

The General Funds to Pay One-Third.

Among the resolutions passed by the Ontario Municipal Association at the meeting held in the city of Hamilton last month was the following, respecting the frontage tax system: "That the Legislature be asked to amend the local improvement sections of the Municipal Act so as to empower municipal councils to charge an equitable proportion of the cost of permanent improvements to streets, such as macadam, asphalt, brick or other pavement, to the general expense fund of the municipality, and to issue debentures for the same."

This is but a repetition of a suggestion which has been previously placed before the readers of the *Municipal World*. In a number of reports to various towns the Provincial Roads' Commissioner has also made the same suggestion and, in accordance with this, Strathroy taking the initiatory step, twenty-seven petitions were presented to the Legislature just prior to the last session. A bill was framed, but owing to the opposition of several of the larger cities it was withdrawn. The ground of opposition taken by these was that, having spent large sums, and paved a great many streets under the old system, it would be unfair to relieve a few favored streets at the expense of all the others; while for the cities to assume responsibility for past expenditure would place too great a burden on the general funds. However, there is no doubt that a plan can be framed whereby cities and towns when first adopting the system, can provide that the general funds shall bear a portion of the cost. Or, in municipalities where the system has been in operation, a favorable vote of the freeholders should be sufficient to guarantee the advisability of the change.

It would be well to provide by by-law for the payment of say one third of the cost of all street improvements out of the general funds. When the Act was framed little interest was taken in the question of street improvement, and the intention was undoubtedly to permit the residents on certain streets, desiring their improvement, to have it made and the payments extended over a term of years; the principle being to allow them to get what they wanted and pay for it. This was taken advantage of by the more progressive citizens, but very seldom in a general way. With the changes of time and conditions, the demand to-day for improved streets is general, and no system should be adopted which will not, to a reasonable extent, provide for this.

No improvement can be made upon the streets of a city or town without benefitting the whole place. The nature, and consequently the cost of these improvements, should be proportionate to the service which they render, and should not be wholly regulated according to the desire of the owners. Before any work is undertaken a comprehensive plan of the municipality outlining the character of the

improvements proposed for the different streets, width of roadway, location of sidewalks, estimated cost, should be prepared, and followed as nearly as possible. The highest assessed property, where the most expensive pavement is required, pays a proportionately great share of the cost of that pavement as well as of the least expensive pavement.

Street intersections should in addition be charged to the general funds, otherwise a street first undertaking improvements would be charged with all intersections, and other streets crossing this and subsequently undertaking improvements would be relieved from the cost of these street intersections.

Sewers and Street Improvements.

In spite of the fact that street improvement is so highly beneficial to the welfare of every village, town and city, the first steps towards the introduction of such a measure are frequently met with severe criticism and opposition. Among the objections most frequently taken, in municipalities where a sewerage system has not yet been installed, is that the construction of sewers should precede the building of macadam or other first-class roadways. The objection can well be taken in some cases. It would certainly be folly to go to the expense of paving a street and within a year or two to very largely destroy this work by opening a trench down the centre for the purpose of laying a sewer. It is, however, equally unreasonable to urge that street improvement be delayed when there is little, if any, prospect of a sewer being required for a period of perhaps eight or ten years. Sewers are required more often than property owners are inclined to admit or suspect, and it is always well before undertaking street improvement to give the question of sewerage thorough consideration.

It is sometimes urged, too, that street construction should be delayed for a year or more after the laying of sewers in order that the earth in trenches may have time to settle. This, too, is quite unnecessary, if proper attention is paid to the restoration of the earth to the trenches. If a sufficient degree of attention is paid to this portion of the work all the earth taken from trenches, and more, can be placed in it, for there is a certain shrinkage of the earth which varies with the character of the soil. All that is required is thorough pounding of the earth.

If the earth is carelessly placed in the trench settlements are apt to occur for any number of years after the completion of the work, and neither one or two years is sufficient to save the pavement from injury in this respect. By restoring the earth with a reasonable amount of care there is every necessary degree of safety in macadamizing the street at any time thereafter. The following season should certainly provide against any danger from settlement.

Road Making at Toronto Fair.

No special exhibit on the fair ground at Toronto this year appeared to attract more genuine attention than the very large display of roadmaking machinery. Municipal councillors, engineers and road commissioners spent hours watching the different machines in operation, comparing the merits of each. In this way councils are in a better position to make a selection, and many sales have been made by the manufacturers. Many committees have returned to report to the councils as to the selection to be made with a view to completing the purchase at a later day.

When the first special exhibit of this machinery was made three years ago, people viewed it through curiosity. To day it is examined largely by men appointed by councils, not to study their general utility, but to select the machine most suitable for their requirements. The Provincial Road Commissioner's office on the grounds was visited by a large number of municipal officials anxious to report the reforms made in their system; the completeness of their outfits, and the large amount of satisfactory work which they now are doing. That prejudice should be changed into sympathy; that the stone hammer and drag scraper should be laid aside, and that modern graders, rock-crushers and rollers should be substituted; that statute labor should be abolished, and a workable system adopted in its stead, are the reforms to be desired, which are steadily gaining ground.

Brick Pavements.

Brick pavements, aggregating about one and three-quarter miles in length, were laid in Columbus, Ohio, during 1898. In the annual report of the chief engineer, Julian Griggs, of the Department of Public Improvements, the following interesting statements are made: "The practice of determining the character of the brick offered for street pavements by submitting samples to the standard rattling test adopted by the National Brickmakers' Association, has been continued, and has tended to improve the quality of brick used for paving purposes. The recommendation of a year ago for the use of concrete foundation in street improvements, instead of broken stone, has not found any response in a change of practice; in the meantime, a very good object lesson on the wisdom of such change can be seen in the pavement of Fifth Avenue, which has gone to pieces, and the brick, broken stone and mud are becoming hopelessly mixed."

The township council of Ameliasburg has just purchased an outfit of roadmaking machinery, including a rock crusher.

The township council of Charlottenburg has purchased a rock crusher and is this year making a great improvement in its roads.