district experienced a minor outbreak of typhoid during the summer of 1913.

³⁷ PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, Reid to Bowser, 25 February, H. G. Perry to Bowser, 3 March, Bowser to Hansard, 27 May 1914; D. Smelts, comp., *Issues in Townsite Development: Government and Railway Involvement in the Incorporation of Prince George, 1914-1915: A Collection of Documents* [hereafter *Perry Papers*], H. E. Young to Bowser, 10 March, J. Shearer to F. Murdoff, 3 June, Joint Incorporation Committee, Minutes, 8 June 1914, Bowser to Perry, 30 July 1914.

³⁸ At a mass meeting of citizens of the three townsites, Prince George committee member D. A. Hood made this point. The members from the other two townsites did not contest the statement. *Perry Papers*, Minutes of Mass Meeting, 11 July 1914.



Realizing the significance of incorporation in the emerging struggle with NRS in 1911, Hays had called for the incorporation of the railway townsite as soon as the company had acquired the Indian reserve. When Hansard learned that the provincial government intended to incorporate some area within the district, the GTP acted to have its townsite alone included.³⁹ In an offer to accompany Bowser to the district and provide a special train, the GTP solicitor stated bluntly:

Our Company's position is that our townsite of Prince George will be the centre of the future city. Under such circumstances we would not of course want city improvements outside of Prince George at the expense of Prince George property.⁴⁰

At the July meeting with Bowser and the Joint Incorporation Committee, Hansard expressed the company view that the future city would prosper whatever its name. He stated the company's major condition for support of incorporation — the exemption from taxation until 1921 of all GTP land within the city boundaries which was used for railway purposes. This condition followed from the GTP agreement with the provincial government in 1908. In response to a question concerning the delay in the construction of major shop facilities in Prince George, the GTP solicitor blandly assured the residents that the railway company would fulfil its promises.⁴¹

In a formal offer of support to the Incorporation Committee in August, however, Hansard changed and added conditions. More important now was the requirement that the station be located at the foot of George Street. The draft of this letter makes the condition absolute; the final version adds the qualification "subject to the approval of the Railway Commission." Hansard also agreed to pay \$14,000 in taxes before 1922, but then demanded that the city limit taxes for the subsequent fifteen years to \$54,000 (an average of \$3,700 per annum).⁴²

In a letter to committee chairman H. G. Perry two weeks before the BRC hearing in November, Hansard emphasized the importance of civic support for the railway company's case.

³⁹ PAC, RG 30, v. 3267, f. 426, Hays to Chamberlin, 18 December 1911.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 3437, f. 2858, pt. 1, Bowser to Hansard, 18 May, Hansard to Bowser, 10 June 1914.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Meeting with the Joint Incorporation Committee, Minutes, 8 July 1914. There is a different version in the *Perry Papers*; Hansard's comments are not found there.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Hansard to Perry (draft), undated, Hansard to Perry (final version), 10 August 1914.

Much will depend, I take it, on the decision of the Railway Commission on the location of the station site as to what kind of a permanent station, roundhouse, engine works, machine shops, and other structures and accessories will be erected on the railway premises.

If . . . your people will show a disposition to work more closely with the Railway Company in the development of the future city, which is of the utmost importance to both of us, something might be accomplished.⁴³ One of the committee members described this suggestion as open coercion. Perry, also president of the Fort George Townsite Board of Trade, did not succumb to this pressure. The joint committee passed a resolution saying that it did not have competence to intervene in the station dispute.⁴⁴

The British Columbia government had its own ideas about the area in the district more suitable for incorporation. While Bowser did not reject the proposed area of the Joint Incorporation Committee, he commissioned a detailed study of the reservoir potential and drainage problems of the three townsites. In August 1914 the government engineer, R. H. Thompson, arrived in the district and publicly expressed a view to a meeting of residents that a restricted area — an area considerably smaller than the 1,926 acres the incorporation committee had proposed — would impose a more manageable tax burden on the residents of the future city.⁴⁵

When the Attorney-General informed Hansard that he was considering the removal of South Fort George from the incorporation area for reasons of economy, the GTP solicitor revealed his president's instructions that only Prince George Townsite be included within the city limits. Hansard then argued that the residents of the southern townsite should receive some compensation: the George Street station.⁴⁶ During November and December 1914 the [South] *Fort George Herald* ran a series of articles concerning the expense of a common reservoir and sewer system with the other two townsites. On 29 December the representatives of South Fort George withdrew from the Joint Incorporation Committee.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Hansard to Perry, 13 November 1914.

