

# The Municipal World

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In the interests of every department of the Municipal Institutions of Ontario.

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ST. THOMAS, AUGUST 1, 1901.

Mr. Charles Patterson, clerk of the township of King, died on the 21st of June, last. *The Leader and Recorder* says that his death removed from the public life of York county an able and efficient officer, and a good citizen.

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At the last session of the council of the county of Peterborough, Mr. George Stewart resigned the office of clerk of the county, and Mr. Richard Watt was appointed to succeed him. Mr. Stewart was retained in the office of treasurer of the county.

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## A Defaulting Tax Collector.

Following quickly on our remarks in the last two issues of the *WORLD* on the apparent prevalence amongst municipal councils of the practice of delivering up for cancellation, the bonds, of collectors, comes the news that the collector of the city of Belleville has become a defaulter to the extent of some \$17,000 and has left the city. The sum mentioned appears to be the aggregate of a number of years' wrong-doing, but the deficit was discovered only a few days ago. The municipal auditors from year to year had apparently reported everything in a satisfactory state. We are not in possession of information as to the condition of this collector's bonds at the time of his flight and of the discovery of the wrong doing, but, if cancelled, the loss to the municipality will be a heavy one. The *Kingston News*, of a recent date, takes this peculiar method of auditing these rolls as its text, and delivers the following homily on municipal auditing generally:

"When the announcement was made that Belleville's tax collector had hurriedly

left for parts unknown, the government at once sent an auditor to examine his books. His report shows that the shortage exceeds \$17,000 and the question arises, what were the civic auditors about? Did they faithfully perform their duty? When Frontenac's treasurer disappeared, it was found that yearly the county auditors had reported the accounts correctly kept. The reasonable conclusion is that the auditors were either incompetent or to be more charitable, careless. The trouble is that frequently, in county and city affairs, all over the Dominion, personal or political favorites are chosen to do the work, worth not being considered. In every defalcation in municipal matters in the last twenty years, it has been found that the auditors were fooled by the officials. It is high time that the government took out of the hands of the municipal councils the power to appoint surveyors of accounts. Should the government appoint men to do the work and hold them responsible if they failed to discover discrepancies, each municipality would benefit by the change in the system. The present mode of doing business practically offers inducements to clever accountants to go wrong. They know that they can so manipulate their accounts that the average auditor would pass by a large deficit without the slightest suspicion. There are many reasons why there should be a change immediately. A government auditor understanding that failure on his part to detect wrong-doing would mean prosecution for conspiracy would be the proper remedy."

## Municipal Interests.

A proposal has been going the rounds for the formation of an association to protect municipal interests in connection with the policy of the Ontario legislature looking to the development and facilitation of private corporation schemes. It is right and necessary that this development and facilitation should go on, as it will certainly do, but it is right and it will soon be necessary for the municipalities to co-operate in a persistent endeavor to safeguard those interests, which they hold in trust for the people.

Amongst these none is more important than the franchises of highways, which have been in some cases foolishly alienated in ways that ought to be made generally known by way of warning to other municipalities. The organization of an association would enable the representatives of municipalities to communicate experiences to each other, and thus avoid the spread of an evil which would soon become a danger.

In this connection, it is not amiss to refer to what is known as the "lobby" in parliament. All such legislation as private corporations desire to procure is considered in a Private Bills Committee of the Legislative Assembly. The members of this committee are always seen

privately by the promoters, and there is no way of preventing such interviews. These may be counteracted, however, by the municipalities, and the formation of the projected association would enable this to be done effectively. When a principle in which all are interested is at stake in one municipality, the others could easily and properly lend their influence to defend it against encroachment. Such an association would be a welcome protection to the public.—Brantford *Expositor*

## Election to Fill Vacancy in County Council.

According to the *News-Record*, of Berlin, the council of the county of Waterloo has obtained the opinion of Mr. Alex. Millar, K. C., in reference to the election of county councillors to fill the vacancies caused by the deaths of two of their number. He says that legislation governing this point is not as clear as it might be, but he is of the opinion that the two vacancies cannot be filled until next general elections. Had the deaths taken place before the June session, and in time for the elections to have taken place before that session, the case would have been different, but as both died after that date, there are no provisions for filling the vacancies until the general elections next January. Section 217, of the Municipal Act, embodies the law on the question.

## The Wentworth County Council Election.

The legal objection to the election of a member of this body to fill a vacancy caused by the death of a member, referred to on page 119 of the issue of *THE WORLD* for July last, according to the *Dundas Star*, has been settled by David Patterson, the candidate declared elected, acknowledging over his own signature that the odds are against him and that John S. Fry acted wrongly in throwing out the names of Dr. Smith and Wilkie Lawrason. The following explains the whole matter:

DUNDAS, July 15th, 1901.

J. W. Lawrason, Esq., Dundas:

DEAR SIR,—On looking carefully into the matter, and on hearing the opinion of parties whose legal opinion is of great weight in my estimation, I have concluded that John S. Fry was wrongly advised and made a mistake in rejecting the nomination papers of J. W. Smith and yourself at the nomination meeting held in Dundas on June 3rd, 1901. While I realize that an injustice was done both to Dr. Smith and yourself as well to the electors, I assure you I acted in good faith in the matter. In order to remedy the mistake as far as possible and still leave this division with a representative, I give you my promise to resign my seat in December next so that a regular election to the said office of county councillor may be held in January, according to the statutes.

Yours truly,

D. PATTERSON.