

EARLY HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN UPPER AND LOWER CANADA.

The earliest evidence of the recognition of Public Health in Canada was the enactment of the Quarantine Act in 1794.

The epidemic of cholera (1832-4) stimulated the Legislature of Upper Canada to action, and an Act to establish Boards of Health was passed by that body. From this time to 1848 there was little or no activity in respect to public health matters. (The Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were united in 1840). There was a typhus epidemic in Canada in the years 1845-47, and of cholera in 1849, and again in 1854-5. It will be of interest in passing to note that in 1847 immigrants to the number of 98,106 passed through the port of Quebec. Of these 8,691 were admitted to Grosse Ile Hospital. Three thousand two hundred and twenty-six of these and two thousand one hundred and ninety-eight others on ships in quarantine died of typhus fever, and are buried at Grosse Ile. The outbreak of cholera was doubtless the reason for the enactment establishing "A Central Board of Health" in 1849. The public mind remained undisturbed in respect to public health until 1866, when the outbreak of cholera in that year induced the Government to enact new regulations looking to the control of the disease. Confederation of the provinces of Canada occurred in 1867, and in 1873 a Public Health Act passed in Ontario permitted the appointment of members of municipal councils and trustees of police villages to act as health officials (Local Health Committees). These were the forerunners of the present local boards of health.

Apparently our forefathers (something like ourselves) needed an epidemic of some sort to create interest in health matters. There was a severe outbreak of yellow fever in the United States in 1877. In the following year a select committee of the Legislature of Ontario was appointed to consider the report "on the subject of sanitary measures for maintaining and promoting the public health." This committee having reported, agitation became quite general about 1881 for the creation of some permanent central health organization in Ontario. Various commissions were appointed. These reported favourably, and in 1882 the Provincial Board of Health was established under the authority of 45 Victoria, Chap. 29, R.S.O. A permanent