

Protecting Public Rights

IMPORTANT WORK OF THE ONTARIO RAILWAY AND MUNICIPAL BOARD

The Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, which was established by the Whitney Government shortly after it came into office, has been doing splendid work for the public, protecting public rights in the matter of the electric railway and telephone franchises. At the outset the Railway Board established a two cent per mile passenger rate on the electric railways of the province. It has brought electric railways under control and supervises their equipment and settles disputes between railways and municipalities. In this connection the Toronto "Telegram" remarked some years ago that "Ontario's Railway Commission has brought order out of chaos."

One feature of the Board's work is the validation of debentures issued by municipalities. Last year debentures involving about \$3,000,000 came under the scrutiny of the Board, and 130 Municipal By-laws were validated. In the majority of these cases special Acts of the Legislature would have been required if the Board had not been empowered to deal with the matter. Thus the Board has saved municipalities much expense and delay.

In the control of the telephone business an important work is being done by the Board, which is rapidly developing. The Board is now superintending the interchange of business between various telephone companies, and thus affording a protection to the public and at the same time preventing large and powerful companies crushing competition. The rapid growth of the telephone business throughout the province has made it very important that there should be a speedy and final method of protecting the public rights, and in this respect the Railway and Municipal Board is proving of great advantage to the public.

The Board is empowered to adjudicate upon disputes as to assessment. Last year it decided cases involving assessments aggregating five and a half millions of dollars.