

CITY OF MONTREAL NEW CHARTER.

Some Important Phases in Connection Therewith.

The most important legislative enactment during the present Session of the Province of Quebec Legislature will be that concerning the City of Montreal. While the new Charter is a vast improvement on the old cumbersome one which it replaces, yet it is by no means as perfect as it might be, and there still remain several objectionable features in connection with it, and some of the clauses will afford wide scope for the members of the legal profession to squabble over. However, on the whole, it is a decided improvement.

We are sorry to note the absence of the restrictive enactments concerning illegal expenditures, which were very necessary.

As at this writing the Bill has not been finally passed, we will limit our remarks to a few matters of vital importance.

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The expropriating of property for the widening of streets is a very questionable proposition in any City, and this expropriation business, for which such a craze existed a few years ago, has been the cause of the present financial condition of our fair City. Expropriations are an expensive luxury, and, when carried out, of very questionable value; the principal gainers being those who are fortunate enough to sell their property to the City at exorbitant prices. It has been well stigmatized as a system of "robbery, jobbery and corruption." Little cities, such for instance as London, England, can manage to transact an enormous business in narrow streets, but Greater Montreal must have wide streets at any cost. An ambition to have a modern Paris seized some of our civic rulers. The result so far has been the piling up of a large debt; of interest charges absorbing almost one half of our revenue, after deducting school taxes; streets beautifully paved at an expenditure of some millions of dollars, and then allowed, for want of sufficient means to keep them in repair, to become a disgrace to the Metropolitan City of Canada; and other services also neglected. These are some of the results of expropriation.

The majority of our Civic Rulers, and the Bankers, members of the Board of Trade, and others representing the largest interests in Montreal, have opposed any further expropriations, and yet the Legislature of the Province, in its wisdom, contemplates saddling the city with the widening of Notre Dame Street East and St. Antoine Street. We earnestly hope that both of these Bills, brought in by private individuals entirely in their own interests, backed up by members from country parts, who have no stake whatever in the City of Montreal, will be thrown out. If any further widening of streets is to be done, it should be carried out at the cost of the property immediately interested on both sides of the street. Of course, we admit that there may be an improvement of a public nature required, in which case the City should bear its portion

of the cost; but so far the streets have been widened, not in the best interests of the City, but for the benefit of those owning property on them.

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Bonsecours Market.—It is surprising to note the solicitude of a few proprietors of property in the neighborhood of this market for the welfare of the farmers who bring their produce to the City. They threaten actions against the City because the market is over-crowded, and the streets are blocked on market days. It is a good thing to see a crowded market, for we have several markets in other parts of the City which are by no means as crowded as we would like to see them. We presume these same proprietors would also threaten to take action against the City if the markets were not crowded, and if there was very little business done there. People owning property in the vicinity of markets, or any where else, must take their chances as to the changes which years bring around. Taking into consideration the interest on the outlay in connection with our markets generally, and the cost of repairs, administration, etc., the net revenue derived from them is practically nil. We are told that, if we improve and enlarge the market, the additional revenue will be sufficient to pay for the expenditure in connection therewith. It is only necessary to say that the number of farmers to come to this City is limited; we believe they nearly all come here now, so that the additional revenue would be very little indeed. We do not mean to contend that we get the best results from our markets under the present system of administration. We believe, for instance, that the stalls, etc., should be rented by public competition.

While a central market would be desirable, yet, at the present time, the City is not in a position to expropriate property and expend an enormous sum thereon. A part of the Champ de Mars could be used twice a week, the farmers entering by one gate and leaving by another, and their business could be transacted by twelve o'clock, which would leave ample time for the cleaning up of the place afterwards, and would also insure the collection of market fees.

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Taxing Capital is unwise. Every encouragement should be put forward to bring capital to a growing city such as Montreal. What makes Real Estate valuable? Capital. What is most essential to stimulate the growth and promote the prosperity of a community? Capital. Why is a bonus frequently offered to those who contemplate building a factory in a town? To encourage investment of Capital? What maintains every employee in factory, bank, insurance or other industrial enterprises, and enables him to pay the taxes he contributes to the support of the commonwealth? Capital. Is it not stupid to excessively tax manufacturing concerns, machinery, etc., thus keeping them outside of our City to the disadvantage of Montreal, and the benefit of other municipalities, who will