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## Turn in the Tide of Municipal Administration

**Report of Provincial Municipal Inspector Shows an Improvement in the Shortage of Sinking Funds and a Decrease in Outstanding Arrears of Taxes.**

The annual report of the Inspector of Municipalities for British Columbia, Mr. Robert Baird, is at hand. This report, which covers the year 1919, is the most valuable and most interesting financial pamphlet issued by any department of the Government. When it is taken into consideration that the operations of the various municipalities are applied on upwards of \$600,000,000 of property, involving a total debt of \$104,296,657, and taking in nearly \$19,000,000 and spending a little less than \$18,000,000, it can easily be seen how closely these operations affect the business life of the entire population.

The report is entirely statistical and for that reason is more graphic than any words could convey. Mr. Baird's comment on his own statistics is concise and meaty and is as follows:

The report is of particular interest in view of the fact that in the year 1919 the first serious effort was made to clear up the large amount of arrears of taxes outstanding, much of which was on account of the extent of the accumulation rapidly becoming uncollectable. The amending Act of 1919 re-enacted in whole the taxation and tax-collection provisions of the "Municipal Act," and provided for a compulsory annual tax sale and also for the obtaining of a tax-sale title without delay and at very little cost. The full result of this policy will not be seen from the figures covering the first year of which we have complete record; the arrears of taxes show a decrease, the decrease being from \$14,631,216.65 at the end of 1918, to \$12,094,121.37 at the end of 1919. The figures submitted also show that the moneys actually received exceed the expenditures by \$1,119,670. For a number of years previous the expenditures had steadily exceeded the receipts, in the year 1918 their excess being \$1,884,475.19.

The sinking funds still show an alarming shortage, being \$5,289,012.15, as compared with \$5,206,093.14 at the end of the previous year, but from an examination of the comparative statement shown under the heading of "Sink-

ing Funds" it will be seen that in a very large number of municipalities there has been a satisfactory recovery.

The municipal department of the province deals in the affairs of 34 cities and 28 municipal districts, and covers the operations of as small as 300 population in the case of Pitt Meadows, to 115,500 population in the case of the City of Vancouver; in areas as small as 40 acres, that of Cumberland, to an area of 75,907 acres, that of Langley.

The variations in assessment have not been marked

during the past year. The total assessed valuation of property in all the municipalities as at the end of last year was \$595,011,324, and for the previous year \$586,857,768. The population in the municipal areas was 374,740, as compared with 374,980 the previous year. The great bulk of these assessed valuations lies in the district of Greater Vancouver, including New Westminster, Burnaby, South Vancouver, Point Grey and North Vancouver, that of Vancouver proper being \$207,606,930, or approximately 40 per cent of the total value of land and improvements of the entire province. That of Victoria, excluding Oak Bay, Esquimalt and Saanich was alone \$76,145,008.

The tax levy for both the cities and districts of the province show advances indicating increased burdens of municipal tax payers. The maximum tax rate was for 64 mills in the City of Greenwood. Another mining town, that of Phoenix, enjoys the lowest tax rate of the province, being only 5 mills. Vancouver is 31.666 mills, an advance of 5 mills, and Victoria is 26 mills, being a decrease of .85 mills from the

previous year.

A great deal of interest and value of the report lies in the total of both debenture and floating debt for the cities and districts. The total debenture debt at the end of 1919, was \$94,740,615, being a slight decrease from the previous year when the total was \$95,020,109. The floating debt, exclusive of shortages in sinking funds, show a decided improvement, being a decrease from \$11,280,348 at the end of 1918, to \$9,555,042 at the end of last year. The decrease in total liabilities is approximately \$2,000,000. This total debenture debt is made up in the aggregate of the following items: Schools, \$9,092,856; streets and bridges, \$18,295,326;

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