⁴⁴ *Fort George Tribune*, 21 November 1914; *Perry Papers*, Joint Incorporation Committee, Minutes, 14 November 1914.

⁴⁵ *Herald*, 22 August 1914.

⁴⁶ PAC, RG 30, v. 3437, f. 2858, pt. 1, Hansard to Bowser, 10 November 1914.

⁴⁷ *Herald*, 28 November, 19 December, 26 December 1914; *Perry Papers*, W. F. Cooke to Perry, 31 December 1914.

The representatives of Fort George Townsite were determined to continue with the joint incorporation. To restrict incorporation to Prince George Townsite, the railway company had to wreck the work of the Joint Incorporation Committee. In a later letter the publisher of the *Fort George Tribune* noted that Hansard spent the evening of the BRC hearing (23 November) in the district in private discussion with the GTP local agent J. T. Armstrong, real estate broker F. M. Ruggles and J. B. Daniell, the former editor of the *Herald*, who now published the *Prince George Post*, a newspaper supported by a secret GTP advertising contract.⁴⁸ When the remaining members of the incorporation committee held a mass meeting on 12 January 1915 to obtain support for a revised incorporation area, these three individuals and Frank Ellis, the auctioneer for the GTP sale of 1913, broke up the meeting with vitriolic attacks on the Fort George Townsite representatives. The next day a Prince George Incorporation Committee was formed and a separate application for incorporation of the railway townsite was submitted to the provincial government on 15 January.⁴⁹

The Fort George Townsite residents, aware of the GTP's hostility, persevered and filed an application for incorporation of sections of both townsites on 18 January, a parcel of 1,361 acres.⁵⁰ Both groups immediately circulated petitions and sent them to Victoria. Bowser requested Thompson, who had submitted a detailed technical report on the district in December, to examine the competing applications. Thompson decided that the Fort George proposal made more sense from a geographical point of view and concluded his findings with the declaration: "I am inclined to favour the larger area."⁵¹

On 11 February the provincial cabinet decided to incorporate only 1,077 acres within Prince George Townsite. It did not explain the decision. Bowser may have wanted to put the lie to the "common rumour" that "Hammond has got a stranglehold on the Legislature which is of

⁴⁸ PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, W. G. McMorris to McBride, 16 February 1915. The GTP paid Daniell \$1,000 in October 1914 for future advertising space in the *Prince George Post*. Daniell had to print GTP material whenever it was presented. See PAC, RG 30, v. 3589, f. 1707.

⁴⁹ Descriptions of the two meetings can be found in *Herald*, 16 January, and *Fort George Tribune*, 16 January 1915. PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, R. Bradley to Bowser, 15 January 1915.

⁵⁰ PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, Shearer to Bowser, 20 January, Thompson to Bowser, 3 February 1915. Perry realized that the GTP was at the bottom of the unreasonable agitation of the Prince George Townsite members. *Fort George Tribune*, 23 January 1915.

⁵¹ PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13, Thompson to Bowser, 3 February 1915.

course composed of one man, the Attorney-General.”⁵² It is more probable that the number of voters within the competing areas may have influenced the decision. The chairman of the Prince George Incorporation Committee informed the Attorney-General that the railway townsite currently had a population of 2,100, South Fort George 700, and Fort George Townsite only 326. The Fort George Townsite Conservative Association’s warning of certain defeat for the local government candidate in the next election was not taken seriously.⁵³

Other opponents of restricted incorporation argued that the railway company determined government policy. W. J. Peters begged the premier not to sell Fort George to the railway company. *Tribune* publisher W. G. McMorris charged that the weight of the railway was greater than that of the people. The individual who stood to lose most, George Hammond, offered the following interpretation in a letter to McBride.

