

Municipal Organization in Ontario

II.

The powers of municipal councils subject to provincial legislation extend practically to all matters of a local nature. The machinery of administration varies little in municipalities of the same class. Each municipality has its own officials, whom it appoints to hold office during the pleasure of the council. Special departments are organized in accordance with local needs and ideas.

County Councils. The seat of government for the county is the "county town." The first meeting of a council is held in the county hall or court house. A chairman, called the warden, is then selected, and holds office for one year. Standing or special committees are next struck, to which all council business is usually referred, and from which reports in the form of recommendations, etc., are made to the council. The names of these committees indicate the class of business referred to each. The usual committees are: Finance; Roads and Bridges; County Buildings; Petitions and Legislation; Printing and Contingencies; Educational; Equalization; House of Refuge; Advisory or Executive. Special committees are chosen from time to time. By-laws of the council usually provide for the routine of proceedings and the duties of officers and committees. Parliamentary procedure is observed. The chief officers appointed by the council, in addition to the warden, are the county clerk, treasurer, engineer or commissioner, public school inspector, auditors.

Warden. The warden presides over the council, signs official documents and calls special meetings. He must summon a special meeting when requested by a majority of the council. In most counties, the wardens attend all meetings of the committees of council, and have various duties under their purview, such as a general supervision of officers and business of the county, counter-signing of treasurers' cheques, etc. For this they receive an annual allowance, which varies from \$50 in the county of Elgin to \$450 in Simcoe. The elections to the office of warden are often keenly contested, especially in counties where the post is recognized as a stepping-stone to political preferment.

County Clerk. The county clerk acts as secretary at all meetings of council and committees, keeps the minutes and by-laws and takes charge of the books in his office, or in a place appointed by by-law of the council. In most counties, by custom or direction of council, he has to attend to other duties than those imposed by statute. The annual salaries vary from \$250 in Dufferin to \$1,200 in York, the present average being \$477.

County Engineer or Commissioner. In many counties the control of work connected with the construction and repair of county roads and bridges is committed to a professional engineer or to one or more commissioners appointed by the council. In other counties this work is attended to by a committee of council, a professional engineer being on occasion consulted.

County Treasurer. The principal duties of the county treasurer are to receive the county rates from the treasurers of the local municipalities, to collect arrears of taxes due in respect of lands in the townships and villages of the county, and to conduct sales of lands for taxes when in arrears for three years. The proceeds of the collections and sales are paid to the local municipalities entitled thereto. In disbursing moneys, he is guided by statutory enactments and by by-laws or resolutions of the

county council. For the due performance of his duties, each treasurer is required to give security. Salaries vary at present from \$350 in Prince Edward to \$1,600 in Middlesex, the average being \$926.

Police Magistrates. Where a county council passes a resolution affirming the expediency of appointing a salaried police magistrate, the Lieut.-Governor may make such an appointment. After the expiration of one year, the council may by resolution terminate the commission of magistrates so appointed. The Canada Temperance Act requires the appointment of a police magistrate wherever and so long as it is in force. The annual salary of a county police magistrate is \$600, or such larger amount as the council may determine.

Court Houses and Gaols. The most important single duty of a county council is to provide accommodation for the courts of justice and for the registrar of deeds. York has this accommodation in the court house and gaol of the city of Toronto, just as in the county of Wentworth the city of Hamilton controls the gaol. The council selects the gaol surgeon and provides the salary of gaol officials. Otherwise gaol appointments are made by the sheriff, a provincial appointee, the appointment of gaoler being, however, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor.

General Duties. The decisions of county councils are embodied at times in petitions to the legislature and to other counties for their co-operation. When the question is of special local importance, deputations are often appointed to wait upon members of the Government. Many of the bills introduced in the legislature, to amend municipal and other laws, are suggested by these discussions. The province also utilizes the administrative machinery of the counties in many ways, not only in connection with the administration of justice, but with education, expropriation of toll roads, the care of the indigent, etc.

County Rates. A county council may appoint valuers to assess the whole county; or it may equalize or adjust the work of the local assessors so that the valuation of the taxable property in the different municipalities will be uniform. The amount required is apportioned ratably amongst the local municipalities and collected with other taxes. The council also issues licenses, under regulations fixed by by-law, for hawkers, pedlars, auctioneers, etc., carrying on business within the county.

Auditors. The county auditors, two in number, usually appointed at the first session of the council in each year, examine and report annually or as directed by the council upon the books and accounts of the county treasurer and all accounts affecting the corporation within its jurisdiction. A special board, however, of which the county judge is chairman, audits quarterly before payment of all accounts in connection with the administration of justice. A second examination of these accounts is made by one or more auditors appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, for the purpose of preparing a statement of accounts for which the province is liable in whole or in part. These include accounts of sheriffs, Crown attorneys, court criers, coroners, constables, etc., for services in connection with the administration of criminal justice.

THE MUNICIPAL WORLD has been a large factor in an educational way in the improvement of municipal government during the last thirteen years.