

PREVENTION OF CONFLAGRATIONS IN NEW TOWNS

Provincial Government has Opportunity in New Ontario—Cleaning up Days

(Specially Contributed by Henry Lye, Vancouver).

Nearly every week the total destruction by fire of some wood-built village or town in Canada occurs; yet the building of such towns of the same old inflammable materials goes on without restriction or regulation.

The present control of the Ontario Government over the whole situation in New Ontario should be far seeing in the matter of fire protection of the proposed towns and villages, even if it does not extend to the arrangement of farmsteads.

Wood must necessarily be used for most of the buildings, but the government should retain and exercise control over the distances between buildings which should depend upon the sizes and occupations, and over the spaces between and behind them, which should be kept clean, so that, when fire does occur, it should not, as a matter of course, entail the destruction of a whole block of buildings, or of a whole town, or even of a whole farmstead, as is now too often the case.

Cobalt and Chelmsford, Chicoutimi, St. Scholastique and countless other places in Canada, have furnished object-lessons which should not be disregarded.

Regulations Must be Enforced.

The country is big enough to afford breathing space and safety to its people; one person's carelessness should not assuredly result in the loss of life or property to others as is now the fact in most of the towns and villages and in some of the cities of Canada, but it is only by wise forethought that this state of affairs can be prevented from extending to New Ontario.

Personal greed causes the subdivision of townsites into lots so small, with streets and lanes so narrow that when a fire breaks out the whole town is endangered. In nearly every place the spaces between and behind the business buildings are filled with old boxes, oil barrels, crates, straw, shavings, weeds, and other such quick burning rubbish; all of which, being nobody's business, is everybody's peril; local indifference or local influence permits the continuance of the dangers, so that if, in New Ontario, common sense measures are to be taken for the safety of life and property, they must be the outcome of government vigilance and governmental regulations which must be enforced by governmental officials.

Nelson's Example a Good One.

Insurance companies' inspectors see and protest, but dare not insist on the clearing away of inflammable materials or rotten old sheds. Insurance companies may reject risks or may impose rates of premiums based upon maps and plans which do not show the dangerous materials which exist between and behind the buildings. Insurance agents being desirous of commissions sometimes seem to ignore the facts or are ignorant of them. Individual proprietors are either careless or unobservant or are not personally responsible, and so these dangers continue and increase.

It was interesting to note that Nelson, B.C., had recently a general cleaning up day when everybody cleaned up vacant lots, alleys, backyards and basements, so as to minimize the danger from fires; such days should be observed at least quarterly in every place, but in addition to this there should be sufficient space between wooden and buildings of inflammable material to afford a measure of protection to those surrounding it.

Premier McBride says that he has been assured that the Canadian Pacific's double-tracking from Winnipeg to the Pacific Coast, will be carried out speedily, and will cost between \$25,000,000 and \$30,000,000 in British Columbia alone. The premier also said that the Great Northern had decided to build its road over Hope Mountain from Coalmount to Vancouver, and that the Canadian Northern would be running accommodation trains from Kamloops into Vancouver within a few months. The railroad contracts in the province, already let or to be let, he added, amounted to \$100,000,000 worth of construction.

At the annual meeting of the Victoria Board of Trade, Sir Richard McBride delivered an address which aroused considerable enthusiasm on the present conditions throughout the province and the outlook for the future. He reviewed at some length the progress being made in the furtherance of the railway programme in hand and projected, dealt with the financial position of the province, and drew a picture of an even greater era of progress and prosperity. He estimated that the railway work now in hand or shortly to be inaugurated would in itself involve an expenditure of \$100,000,000. Mr. J. J. Shallcross is the new president of the board of trade, and Lieutenant-Colonel E. G. Prior, the vice-president.

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