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tribution of supplies. They would take repayment notes from those receiving aid, which notes would be repayable to county treasurers. Reimbursement was to be in cash or road work, the amount to be decided by justices of the sessions. The amount designated proved inadequate for Cape Breton; in 1847, the House Committee appointed for Relief for Poor Settlers declared that they could give aid only where need was "almost universal." £600 extra was thus voted for Cape Breton County, £350 for Inverness, and £300 for Richmond. It was intended that this money would be repaid by road work, but it was still inadequate. The magistrates of Cape Breton County met in special session during the early winter of 1847, and four hundred family heads came begging for supplies, draining all local resources. When seed potato was distributed the following spring, the need was so great that it was eaten, and that which was planted, largely rotted. Consequently, in 1848, one observer declared that "not one person in every five hundred has seed of any kind to put in the ground." When the hay crop failed and grain and seed were gone, people slaughtered cows and working animals, averting immediate death, but decimating herds. The summers of both 1847 and 1848 were wet and stormy, encouraging the rot and ruining the hay crop. Rust even appeared on the wheat in 1848. Many people did not even receive seed. Some living in remote areas of Cape Breton were not aware that it was being distributed. Others heard about the government programme, but when they reached the distribution points, they were told that they had been forgotten and that there was neither seed nor supplies left. The Relief Committee finally had to admit that "the expectations of the farmer have been blighted." Starvation would certainly have been rife had people not foraged berries, hunted wildlife, shared food, or fished. Fishing was particularly helpful, especially in coastal areas, but unfortunately, the places hardest hit were a distance inland. Moreover, the important fishery on the south coast of the island failed during the peak of the famine, in 1847 and early 1848. The idea of road work for seed proved unsatisfactory. Those most in need lived in remote areas where there were no roads. Where there were roads, it was also soon apparent that the wretched settlers were not performing the required work. By May 1848, no road labour had been performed in Cape Breton or Richmond counties, prompting the Committee for Relief for Poor Settlers to observe that "the liberality of the Legislature has not met with corresponding gratitude on the part of the people who have been willing to receive the benefit, but have made little return...." In Inverness County, road work was performed in the fall, after rains had prevented earlier labour. However, people resented such work and it was poorly done, while the official records were in such a state of confusion that work debits could not be properly computed. Politicians furthermore complained that

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Committee soon realized that "the benevolent intentions of the Legislature have been frustrated...." Not only was the road work poorly done, but the burden of paying for relief was also removed from those who could afford it. Though it would have been impossible for the local population to pay, the Committee was appalled that poor rates had been assessed in Cape Breton County only in Sydney Township. To the Committee this meant that people did not intend to repay, indicating a clear "relaxation of moral principle," which could lead only to "idleness and want of self-reliance and self-respect which elevates a people and enables them to overcome the difficulties and misfortunes of life." The question arose, however, should the poor settlers have to pay at all? The Novascotian wondered why the citizens of Richmond, Inverness and nearby counties should be penalized with poor roads to avoid starvation. James McKeagney, M.L.A. for Inverness County (1843-1847), carried the argument further by wondering why Cape Bretoners should pay for assistance for all when the government had given \$1,000 in emergency aid to both Barbados and Quebec without asking for repayment. The government never collected payment and reluctantly committed itself to large-scale financial aid to the socially destitute, setting a precedent that would be difficult to break in the future. Besides government, merchants were called upon to give assistance. Great quantities of food were thus distributed. The managers of Gammel and Christie, merchants in the Bras d'Or area, recalled that during the famine they sold between 2,000 and 3,000 barrels of flour, but by 1853, as crops improved, they disposed of only six hundred barrels. Either cash or credit was always demanded. An observer wrote: "Any person possessing the common feelings of humanity, and standing for an hour or two on one of the wharves at North Bay [North Sydney], would really feel sick to witness the number of men 2 1/2-hour cruise • frequent sightings of Minke Whales, Pilot Whales, Dolphins, Fin Whales The Markland a coastal resort Relax in our luxury log suites and dine on our gourmet food featuring local fish and lamb. Join the thrill to the play of light and shadow as they dance over the northern seascape. For reservations in the Maritimes call 1-800-565-0000. Or ask the operator for your toll free Check Inn number. Local phone (902) 383-2246 Cabot Trail, Dingwall, Nova Scotia, BOC IGO, Canada STOP AT DINO'S fresh baked goods \* souvenirs magazines \* film \* charcoal gifts \* novels \* camp fuel \* ice Ingonish One Stop Store & Restaurant STAY AT DINO'S Trailer Park Laundromat close to the National Park Ingonish Heading for the Top of the Map: Down North