

NEWS OF MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Ottawa Defeats Single Tax Scheme—Moose Jaw and Saskatoon Tax Collections Good—Large Increase in Montreal Revenue.

Portage La Prairie, Man.—The total amount of taxes collected in 1919 was \$209,393. Unpaid taxes at the end of the year totalled \$73,545.

Sydney, N.S.—A statement issued by Mayor Fitzgerald shows that in 1919 \$276,807 was collected in general taxes as against \$227,382.49 for 1918. Assessment in 1919 was \$326,730 against \$276,807 in 1918.

Ottawa, Ont.—Ratepayers have defeated the tax reform issue, which provides for the exemption of buildings, improvements, business assessments and incomes from taxes, and with the exemption of water and school rates to gradually transfer the burden of taxation to land values.

Edmonton, Alta.—The city closed its 1919 banking business without an overdraft, according to a statement by the mayor. Although the bank return at the end of the year does not show this, the taxation payments which were in the mails will fully wipe out any overdraft against the city.

Saskatoon, Sask.—Total tax collections for 1919 amounted to \$1,114,274, an increase over those for 1918, which were \$961,225. The feature of the collections, stated Acting Commissioner Leslie, is that they exceeded by approximately \$118,000 the total tax levy, which was \$996,349. Outstanding tax arrears at December 31 were approximately \$858,000.

Calgary, Alta.—According to compilations of City Comptroller Wood, for the eleven months of the year ending November 30 last, and estimates for the present month, the three utilities will show the following approximate surpluses for 1919: Street railway, estimated surplus, \$25,000; Electric light and power department, estimated surplus, \$15,000; Waterworks department, estimated surplus, \$10,000.

Walkerville, Ont.—Taxes during the year 1919 amounted to \$212,235, according to the financial statement just issued. Of this amount \$199,552 has been paid to date. The amount of assessed values for the year is: Land and buildings, \$6,035,779; business, \$760,261 income, \$339,582; total, \$7,185,622. The amount of exemption is \$631,538, which leaves the amount assessable \$6,554,084. This is an increase over 1918 of \$84,074.

Victoria, B.C.—The percentage of taxes paid into the city last year was greater than in any other year since the beginning of the war, Ald. W. J. Sargent, chairman of the Finance Committee of the City Council, stated recently. During 1917 and 1918 the tax collections were not sufficient to meet the current expenses of the corporation, and the city's expenditure ran \$345,000 behind revenue receipts during those two years. Collections in 1919, however, have not only enabled the city to meet current expenses, but have also made it possible to pay \$25,000 on account of the deficit of the two previous years.

Moose Jaw, Sask.—Figures issued by city treasurer Goudie indicate that the total of 1919 city taxes paid up to the 31st of December was \$574,377, about 68½ per cent. of the total tax levy for the year, and the largest proportion of the current taxes paid in any year since the start of the war. This total exceeds by \$66,254 the total current taxes paid up in 1918, when the current payments, \$508,122, represented a total of 64 per cent. of the annual levy. The payment of arrears dropped below 1918, however; the arrears paid in 1919, \$165,913, was \$25,559, less than the arrears of \$191,473 paid in 1918. The total for 1919, however, exceeds the 1918 total by \$40,695, the figures for 1919 being \$740,291, and for 1918, \$699,595.

Vancouver, B.C.—The city's total expenditure in 1919, according to Mayor Gale, was \$5,740,000, just \$193,000 more than in 1917. Of this sum \$4,223,000 was paid out in fixed charges, such as interest on sinking funds, payments on treasury notes and other charges that were incurred in previous years of civic financing, and regarding which the city council had no alternative now but to meet them. This left out of the city's total expenditure only \$1,517,000 for the city to spend on its general maintenance. The fixed charges included, among other items, \$1,016,000 for schools,

and the police department cost \$393,000. There was the city's share towards the Greater Vancouver joint sewerage board for the year, amounting to \$70,000, and a large hospital account. All these had to be met, and the city financed on what was left.

Hull, Que.—The total assessable property of the city for 1919 amounts to \$13,800,899, an increase of \$430,996, according to the report of the treasurer, Joseph Raymond. Of this amount exemptions, including church property, civic buildings, etc., total \$3,353,022. The value of the municipal assets is given at \$2,678,340, and the debt is \$2,557,742. The taxation rate per \$100 is \$1.25 and the population numbers 30,586, this being an increase of 10,657 since 1914. Principal sources of revenue during the past year were: Taxes, \$172,716; recorder's court, \$28,321, and other items, making a total of \$220,248. Expenses include: Maintenance, \$52,224; bonds, \$182,690; investments, \$26,580; Gatineau bridge, \$28,000; current account, \$15,000; totalling \$320,463. Salaries total \$65,017, and debenture interest \$75,752.

Montreal, Que.—Since 1910 the city's realty values have more than doubled, the amount in 1910 being \$428,585,356, and in 1919, \$852,411,726. Revenue figures also show large increases. In 1910 the revenue amounted to \$6,615,701, compared with \$20,504,173 in 1919.

The sources of revenue on which the estimates for 1920 are based show that the city raises \$1,719,000 from the water rates, from the business tax \$1,351,000, about \$9,000,000 from realty tax, \$5,000,000 from school tax, and about \$3,000,000 from other sources of revenue, including a contribution of \$500,000 from the Montreal Tramways Company, in accordance with the new agreement between the city and the company. The grand total of revenue is \$20,504,000. Over half of this amount is appropriated for the payment of the interest charges and the school tax. The interest charge amounts to \$6,216,000 and the school tax to \$4,552,278.

The following resolution has been adopted by the city council:—

"That this council requests the members of the provincial legislature not to grant to the different municipalities on the island of Montreal, except the city of Montreal, any borrowing power, seeing that these different municipalities may one day or another be annexed to Montreal, which would then have to support the burden of debts contracted by the said municipalities, in virtue of these new powers."

Toronto, Ont.—It is probable that Toronto will apply to the legislature for two amendments to the Assessment Act. The most important of these is to the clause which deals with one class of income from invested capital which at present escapes taxation, and which Assessment Commissioner Forman is anxious to secure permission of the legislature to assess. The other is in regard to the statement submitted by the person assessed.

Should these two amendments to the Assessment Act be passed by the provincial government, they will undoubtedly result in a further increase of the city's assessment on incomes. This class of assessment has already shown a rapid growth, and is this year \$8,760,824 larger than it was last. A comparison of figures for the past four years illustrates the results which have been achieved. In 1917 Toronto's total assessment on incomes was \$20,837,702; the following year, \$25,684,967; in 1919, \$33,611,090, and this year \$42,371,914.

The annual report of the assessment commissioner shows that twelve public service corporations are assessed at \$42,038,278 for 1920, an increase of \$571,683, as compared with 1919.

Toronto's debt at the beginning of 1920 is \$104,000,000—almost exactly what it was a year ago. The maturing of debentures has been offset by new issues. Debentures not sold at the year's end were practically confined to \$450,000, of which \$150,000 is for parks. There are considerable debts already incurred for which debentures will have to be issued during 1920. These include \$3,000,000 for local improvements (such as roadways) authorized, and \$1,000,000 for the Hydro, besides the cost of Royce avenue park, which has to be settled by arbitration, and of Scarboro Beach park, if the city finally decides to purchase. These sums, with the unnegotiated debentures, will run the total up towards \$5,000,000.