

The Municipal Conference.

At the call of Mr. S. H. Kent, assistant city clerk, of Hamilton, and secretary of the conference, representatives from several provincial municipalities, met in the council chamber, in the above city on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 5th and 6th of September. The following municipalities sent delegates: Lindsay, Belleville, Ottawa, Ingersoll, Brantford, St. Catharines, Galt, Berlin, Fort William, Guelph, London, Wiarton, Port Hope and the township of Keppel—twenty-two delegates in all. Mr. J. V. Teetzel, mayor of Hamilton, was elected chairman, and Mr. S. H. Kent, secretary of the convention. The chairman in a few words explained that the object of the meeting was to consider and discuss necessary amendments to the existing municipal and assessment laws, and to settle the best mode of having them embodied in Acts of the Provincial Legislature. A number of resolutions were introduced, discussed and referred to a committee, which reported as follows:

1. That in the opinion of this convention the assessment act should be so amended as to distribute the burden of taxation more equally, and, with this end in view, the assessment of personal property should be made without regard to the debts owing on account of it.

2. Provision should be made in the Assessment Act that real property belonging to or in the possession of any person or incorporated company and extending over more than one ward in any city or town may be assessed together as a complete going concern in any one of such wards at the option of the assessor, or that the assessment of the property as a going concern may be apportioned amongst two or more of such wards in such manner as he may deem convenient, and that in either case the property shall be valued as a going concern or forming part of a going concern.

3. The personal property of incorporated companies, other than chartered banks, should be liable to assessment to the same extent as that of any private individual or partnership, and sub-section 2 of section 39 of the Assessment Act, should be amended accordingly.

4. That no sale of lands for taxes in any city shall be invalid by reason of there having been goods or chattels within the county belonging or in the possession of the person assessed for the lands, or goods or chattels upon such lands liable to seizure for taxes, and of no levy by distress having been made upon such goods or chattels for the payment of taxes due in respect of said lands.

5. That representatives of city and town municipalities should be appointed to attend before the committee provided by the Provincial Government to consider and discuss the question of the turnover tax, which was brought before the Municipal Committee of the legislature last season.

That for the purpose of urging upon the legislature the changes in the law which this convention deems desirable a municipal deputation should wait upon members of the Ontario Government at some time within a month before the opening of next session, when the Ministers would have leisure to hear and consider the matter brought before them.

Mr. Joseph A. Culham, barrister, of Hamilton, read a paper on municipal reform in the United States, which was well received. The following resolutions were discussed and adopted:

"That in the opinion of this convention the polling subdivisions made by councils of cities and towns in which the manhood

suffrage registration act is in force should be for municipal purposes only. That the number of voters for municipal elections in a subdivision should be increased from 200 to 300, and that an election should not be void or voidable for the reason that a polling subdivision which contains more than 300 voters has not been divided, provided it does not contain more than 400 voters. That the Board of Registrars should define the polling subdivisions for elections to the Legislative Assembly. That all voters for elections to the Legislative Assembly should register with the Board of Registrars under the Manhood Suffrage Act."

"That power should be given to cities having a population of more than 15,000 to provide for election of aldermen by a general vote instead of by wards, if such mode of election be desired, by a majority of the electors, and that the question of its adoption should be submitted by the council to the vote of the ratepayers at the then next municipal elections if desired by petition of at least 300 ratepayers, and if decided by such vote in the affirmative, the aldermen at all future annual elections shall be elected by a general vote."

"That any police magistrate, in sending a boy to the Industrial School, may issue an order requiring the parent of such boy to pay to the city corporation the amount the city has to pay for his maintenance. At the present time the city has to pay, even though the child's people may be well able to do so."

"That rebates on account of local improvements be calculated on land values only, and not on land and building values combined."

"That the Dominion Government should be asked to pass an act requiring the capacity of baskets to be stamped at the handles by the makers; also that fruit and vegetable boxes be of a standard size."