The incorporation movement, backed by interests which are plainly in sight, is for the sole purpose of injecting a new situation into the station matter. The company is bending every energy to secure the incorporation of the municipality for the sole purpose of influencing adversely the two cases still pending. [An earlier PGE intervention and the citizens’ notice of appeal to prevent the BRC from declaring the GTP in default of its decision.]⁵⁴

Hansard had arranged with Bowser to come to Victoria before the cabinet made its decision. The GTP solicitor’s only description of his activities there follows in a telegram to Armstrong on 17 February. “After long fight against full Hammond forces succeeded in getting Government decision for incorporated area within Prince George Limits. . . .”⁵⁵

In early March Bowser introduced an incorporation bill vetted by P. E. Wilson, the marshal of the Citizens’ Committee, as one which conformed to Thompson’s report. The people in the residential districts (i.e., Fort George Townsite) would, he predicted, in time thank the government for having left them out. Two Liberal members alleged that the government was simply favouring one group of real estate sharks over another, but there was never any doubt of the outcome of the debate. Although Bowser considered the old and historic name should be re-

⁵² *Ibid.*, f. 11726/13/13, A. G. Hamilton to Reid, 20 September 1913.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, f. 2919/14/13, Prince George Incorporation Committee to Bowser, 16 February, Dearle to McBride, 15 February 1915.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Peters to McBride, 19 February, McMorris to McBride, 19 February, Hammond to McBride, 19 February 1915.

⁵⁵ PAC, RG 30, v. 3437, f. 2858, pt. 1, Hansard to Armstrong, 17 February 1915.

tained for the city, he added an amendment providing a plebiscite which would determine the name of the new city.⁵⁶ Hansard's explanation of his role in the passing of the bill was also slight. "We got in a little ahead of Hammond and his crowd with Attorney-General Bowser, and got him more or less to commit himself so that he forced the measure through. . . ."⁵⁷

While the evidence suggests that the GTP determined the geographical extent of the new city, the railway company clearly failed to determine the personnel of the first city council. The company's actions during the first municipal election demonstrate that it was not omnipotent.

It is important to note that not every voter in the new city favoured the George Street station location advocated by the railway company. Owners of property in the western part of the city favoured the BRC location (Oak-Ash Street) or one at the foot of Victoria Street (see map, p. 00). Many of the owners of property on George Street lived in South Fort George and consequently did not possess the franchise. The majority of voters on the first enumeration list were residents rather than property owners.⁵⁸

It is not surprising, therefore, that when nominations closed for the offices of mayor and six aldermen, a group of candidates ran against George Street. W. G. Gillett, a contractor who supported a station at the foot of Victoria Street because he owned property there, according to Hansard, campaigned for mayor on the platform of a plebiscite for the station location. The *Herald*, now in Prince George, attacked this man as "twisting," but the George Street candidate, "wise, sagacious, true-as-steel" Neil Gething, was not impressive.⁵⁹ A GTP district engineer described Gething as a real estate shark and admitted that he was not popular, even though the *Herald* and the *Prince George Post* supported him. *Post* editor Daniell and aldermanic candidate Armstrong both requested that the GTP send money to fight the election; music and cigars

⁵⁶ Prince George Public Library, Pioneer Tape 18, P. E. Wilson; *Vancouver Daily Province*, 6 March, *Vancouver Sun*, 6 March, *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 March 1915. The *Prince George Post* and *Prince George Herald* (now moved from South Fort George) contain little on the debate. The relevant number of the *Fort George Tribune* has not survived.

⁵⁷ PAC, RG 30, v. 3437, f. 2858, pt. 1, Hansard to Armstrong, 8 March 1915.

⁵⁸ Voters' List, 15 May 1915, printed in *Prince George Post*, 19 May 1915. Qualifications for voters listed in "Fort George Incorporation Act," Section 5, in British Columbia, *Statutes*, 1915, chap. 29.

