

# The Municipal World

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K. W. McKAY, EDITOR,

A. W. CAMPBELL, C. E., } Associate  
J. M. GLENN, LL.B. } Editors

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OFFICES—28 Elgin Street, St. Thomas. Telephone 101  
Address all communications to

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Box 1252, St. Thomas, Ont.

ST. THOMAS, AUGUST 1, 1896.

We have been in receipt of several letters of inquiry in reference to the form of Collectors' Roll required to be provided under section 4 of the Assessment Amendment Act of 1896. In our opinion no change in the form of the roll is required. The amendment is only to be considered when the councils of towns and cities pass a by-law in accordance therewith. We would recommend clerks to read the section carefully, and endeavor to apply its provisions in a practical way before preparing the by-law.

The council of the township of Sullivan has published a comprehensive by-law respecting the public health, together with the rules for checking the spread of contagious and infectious diseases, and hints on methods for dealing with municipal and house wastes. This takes the place of the by-law provided for in the appendix to the Public Health Act. The following is one of the sections introduced in the by-law in addition to those provided for by the Act:

"All school houses within the municipality shall be whitewashed at least once every year, the floors scrubbed at least twice a year, the said floors to be swept at noon and after school hours on every teaching day, the trustees to see that the wells are kept clean, and the water pure and healthful, and that the privy vaults be cleaned out twice a year, on or before the 15th day of May, and after the 1st day of November; and from the 15th day of May, to the 1st day of November in each year they shall be thoroughly disinfected by adding to the contents of each privy once a month, not less than two pounds of sulphate of copper dissolved in two pailsful of water, or other suitable disinfectant."

## Municipal Clerks in England.

"The Position and Salaries of Clerks of Councils" is the title of an interesting paper in the last issue of *The Councillor*, the leading organ of local government in England. The municipal clerks of Ontario are in the same position as their brothers across the sea, and the following extracts from the paper, which is the first of a series, will be of general interest:

"It is apparent to all that the passing of the Local Government Act, 1894, conferred many additional powers on local authorities in rural districts. As a matter of fact, the act more than doubled the work carried on by the predecessors of rural district councils.

"It has, I believe, been officially stated that, without the valuable assistance rendered by clerks in interpreting and advising councillors on the intricate provisions of the new act, the measure would have been a total failure. In many unions it is a common practice for clerks to parish councils and parish councillors, as also chairmen and members of parish meetings, to call upon the clerk of the rural district council to advise them in his official capacity upon questions as to the construction of Acts of Parliament, and other matters appertaining to their duties. It is perfectly clear that this forms no part of the official duties of the clerk to the R. D. C., but it is notorious that it has been, and still continues to be done."

"The office of clerk is an onerous and difficult post; it needs a cool head and calculating mind. The officer who holds it must possess a thorough and practical acquaintance with the numerous Acts of Parliament which govern our sanitary laws. When we reflect that the Public Health Act, 1875, contains over 300 sections and that new statutes kindred to the subject are passed every year, it will be readily conceded that it needs a competent and well-trained mind to advise and unravel the complications of our sanitary legislation. But the new local Government Act has accentuated this state of things. This comprehensive measure has simply incorporated whole Acts of Parliament without re-enacting them in the act itself, creating a precedent of ambiguous draughtsmanship and a chaotic mass of legislation scattered over volumes of text books and Acts of Parliament. In addition to this, the case law on the subject is quite as extensive as the Public Health Acts themselves, puzzling not only the ablest barristers, but the most learned judges."

"The remarks recently made by the Lord Chief Justice in the House of Lords, on a Bill prepared and brought in to elucidate and define the meaning of sewer, will be appreciated by all officials. He practically

stated that the Public Health Acts were in such a confused state that unless they were consolidated it would be impossible for the judges themselves to understand their provisions. Be that as it may it is sufficient to my purpose to state that a clerk to a Rural District Council is expected to advise his Council on questions of highly complex law at a moment's notice, and if his advice is incorrect he very soon hears of it from numerous quarters. A large correspondence is thrown on his shoulders with the Local Government Board, Parish Councils, overseers and other public officials."

"A banquet given to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham last month was the occasion of a striking speech by Mr. Chamberlain on Municipal Progress. The limits of space preclude us from printing it verbatim, as we should like to do, but there are two or three points which we cannot overlook. The first of these is Mr. Chamberlain's interpretation of local government: "The prime objects," he said, "of municipal institutions are to bring together all classes in a wise co-operation for the common good, by which you may bring within the reach of all opportunities necessities, luxuries, which otherwise would only be the enjoyment and the privilege of the few—health, comfort, recreation, education." The conditions of success, he maintained, depended upon three things—the character and ability of the representatives, the ability and integrity of the permanent officials, and the intelligent interest of the great body of citizens."

"Writing as we do for officials, we are glad to find that our own advocacy of ample remuneration for skilled service finds an echo in Mr. Chamberlain's warning to the effect that there is no economy more disastrous than the economy which endeavors to make cheese-paring savings in the remuneration of men whose services may be priceless. This should form part of the creed of every councillor in the country, and should be taken well to heart at a time like the present, when there is a marked tendency on the part of rate-payers and electors to clamor for reduction in the salaries account, which can only be effected by acquiring the services of second-rate men. The points we have emphasized here apply, not only to huge corporations like Birmingham, but to all local governing bodies, not excluding parish councils."

Arrangements have been made for holding the annual meeting of the Ontario Good Roads Association at Toronto, on September 8th, in a hall over the general offices on the grounds of the Toronto exhibition. An exhibit of roadmaking machinery will be a feature of the fair. Every person interested in road improvement is invited to be present.