

OUTLINE OF  
STATEMENT OF T. S. ROGERS, K. C., CHAIRMAN  
HALIFAX RELIEF COMMISSION

As to policy of restoration made before City Council of Halifax and Town Council of Dartmouth and other public bodies, June 4, 1918.

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1. For many reasons beyond the control of the Commission a general statement of its policy as to rebuilding the destroyed houses and the restoration of the affected district structurally has had to be deferred until the present moment. The Commission was delayed for many weeks awaiting settlement of its powers by the legislature; it then had to submit its proposals to the Federal Government, which Government along with the Imperial Government made the large grants enabling a modern and progressive development possible; it had to await the reports and advice of its architects and engineers, the making of important contracts for essential reconstruction materials, and it felt bound, as far as it reasonably could, to ascertain the individual wishes of the home owners likely to be affected by its proposals. These matters though not fully overtaken have been sufficiently grappled with to enable us to take the public into our full confidence today. The Mayor has been conferred with on several occasions, and the Board of Control has been made aware of the main outline of our policies, and the Commission has every reason to hope for the widest cooperation with us of the civic and other authorities concerned as well as the public generally.

2. Under the provisions of the Act of Legislature recently passed, the Commission has defined the devastated district to include that portion of the City bounded westerly by Robie Street

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and Longard Road, easterly by Campbell Road, northerly by Leeds Street (running past the Rockhead property) and southerly by the Wellington Barracks property and Russell Street extension. The <sup>contains</sup> area ~~is~~ about three hundred and twenty-five acres.

3. That part of this district lying between North Creighton Street on the west and Campbell Road on the east is to be more particularly subject to the Commission's regulations as to rebuilding. This portion includes the Richmond district from Russell Street north and both sides of Gottingen Street from East Young Street north. It is the Commission's ambition to make this district one of the best residential portions of the City for persons of moderate means.

4. The Commission has acquired the Fort Needham property containing about eight and a half acres, the Blackader property to the north containing over three acres, and is proceeding to expropriate the large vacant lot south of Fort Needham, and the six blocks on Gottingen Street north of Fort Needham extending to Duffus Street and eastwardly on this frontage practically to Albert Street. On the west side of Gottingen Street it is expropriating all the blocks lying between North Creighton Street and Gottingen Street and extending from East Young Street to Cabot Street. The owners in the expropriated territory have so far as possible been personally interviewed and it is felt that comparatively few within these areas will be unduly disturbed. Due compensation will of course be made for the land, the market value of which had been well established and has been further

tested by a number of purchases on behalf of the Commission. If the house owners within this district desire to rebuild they will be promptly interviewed and their individual wishes be met so far as is consistent with the Commission's general plan of development.

5. Albert Street will be reached from Campbell Road by an easy gradient either through the military property (negotiations as to which are proceeding) or from a point on Campbell Road at the north east corner of the military property. Albert Street will be widened so as to become a leading thoroughfare, and at or about Richmond Street will by an easy grade ascend across Acadia Street to Gottingen Street. There will also be a diagonal street running from Campbell Road following an easy gradient and passing upon or near the Richmond School property and thence across Acadia Square and reaching Gottingen Street at the northern base of Fort Needham. Pending the exact location of these streets, on which engineers have been working for some weeks, permits for the restoration of buildings on the few sites likely to be affected will not be issued. At the point where these two streets converge reservations will be made for public buildings such as schools and churches, and the centralized development at this point will be worthy of the best art of the Commission's engineers and architects.

6. The Fort Needham property will it is hoped in a large part be devoted to park purposes, though considerable land facing new streets which following natural contours will encircle its base will be made available for building purposes. The City no doubt will place in the hands of the Commission the lands known

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as Mulgrove Park, Acadia Square and other City property in that vicinity in exchange for other public property devoted to streets and parks. The Commission's work in this respect is City work, and no differences are anticipated and even so they must prove easy of adjustment. The opportunity of developing the Fort Needham and surrounding property is unique. The Commission trusts that this eminence will be retained on behalf of the public of Halifax as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the disaster and to the courage, fortitude and patience of the sufferers who survived.

7. The Commission will require that all buildings lying between Campbell Road on the east and North Creighton Street on the west and Duffus Street on the north and Russell Street on the south, a district to be known as "the restricted area", shall be of first class or fireproof construction, and in this area, though as far as possible individual preferences will be respected, the Commission will insist on such rules and regulations as will lead to the development of the slope on both sides in accordance with its plans. Those who desire to rebuild have been conferred with for some time past and those who do not wish to rebuild will be dealt with on a reasonable basis. If they desire to rebuild on particular lots required for other purposes exchanges will be arranged for or decisions may be postponed pending the further development of the Commission's plans. Opportunities of acquiring completed houses will be open to the former house owners.