⁵⁹ *Herald*, 30 April, 7 May 1915.

were necessary to convince the “shack dwellers and pool room habitués who might swing the election.”⁶⁰

Although the railway company put funds into a short-lived *Prince George Daily News* which began publication a week before the election, Hansard refused to contribute funds for rallies for George Street candidates, explaining that such practices were against company policy. Hansard’s hesitancy is all the more surprising because Armstrong charged that the Hammond interests funded Gillett.⁶¹

While voters did select “Prince George” over “Fort George” as the name of the new city by 153 to 13, the election of 20 May was in all other respects a disaster for the railway company. Gillett solidly defeated Gething for the office of mayor with a vote of 290 to 190. Of the six aldermen, only three dependable George Street supporters were elected. Armstrong, self-styled GTP influence-broker, was handily defeated.⁶²

A mistake had been made, and GTP officers and employees were anxious to justify their actions. Chamberlin complained that the election had been badly handled. In defence Hansard replied that he had requested money but that it had not been forthcoming. Borrowing an excuse from Armstrong, he also blamed the “Dago vote.” This label described an alleged large group of immigrant railway labourers living on railway property who were politically disloyal.⁶³ The following figures drawn from the 1915 enumeration list demonstrate that the explanation was specious.⁶⁴

Two railway employees had openly criticized the George Street candidates, however. Hansard suggested that they be transferred to another district and fired.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3 [no pt. 2], J. A. Heaman to Hansard, 12 May, Daniell to Hansard, 12 May 1915.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, “Chicken” (Hartford) — “Dick” (Hulatt) telegrams, 17 May 1915, refer to *Daily News*. Hansard to Daniell, 17 May, Armstrong to Daniell, 5 May 1915.

⁶² *Herald*, 21 May 1915. Ruggles described Armstrong as a bad influence on GTP fortunes in the city. PAC, RG 30, f. 3437, f. 2458, pt. 1, Ruggles to Hansard, 23 December 1915.

⁶³ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Chamberlin to Biggar, 11 June, Hansard to Biggar, 15 June, Armstrong to Hansard, 22 May 1915.

⁶⁴ Voters’ List. I have interpreted “Dago” broadly as anyone who did not have a British surname. On 3 February 1915 W. P. Ogilvie wrote a letter to Bowser calling for the exclusion of “bohunks” from the voters’ list. PABC, A-G, f. 2919/14/13. The bill reveals that Bowser did not heed this advice.

⁶⁵ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Donaldson to Hansard, 11 June, Hansard to Donaldson, 15 June 1915.

1	2	3	4	5
no. of eligible voters in city	no. of voters residing on GTP property or in "Cache" (FWS base)	no. of col. 2 with occupations connected to ry. operation or construction	no. of col. 3 listed as labourers	no. of col. 3 with non-British surnames
589	72	67	8	7

It was necessary for the GTP to make some arrangement with the new city council which now contained four members, a majority, who did not support the George Street location. Armstrong suggested that Wilson, the lawyer who marshalled the Prince George property owners at the direction of the railway company, apply for the position of city solicitor to initiate an appeal. Wilson obtained this post since his only competitor, W. P. Ogilvie, had worked for the Joint Incorporation Committee, now viewed as a tool of NRS.⁶⁶

On 31 May Hansard presented the company's position to the new city council. The GTP solicitor indicated that the GTP would turn over three major parks to the city provided the council support the railway company on the station question. When asked whether the parks were payment for civic support, Hansard replied that the main thing was for Council to decide immediately.⁶⁷

On the following day Hansard presented a draft agreement with the city which contained the following section:

The city agrees that the station will be placed at the foot of George Street and that it will forthwith make and at all times support to the fullest extent an application to the Board of Railway Commissioners for an order authorizing and sanctioning the immediate erection of the station at the foot of George Street and that it will pass a resolution to this effect.

The council members could not agree on Hansard's written proposal but the aldermen passed a resolution to send a letter to the BRC supporting the railway by a vote of 4 to 2. The mayor then gave notice of veto explaining that his election proved that the city did not want such a resolution.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Armstrong to Hansard, 22 May 1915; Corporation of the City of Fort George [Prince George after 15 June 1915], Minutes [hereafter City Council Minutes], 29 May 1915.

