

## Constitution of County Councils

In accordance with arrangements completed by County Clerk Macnachten, of Cobourg, a meeting of county council representatives was held at the Rossin House, Toronto, on 23rd February, to consider the question of the constitution of county councils and organize a deputation to wait upon the Provincial Government in reference thereto. The following counties were among those represented: Oxford, Waterloo, Victoria, Ontario, Huron, Northumberland and Durham, Carleton, Lambton, Peterborough, Simcoe, Essex, Lennox and Addington, Haldimand, Wellington, York, Perth, Lincoln, Halton, Wentworth, Elgin, Hastings, Kent, Peel, Prince Edward, Welland.

Warden Miller of Northumberland was appointed chairman, and County Clerk McKay of Elgin, secretary.

The county council legislation of 1903, as enacted by section 68a of The Municipal Act, was fully considered, and a resolution passed favoring the repeal of the same. Arrangements for deputation were completed by the appointment of speakers. On the following day, county council representatives to the number of about two hundred attended at the Parliament buildings, where they were received by Premier Ross, who was accompanied by several members of his Cabinet. The views of the deputation were presented by Mr. M. T. Buchanan, of Oxford, who acted as chairman; County Clerk Aylsworth, of Hastings; County Solicitor Holland, of Northumberland; Warden Bruce, of Simcoe; Warden Kenrick, of Wentworth; Warden Boyce, of Carleton; County Clerk McNeillie, of Victoria; County Solicitor Farewell, of Ontario, and County Councillors Duncan, of Lambton, Evans and Lundy, of York.

The Premier, in his reply, complimented the deputation on the manner in which they had presented their case and referred to the loss the Province had sustained in an educational way in the separation of the local from the county councils by the Act of 1896. He recognized that there were defects in the legislation of last session, and said:

"We think of amending the Act of last year so as to change the manner in which it shall come into operation. We would allow the municipal councils to pass a by-law if they saw fit to do so asking that the Act come into force. These by-laws afterwards would be referred to the electors of each township so that instead of the municipal councils of each municipality governing in this matter there would be a vote taken on the day for the election of councillors, say, next year, and if a majority of the ratepayers of the whole county demand the change, the change will go into effect in that county. (Applause.) The old Act will remain in force for two years, and it may be possible that the county councillors who have done such excellent work will be able to so impress their usefulness upon the electors that the change will not be made. In the meantime, the act of last year will be very carefully revised and amended in one or two particulars."

The members of the deputation were very much pleased with their reception and with the premier's reply which was accepted as an indication that the present county council system would be continued.

In addition to the memorials which all of the councils represented had already forwarded to the Legislature, the following special papers prepared by the representatives of the counties of Northumberland, Victoria and Elgin were considered by the deputation in formulating their views and filed with the Government.

### COUNTIES OF NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM.

1. The Act of 1903, whereby the reeves of minor municipalities and mayors of towns have the power to vote themselves as county councillors, while at the same time they are municipal councillors, is a return to dual representation long since abolished in respect to the Provincial and Dominion Parliament.

2. It is not in the best interest of our municipal institutions that the Act of 1903 should come into operation and decidedly unfair if the proposed change was desirable that it should be left wholly in the hands of the reeves and mayors to vote themselves into office.

3. The work of the county council as established by statute and also by custom is of an entirely different character from that of the minor municipalities, and just as separate as the work of the Provincial Legislature is from the Dominion Parliament.

4. The county councils, as at present composed, is entirely along the line of representation by population, whilst the amendment of 1903 is directly the opposite. As villages with only 500 inhabitants have the same representation as towns with 10,000 inhabitants.

5. It is also unjust that small villages and rural municipalities, with an assessment of \$150,000 or less, should have the same representation and voice at the county councils as municipalities with ten times that amount, or even greater than ten times.

6. Taking the united Counties of Northumberland and Durham, under the present system there has been a saving in money paid to commissioners since the Act came in force in 1897 of \$17,000, as compared with the same time under the old system.

7. In so far as the united Counties of Northumberland and Durham are concerned, the representation at present is equal from each county, being twelve from each, and in case the amendment of 1903 is brought into operation the representation will be most unjust, as it will give 14 representatives in Northumberland and only 10 to Durham.

8. The present system is a stimulus to reeves of minor municipalities to fit themselves for the higher position of county commissioner when done in the municipal council.

9. Representation by division in the county council is the same as representation in Parliament by constituency.

10. The present system has had the effect of inducing a better and more capable class of men to enter into our municipal councils as a preparatory school for higher positions of public trust, such as county commissioners and members of Parliament.

11. It is an indisputable fact that since the present system came into operation in 1897 there has been a decided improvement in the "personnel" of both our county and municipal councils in respect to intellectual ability.

### COUNTY OF VICTORIA.

The act under which the Constitution of County Councils, as it at present exists, was passed in the year 1896. It was entitled simply, "an Act to Reduce the Number of County Councillors," but it was in fact an important and even a radical measure, providing for the formation of county council divisions whereby equality of representation would be secured, for the election of