8. The lands on the west side of Gottingen Street will be developed by the construction of a large number of houses of



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the lower cost type. These houses can be acquired by former house owners in that district against the appraised value of their former holdings. Other purchasers affected by the disaster can acquire them on the installment plan of payment, and others will be let at reasonable rentals. All owners who cannot be provided with new houses during this season will have the first opportunity of occupying until next season the houses which will be erected by the Commission for letting.

9. It is hoped that Russell, Kay, East Young, Union and Albert Streets, in fact the whole Richmond slope, will be developed into a most desirable residential district. Home owners in this district will be got in touch with as quickly as possible and provisions will be made it is hoped to their general satisfaction for rebuilding. The architects have completed many designs for housing and have under preparation many more and will without delay let contracts not only for construction of the individual houses but also a large number of tenements. The number will only be limited by the ability to obtain contractors to undertake the work.

10. The Commission is prepared to set aside out of the capital sum of the Pension Fund the sum of one million dollars or more to be devoted to the building of modern tenements and small ownership housing, the income from which will be devoted to the payment of pensions established for the victims of the disaster. The Commission is likewise prepared to expend a sum as large as may be necessary, possibly another million dollars, in restoring the damaged houses of individual owners. Due allowance will be made for the fact that homes cannot be restored for the former market

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or appraised value and the disposition of the Commission will be to aid through its housing problem those who would otherwise suffer from the fact that their property cannot be restored for the sums awarded. Each of these cases must be dealt with on its merits, and greater proportionate consideration must be afforded to those whose houses were of low cost type.

11. The building material for reconstruction in the specially restricted area will be of pressed concrete known as hydro-stone. This material is manufactured under pressure of seventy thousand pounds, and it must not be confused with the concrete blocks now used to some extent in Halifax. The blocks can be faced in the process of manufacture so as to produce variety of effect. Stucco will also be made use of and it is hoped that brick will also to some extent for the sake of variety be one of the materials used.

12. In that portion of the devastated district not included in the specially restricted area the Commission cannot undertake to control rebuilding operations except in accordance with the City laws as heretofore enforced. If however the City Council is of the opinion that there should be further restrictions, the Commission will be glad to meet them in conference and come to a conclusion which will be in the general best interests. Many of these houses not in the restricted district are under repair and it would be quite impossible to enforce such a development as is proposed in regard to the specially restricted area.

13. The same remarks apply to the Town of Dartmouth and outlying sections, the reconstruction of which areas will continue to be largely of wood, but the Commission will as far as possible

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endeavor by its advice and counsel to encourage every reasonable improvement in all building operations undertaken. Steps are on the way towards the rebuilding of many wooden houses throughout the whole district.

14. A contract has been awarded to the Nova Scotia Construction Company for the manufacture at Eastern Passage of the hydro-stone in large quantities. The experts have pronounced the gravel and sand at that point as of the highest quality. The necessary machinery is on the way and when the work once begins, construction will proceed with great rapidity. Arrangements are quickly developing for the building also of the houses not within the restricted area.

15. The architects are the well known firm of Messrs. Ross & McDonald of Montreal, who have been studying the problem on behalf of the Commission for many weeks past. The street changes and general planning development are proceeding under the advice of Thomas Adams of the Commission of Conservation, Ottawa, who has had an assistant on the ground for some time. The Commission has had the continued aid ever since its appointment of Mr. H. W. Johnston, C. E., Assistant City Engineer, whose cooperation has been of the greatest value. His advice has been freely adopted in the replanning of the devastated area.

16. The new manager of the Reconstruction Department who will continue the important work of repair and will cooperate with the architects and engineers in the Commission's rehousing plan is Mr. George H. Archibald, a native of Nova Scotia although a resident of Toronto and a well known engineer and contractor

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in that City. He rendered valuable voluntary services to the City for weeks following the disaster and the Commission feels it had done well to secure his services at the present time. Colonel Low, after six months of the most arduous work carried on under great difficulties and without remuneration, feels compelled to retire in order personally to supervise the many large contracts which have recently been awarded to his firm.

17. The work of the Commission in other departments is making due progress but on this occasion it is not intended to make more than a passing reference to the work of the Rehabilitation Department under the competent leadership of Dr. Cutton, and his coadjutors Miss Wisdom and Miss Haliburton. The work is thoroughly organized and the dependents and sufferers are receiving admirable attention at the hands of most capable departmental heads and industrious assistants.

18. The Commission once more appeals to a considerate public for cooperation in its further tasks and more especially in the great work of rebuilding the ruined housing. The efforts of the Commission in dealing individually with so many cases can only succeed when the people affected realize that there is a sincere desire on the part of the Commission to help them out of their difficulties and any person, whether occupying a public position or not, who by word or act does anything that tends to create in the minds of those affected by the disaster a feeling of unsettlement and dissatisfaction, hampers the Commission in its work and injures the sufferers and the community at



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large. The Commission therefore appeals hopefully for united  
and sympathetic support.



*Copy of Report  
of the Commission  
to the City Council*

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