⁶⁷ City Council Minutes, 31 May, 1 June 1915.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 June, Memorandum of Agreement, 1 June 1915.

In a letter to his superior, Hansard noted with satisfaction that such a stratagem could only delay the vote by thirty days. Hansard informed Ryley that it "would be policy not to give any concessions to the city, but at the same time it would not be advisable to notify the city that we are holding out on that account."⁶⁹

The railway company could not wait a month, however. When Gillett made a trip to Vancouver, City Solicitor Wilson informed the remaining council members that the mayor had no power to veto the resolution, and it was passed again by a vote of 4 to 1, Alderman Eagel dissenting.⁷⁰ The motion was wired to the BRC the following day.

In July an NRS lawyer used a statement made by Hansard at the 1 June council meeting that the GTP had money to build a station at George Street to compel the BRC to send its order to the Exchequer Court for enforcement. Hansard also indicated that the long dispute with the BRC prevented the railway company from collecting more than half a million dollars from the Prince George Townsite lot purchasers. Formal entry of the city into the dispute was now essential. Hansard instructed Wilson to begin preparations for an appeal of the city to the Governor-in-Council.⁷¹

The appeal would have more weight if it came from a unanimous council. Armstrong informed Hansard that he had organized a boycott of bread from the bakery of E. A. Eagel, one of the recalcitrant aldermen. When a group of businessmen waited on Council demanding action on the station question, Gillett remarked that he had recently told Hammond that the BRC location was too far west and that "so far as he [Gillett] was concerned, his largest interest was on George Street." Council passed a motion to send a committee to Ottawa, Alderman Livingstone declaring that "it was good business to back up the Railway Co. in anything they wanted, in order to make a City of it; . . . We have no City here, but just a small town on its last legs. . . ."⁷²

Council selected the other recalcitrant alderman, Ruggles, to make a trip to Winnipeg to discuss relations between the city and the GTP.

⁶⁹ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Hansard to Biggar, 7 June 1915; v. 3437, f. 2958, pt. 1, Hansard to Ryley, 9 June 1915.

⁷⁰ City Council Minutes, 21 June 1915. For Wilson's role in the meeting, see *Herald*, 25 June 1915.

⁷¹ PAC, RG 46, v. 1432, f. 21418, R. A. Pringle to Drayton, 29 June 1915, BRC, Order to Exchequer Court, 9 July 1915; RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Hansard to Wilson, 9 July, 17 July, Hansard to Biggar, 12 July 1915.

⁷² PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Armstrong to Hansard, 5 June 1915; City Council Minutes, 20 July 1915.

Vice-President Donaldson bluntly informed him that “when Prince George wanted anything they always come to G.T.P., A great many people in Prince George owed the Company money and if they choose, they could close them out at once.” Ruggles was so impressed with this ungrammatical statement that he read it into council minutes.⁷³

On 11 August Hansard wired Wilson to proceed vigorously with the appeal to the Governor-in-Council. The “city should go in as new party . . . keeping railway out as much as possible.” A special council meeting was required and Wilson suggested that Hansard wire Ruggles, now very amenable, to request the meeting. “Do not wish it to appear that I have any other interest other than as City Solicitor.”⁷⁴ When some aldermen voiced concern about the expense of prosecuting such an appeal, Hansard wired Wilson the following reply: “We will guarantee your fees in connection appeal if City will not pay them but would rather have nothing to do with appeal.”⁷⁵

Rejecting a late prediction of disaster from Hammond, Council unanimously passed a motion on 16 August directing its solicitor to apply to the Governor-in-Council for an appeal from the BRC decision or for an order directing that the city as a new legal party be heard on the appeal. On an amendment by the suddenly stubborn Eigel, a specific preference for George Street was deleted from the motion but there was no other practical alternative by this time. Wilson had already drafted the application and filed it the same day.⁷⁶

Although the city council’s attempts to influence both the BRC and the federal cabinet were unsuccessful at that time, the outcome of the

⁷³ City Council Minutes, 3 August 1915. A version of Donaldson’s threat also appears in *Herald*, 6 August 1915.

