

RAISING MONEY FOR MUNICIPAL WORKS

Conditions and Procedure in Canada, Great Britain and South Africa Compared—Regulation of Municipal Loans

(Written for *The Monetary Times*, by R. O. Wynne-Roberts, M. Inst. C.E., M. Can. Soc. C.E., consulting engineer, Regina).

The present financial stringency affords an opportune occasion to offer a few observations on the question of loans required for the execution of municipal works in Canada.

My remarks will have special significance in connection with the Western Canadian municipalities, firstly, because much attention has been directed to the amount of money required by them; secondly, because the conditions are unique in the history of British municipalities, and thirdly, because the procedure observed in relation to obtaining money for new works is somewhat different to that obtaining in other parts of the empire.

My extended municipal experience in Great Britain, South Africa and in Canada, enables me to compare the conditions and procedures in these countries in respect to works carried out of loans.

In the first place, it is important to study the conditions in these countries so far as they concern the needs of the public with regard to utility works.

In England the growth of towns has been steady and practically uniform, during the last fifty years. Some towns have grown much quicker than others, but the average increase of urban population was about 15 per cent. between the years 1801 and 1901, and about 11 per cent. in the next decenium.

How London Boroughs Grew.

Some boroughs round London had grown about 26 per cent. in the years 1901-1911; this was due to immigration from the central parts to the suburbs owing to improved transportation facilities.

The following probably represents the largest increases in England and Wales during the last census period.

	Population.	Increase per cent.
Croydon	169,500	26.6
Rhondda	152,780	34.3
Swansea	114,663	21.3
Huddersfield	107,821	13.4
Cardiff	182,259	10.9
Sheffield	454,632	11.1
Belfast, Ireland	385,000	10.4

When Sir Robert Rawlinson was commissioned by the government to investigate the sanitary condition of Lancashire towns, in the forties or thereabouts, public health works were most inadequate and unsatisfactory. Sir Robert initiated great schemes to provide work for masses of men who were out of employment owing to the depression which then prevailed.

From that time to the present, English municipal authorities have gradually carried out such works. The growth of the population was steady, very few towns have had any exceptional development, and there has been no difficulty in undertaking schemes which would be ample for a generation ahead. Water supplies, sewerage schemes, street railways, electric light, gasworks, and other municipal works have therefore been provided without imposing an undue burden on the ratepayers. The only public work of importance which was difficult to carry out with a degree of assurance of success was that of the purification of sewage.

In South Africa, the conditions are different, far apart from Capetown district, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, the population of the British and Dutch element has not grown to any extraordinary extent. The above towns during the ten years ending 1911 have grown considerably, but not in anything like the same manner as Western Canadian cities. Johannesburg is about 30 years old, but the other South African cities are much older and all have had time to carry out many municipal works, but there is much left to be done.

Regarding Canadian Expansion.

With regard to Canadian expansion, it may be instructive to analyse and compare the census returns for the 1911 decenium. The increase in population in Canada was 32 per cent. as compared with 11 per cent. in England and Wales. The province of Saskatchewan had increased 439.48 per cent.; Alberta, 413.08 per cent.; British Columbia, 119.68 per cent.; Manitoba, 78.52 per cent.; Ontario, 15.58 per cent.; and Quebec, 21.46 per cent.

The urban population in Canada had grown 62.25 per cent. as compared with 11 per cent. in England and Wales.

If we analyse the returns still further we find that the increase in a few of the cities were as follows:—Regina, 1243.40 per cent.; Moose Jaw, 787.23 per cent.; Edmonton, 848.21 per cent.; Vancouver, 51.35 per cent.; Fort William, 354.11 per cent.; Toronto, 80.99 per cent.; Saskatoon, 105.23 per cent.; Calgary, 893.72 per cent.; Medicine Hat, 257.20 per cent.; Winnipeg, 221.29 per cent.; Ottawa, 45.27 per cent.; Montreal, 75.73 per cent.

It may be interesting to know that Toronto and Belfast have about the same population but the rate of increase was as 8 is to 1. Montreal and Sheffield are somewhat similar in the number of inhabitants, yet the growth of Montreal was nearly seven times as great as in Sheffield. Winnipeg in 1911 was about three-fourths the size of Cardiff, but the expansion of the former was about 21 times as much as the latter.

New Population in Western Canada.

Unfortunately, comparative figures are not at present available to contrast the other Canadian cities mentioned, but there is no doubt that their growth has been enormous as compared with English standards. It is palpable that in the West, the development of villages into towns will show an abnormal percentage of increase, but even if such cases are excluded, the expansion was far in excess of what ordinarily occurs in other countries.

The influx of people into Western Canada during the last five years was even greater than in the decenium 1901-1911. For instance, the writer when investigating the question of water supply of Regina, found that the annual increment for five years ending 1912 was about 36 per cent. compound. It is, of course, possible that this rate of increase has been equalled or even exceeded in other cities.

The extension of railways, the great development of the agricultural industry and the immigration of people, demand the creation of new towns and villages to provide for the commercial and social requirements of the inhabitants generally.

The enormous growth of the existing towns and the ever-increasing number of new villages, some of which develop very quickly, give rise to sanitary works, better means of locomotion, more efficient lighting, cheap power, and the many other civic requirements of modern times.

Keep Pace With Requirements.

It will be acknowledged that the best policy and the only efficient administration for municipal authorities to undertake, is to carry out the necessary public works as the towns grow, and not to allow the works to accumulate in such a way as to be difficult to be overtaken. It is far cheaper and more satisfactory to carry out sanitary works in advance of the actual requirements, rather than to neglect keeping abreast of the times, and wait until a disastrous epidemic of some disease has broken out, which will not only need eradicating, but also the execution of the essential precautionary works, after causing sufferings and losses which cannot be reckoned in dollars and cents.

The influx of people into Canada, therefore, imposes an important and difficult duty on the municipal authorities, which cannot be safely ignored. That the majority of the authorities are endeavoring, within the statutory limits of their borrowing powers, to meet the requirements is proved by the calls for capital.

While English municipalities have had fully fifty years to carry out such works, the Canadian cities and especially, the Western ones, are called upon to undertake the same in about ten years. The difficulty is enhanced by the exceptional growth, for engineers find it almost impossible to estimate the future with the same confidence as they can in other parts of the world.

Not Familiar With Expansion.

This difficulty is not inherent to city works, for banking corporations have frequently erected buildings which were soon found to be inadequate; railway companies have built railways and structures only to find that it was necessary to enlarge the same almost before completion; governments are guilty of similar delinquency, and business men who erected what others called "white elephants," have had to face similar conditions and exigencies.

Such, then, is the almost universal development of municipal enterprises in Canada. It is small wonder that criticisms have been levelled at civic authorities, both by in-