

Catholic standpoint. That I can easily show you, and it is important that it should be understood. You will observe that the notice might be given by an agent; this agency had not to be created by writing, and proof of it had not to be given to the clerk of the municipality who receives the notice; there was no provision for keeping any record of the notice; the notice might, in point of law, be given for the ratepayer by the priest himself, or by any one else; it might happen to be given without the authority or knowledge of the ratepayer, or to be given under what was erroneously supposed or assumed to be his authority; and it was enacted by the statute which provided for the notice, that "every clerk of a municipality upon receiving any such notice shall deliver a certificate to the person giving such notice to the effect that the same has been given." (26 V., c. 5, s. 15.) Nor did the law require verification of the notice in any other respect. None but a Roman Catholic was entitled to give the notice, but a ratepayer who was not a Roman Catholic might give the notice, and falsely describe himself as a Roman Catholic; or another might give the notice and so describe him; and before our time there was absolutely no provision for correcting these errors.

Again, by the law before Confederation all Roman Catholics who have given notice once are entitled to exemption from Public School rates in the municipality for ever after. Under this law notices had begun to be given as long ago as 1856, twenty-one years before our first amendment. Any one who gave the notice in any of the twenty-one years between 1856 and 1877 was entitled to exemption every year until he chose to give notice of withdrawing from the support of the Separate School. Many of these notices, however, are from time to time lost or mislaid, or perhaps carelessly destroyed, but Roman Catholics who have given the notice are by law entitled to exemption though the notice has not been preserved by the municipal clerk who received it or by his successor. In some municipalities, such as Toronto, there had probably been during the period mentioned many thousands of Roman Catholic ratepayers and supporters of Separate Schools. Before our legislation it was commonly understood to be the duty of the clerk, after the assessment roll had been finally revised in all other respects, to examine all these notices, and to enter on the roll for the collector the exemption of the ratepayers named in the notices, or in such of them as had not been lost or mislaid or overlooked; but there was no provision for correcting any errors he might fall into in discharging this duty. He had not to give any notice to the ratepayer that he was