

ROAD BULLETIN

No. 2.

ROAD LABOR AND EXPENDITURE IN ONTARIO.

The [greater portion of road mileage in Ontario is constructed and maintained under the statute labor law. The statute labor is usually supplemented in each township by grants from the general funds of the municipality for grading, draining, purchasing gravel and road material, building bridges, culverts, etc. Any person required to perform statute labor may commute his time at the rate of one dollar per day. The amount of such commutation is paid either to the pathmaster or is collected with the general taxes of the municipality. A few townships have a by-law whereby statute labor must be commuted wholly or in part, but in such cases the rate is usually much less than one dollar, being in one instance as low as thirty-five cents.

While it is universally admitted that a great deal has been done by the pioneers of this country who performed their road work honestly and with zeal, there is a growing opinion in many parts of the Province that the statute labor system has survived its usefulness, that it is frequently wasteful and unjust. This feeling must necessarily grow wherever councils fail to secure an honest and systematic administration of the law.

Wherever the statute labor law has grown unpopular it will be found that the council gives little attention to the appointing of pathmasters, as to whether those chosen are the best suited to fill the position, but make such appointments as will hand the "job" around so that each property owner may do a little work in front of his own farm; the council exercises no supervision over the work while it is being performed, nor before nor afterwards; a pathmaster is appointed for about every mile of road in the township; pathmasters are retained in office too short a time to gain any experience or knowledge of road-making; the work done does not follow any definite plan, each pathmaster being left to his own resources; the work of one pathmaster is rendered useless or is torn up by the pathmaster succeeding to the office; the amount of money and labor at the disposal of each pathmaster is too limited to permit his undertaking any durable work; the pathmaster calls out at one time all whose names appear on the list, and sometimes they all respond and sometimes two or three put in their appearance; in the former case there may be so many men that it is impossible to direct them and they are in one another's way, while in the latter case, when several weeks afterward, they turn out to do their road work they do a little grading or haul a little gravel as the pathmaster directs and succeed in putting in time; the pathmaster seldom exercises sufficient forethought regarding implements and teams, and in consequence there are men and no teams, plows and no scrapers, or scrapers and no plows, wagon-boxes to hold a third of a cord, and wagon-boxes to hold a third of a yard; in general there is no plan of doing work and no organization whatever. For these reasons the people have lost interest in the road work; perhaps they find, too, that though one man may do his work faithfully, his neighbor merely tries to put in time; or though one section is sufficiently enterprising to put their roads in good condition, those adjoining are totally neglected.