

Municipal Affairs in Alberta

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The year 1917 will be an important one for Alberta municipalities, but more especially for the cities, Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge. Confronting the administrations this year are the questions of taxation, the standardization of charters and accounting systems, and the hundred-and-one war measures which every municipality has to face.

Edmonton and Calgary are fortunate in the choice of the electors of the respective cities for mayor this year. In Edmonton W. T. Henry has been returned to office for the third consecutive term. In Calgary Dr. Costello has received similar honors. Western cities have had conditions to face far more important than the older established cities. The boom days have left the west staggering a little under the load created. Nowadays though, with efficient municipal administrations, the cities are watching the silver lining to the dark 1914 cloud, and with continued practice along the economy policy lines, will eventually bring the ships of state to a safe port. Mayor Henry has saved Edmonton something like \$750,000 in two years in the controllable expenditures. With the establishment of a comptrollers' department, payments and expenditures are checked before and after the requisitions are issued, so there is a constant check on expenses all the time. Needless to say, bank officials themselves give Edmonton a good name—it does not need a westerner to boost—easterners are doing it now.

The city of Edmonton has recently borrowed from its bank, the Imperial Bank of Canada, the sum of \$650,000 at six per cent., hypothecating as securing \$719,000 of debentures unsold and part of the 1913 tax arrears debentures. Estimates of current expenditures and revenue are now being prepared by all the municipalities, and during this month (January) will be considered, pruned and passed on.

In the month of March or thereabouts, Edmonton will hold the first tax sale for twenty-two years. Property on which 1913 and before that year taxes are owing will go under the hammer, but the statutes provide three years for redemption. At the last session of the legislature, power was given the city to hold a sale, and it was decided to first put up for sale land which owed for 1913, and to leave the property owing 1914 and 1915 for another year. On the strength of this tax sale, debentures were issued for \$2,719,000, and of this total \$2,000,000 were sold to Otis and Company of Toledo for 99 7-8. The balance of the issue have been placed with the bank as security on the loan recently obtained.

Calgary at its annual elections, decided to give proportional representation a trial, but the electors also decided to turn down the daylight saving scheme. Western Canada does not need this daylight saving scheme at all.

shorter they are the better when the thermometer is freezing itself.

The councils of the west will have to face the question of salaries to civic employees. When the war broke out in 1914, municipalities as well as business houses everywhere stampeded, salaries were reduced, and now the cost of living has soared so high, that the employees are petitioning for a readjustment of the pay check. Lethbridge city commissioners have been gathering data for some time to make comparisons. Calgary employees are watching Edmonton before they make a move, whereas Edmonton's employees have already taken the bull by the horns, passed a resolution, forwarded it to the City Council, and made an advancement in their aims. The 1916 Council before retiring, recommended to the 1917 Council that a readjustment of salaries be made in the estimates for the New Year. What will happen eventually is conjecture, but it is certain that those receiving a monthly salary or wage of under \$100 will get more than they received in 1915 and 1916.

During the year, when the Provincial Legislature is in session, the Minister of Municipal Affairs will bring down a measure to standardize the city charters. It is called the Model City Charter Act, and is divided into three classes, cities, towns and villages. Another scheme which is being advanced is the standardization of accounting systems for the cities. The towns and villages of the province have a system all their own, but the three cities work under different systems. When comparisons of departmental expenditures are made, it is difficult, unless an analysis is made, to compare one department in Edmonton with its companion in Calgary.

Another thing which Edmonton intends to do this year—the City Council will take full responsibility for the assessments. In the past few years an advisory board has been appointed. This board is comprised of three citizens, all real estate men generally, and they act in an advisory capacity to the city assessor. In reducing the assessments for 1916, they seemed to hit the wrong spot. Result, severe criticism on the part of the electors. However, Edmonton's assessment in 1914 was over \$190,000,000. To-day the municipal assessment is \$130,916,285. The tax rate in 1916 was 21 mills, against 17.50 in 1915.

The general municipal elections are over. The 1917 Councils are now ready for business, and best wishes are extended to them, with the hope that their deliberations will be for the best interest of all the citizens and the city as a whole.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND MANITOBA.

(Continued).

Allegations that a combine to boost bread prices existed were made by a leading north-end Jewish baker, who stated that certain bakers who did not live up to an agreement along this line were the subjects of persecution. As far back as before the war, he stated, Winnipeg bakers held a number of meetings at which the subject of increasing the price of bread was discussed. It was, he stated, a case of the south-end bakers wanting the north-end firms to increase the price.

Testifying before the commission, Louis Wicker, representing the Co-operative Bakery, stated that his company was selling at twenty-two loaves for the dollar, compared with the \$1.54 charged by bakers in the south end. They, however, did not deliver to customers, and to this cause a number of bakers present attributed their higher charge.

The next sitting of the commission is expected to be taken up with evidence to be given by the milk companies, and these will be followed by owners of cold storage plants.

The long days in summer are long enough; in winter the



DR. COSTELLO,
Mayor of Calgary; re-elected by a large majority to
the Mayoralty of Calgary.