"That the legislature be asked to amend the local improvement sections of the municipal act so as to empower municipal councils to charge an equitable proportion of the cost of permanent improvement to streets, such as macadam, asphalt, brick or other pavement, to general expense fund of the municipality, and to issue debentures for the same."

"With a view to empower cities to acquire water privileges, it was decided to ask the legislature to amend the Municipal Act by inserting the word "city" before the word "town" in section 564 of the act."

That the legislature be asked to amend the Municipal Act so as to provide that the mayors of cities or towns may be elected for a term of two years, and aldermen and councillors for two or three years, one-half or one-third of the number to be elected annually, as decided by by-law to be carried by the ratepayers."

"That in the opinion of this convention the clause in the Assessment Act by which the property in each ward of the municipality has to be separately assessed, should be amended so that companies should have the whole of the property, belonging to the company assessed against the company as a whole, at the head office or principal place of business within the municipality as a going concern."

The ability of forming a permanent association was considered and approved by the following resolution, moved by mayor Keaty of St. Catharines and seconded by mayor Nelson of Guelph.

That an organization to be called the Ontario Municipal Association be now formed to consist of the Mayors of the cities and towns of this Province, and such other representatives of each city or town as its council may from time to time appoint.

That such association shall meet at least once in every year, and oftener if need be, upon the call of the Executive Committee.

That prior to each session of the legislature of Ontario, the Executive Committee shall arrange with the members of the Provincial Government for a hearing of the Municipal Association at such time as the Government may appoint, upon any questions which the

association shall desire action to be taken by the government of the legislature.

That notice of the time so appointed be sent by the Executive Committee to the mayor of each city and town, so that representatives may be sent to meet at the place to be named in the notice of the Executive Committee, and may proceed to interview the government.

That the officers of the Association consist of a president, and two vice-presidents, a secretary and assistant secretary, and an executive committee, to consist of these officers and 5 other members, and that 3 members shall form a quorum of the executive committee.

That the following be the officers:

President—The Mayor of Hamilton.

Vice-Presidents—The Mayor of St. Catharines, and the Mayor of Guelph.

Secretary—Mr. S. H. Kent, Deputy City Clerk, Hamilton.

Assistant Secretary—Mr. John T. Hall, Assessment Commissioner, of Hamilton.

Executive Committee—Assessment Commissioner Fleming, of Toronto; Auditor Cluff, of Ottawa; the mayor of London, the mayor of Port Hope and the mayor of Belleville.

The meeting then adjourned.

Mr. A. W. Campbell, Provincial Road Commissioner, addressed the meeting and gave the Convention some good hints in connection with the carrying out of municipal improvements. He intimated that the failure of municipal associations in the past has been brought about by the discussion of questions which should have been left to expert engineers, etc. Municipal associations should confine their attention to questions of administration, and drop learned papers on engineering and other kindred subjects, and they would find a vast field for their labor.

London was chosen as the next place of meeting, of the association.

After the meeting on Tuesday, the visitors were very pleasantly entertained by the mayor and aldermen of the city.

We are publishing in this issue the paper presented by Mr. J. A. Culham, and also a paper on "Assessment" prepared by city assessor Dolson of St. Catharines, which was withheld owing to the shortness of time at the conference.

In the course of a scrutiny of votes cast in the township of Aldborough, for and against a by-law, granting a bonus of \$7,000, to the Lake Erie & Detroit River Railway Company, the senior Judge of the county of Elgin decided a point which it would be well for assessors and municipal clerks to bear in mind. Three persons were entered on the Assessment Roll of the township as follows:

Smith, John }
" Henry }
" James }

His Honor held that the two latter were not on the Assessment Roll at all, and therefore could not be entered by the clerk in his Voters' List, based on that Assessment Roll. The assessor is required, by the Act, to enter in column 2 of his roll, the "name (surname first) and post-office address of taxable persons." See Section 13, sub-section 4, of the Assessment Act.