⁷⁴ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3. Hansard to Wilson, 11 August, Wilson to Hansard, 12 August 1915. The relationship between the GTP and Wilson is not clear. One of the important inducements for Wilson’s arrival in Prince George in early 1914 was a retainer from Foley, Welch & Stewart, the principal contractor of both the GTP and the PGE. When Ryley complained in September 1915 that Wilson was paying neither rent nor property taxes for occupying a house on GTP property, Hansard replied that he “would not like to see anything done at the present time which might disturb in any way the advantageous position we are now in in connection with having the station established at George Street.” Interview with the Honourable J. O. Wilson, 4 June 1983; PAC, RG 30, v. 3624, f. 3253, Hansard to Donaldson, 30 September 1915.

⁷⁵ PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Hansard to Wilson, 14 August 1915.

⁷⁶ Hammond’s letter has not survived. *Post*, 7 August 1915, refers to its prediction of disaster if city council appealed to the federal cabinet. City Council Minutes, 16 August 1915; PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Corporation of the City of Prince George, Petition to the Governor-in-Council, undated.

city's actions is not relevant to the argument of this paper.⁷⁷ The GTP selected a site and maintained a station in opposition to the interests of its competition and the demands of the federal government regulator. When legal action threatened the station location and the economic advantage which it accorded the railway townsite, the GTP, having decided on a civic name and street layout, set municipal boundaries and inspired incorporation to damage further its economic rival and gain leverage with the BRC. In 1911 the editor of the [South] *Fort George Herald* made a striking prediction concerning this activity. In a discussion of rumours concerning the precise location of the GTP townsite, he offered the following observation:

... [the] company would attempt to establish their own cities, backed and upbuilt by their organization and development, at any point which offers them the greatest opportunity and profit.

He concluded that "the future of this young town lies in the hollow of the corporation's hand."⁷⁸

The city of Prince George did not begin as a company town, however. Like the Galts in Lethbridge, the GTP rejected the "closed-camp concept with its company-owned stores, company-built houses, schools, and churches, and company-run local government."⁷⁹ The election of Gillett and a city council with a majority unsympathetic to the George Street station location reveals that the railway company's attempts to direct "spontaneous" civic action were not always successful. The company resorted to heavy-handed threats and promises to turn decisively council policy on the municipal issue which it considered crucial to its interests.

Clearly the case of Prince George does not agree with Artibise's findings concerning boosterism. Of course, Artibise does not suggest that local leaders through their actions alone created cities on the prairies. But the evidence presented here does not support even his more qualified claim that "the element of [local] urban leadership must be an integral part of any explanation of urban growth."⁸⁰ One can find a better explanation for the establishment of Prince George in his remark that

⁷⁷ Although Armstrong predicted that the minister of railways would convince the cabinet to hear the city's appeal, the cabinet eventually declined to hear the appeal in 1917. PAC, RG 30, v. 3409, f. 2438, pt. 3, Armstrong to Hansard, 16 September 1915; P.C. 624, 7 March 1917.

⁷⁸ *Herald*, 22 July 1911.

⁷⁹ den Otter, *Civilizing the West* . . . , p. 162; *ibid.*, "Lethbridge: Outpost of a Commercial Empire, 1885-1906," *Town and City* . . . , p. 186.

⁸⁰ Artibise, "In Pursuit . . ." p. 147.

more extensive transportation links increase the dependence of western cities on eastern industry and finance.⁸¹

On a more general note this case suggests that it is necessary to revise the description of the impact of railways on communities as impersonal and mechanistic. Like the actions of both its economic rival and the local inhabitants, the actions of the railway company in creating a city represented a decidedly personal response to the problems and opportunities of a particular development context. If Prince George merits the label of "railroad town," the Grand Trunk Pacific should be regarded as its premier booster.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, "Introduction," *Town and City* . . . , p. 4.