

MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT

TO MUNICIPAL OFFICERS.

The CONTRACT RECORD is desirous of publishing, as far as possible, advance information regarding projected works of construction in all parts of Canada, such as sewerage and waterworks systems, railways, street pavements, public and private buildings, etc. Municipal officers would confer a favor upon the publisher by placing at our disposal particulars of such undertakings which are likely to be carried out in their vicinity, giving the name of the promoter, character of the work, and probable cost. Any information thus furnished will be greatly appreciated.

WATER SUPPLY OF BOSTON.

The state of Massachusetts has undertaken to supply the metropolitan water districts, including Boston and twenty-seven other towns and cities, with pure water from an immense lake, nine miles in length, covering forty-one hundred and ninety-five acres, three hundred and eighty-five feet above high-water mark, and with an average depth of forty-six feet. It is to take the place of what is now a busy manufacturing district in the valley of the upper Nashua river. The greater part of two towns and five villages, including churches, schools, the houses of seventeen hundred and eleven people, two large mills, and hundreds of small farms will be wiped out of existence to provide for this enormous reservoir. Its construction made necessary the passage of a law, said to be without a precedent in this country, which provides that the state shall pay to such employees of the mills at the time of the confiscation of the property a sum equal to six months' wages. The state also treats liberally people with established businesses, the value of which the seizure of land for reservoir uses completely destroyed, by a liberal allowance for accumulative or prospective damages. When all this is done, the people of Massachusetts will have a bill variously estimated at from \$30,000,000 to \$50,000,000 to pay.

AN ASSESSMENT DECISION.

A decision was rendered a few weeks ago by Judge Cumberland in the matter of assessment by a Manitoba municipality. The decision was in the case of the appeal brought by the Manitoba Mortgage and Investment Company against the municipality of Strathclair for wrongful assessment. And it has an important bearing upon the system of assessment, commonly followed by the municipalities, their contention having generally been that a uniform assessment, irrespective of the value of the different parcels of land, was legal. The effect of the decision in this case by

Judge Cumberland is, however, that this mode of assessment is illegal, and that the actual values of the lands shall be the values for assessment purposes. For example. Some of the land, assessed at \$4 an acre, was reduced by the judge to \$1 an acre. The decision in question is likely to operate as a check upon lavish expenditures by the municipalities, some of whom, in the belief that they could raise the assessment to whatever figure they saw fit, provided they did not levy beyond the 2 per cent. limit as required by the Assessment Act, did not hesitate to demand from the ratepayer a tax that became a serious burden and operated against the sale of his lands.

The Land Mortgage Companies Association, composed of the representative land lending companies in the province, chose the lands in the above-mentioned municipality for the purposes of a test case. Hence this appeal. The decision meets general approval in Manitoba. "It has the elements of common sense and justice," says the Commercial. It has been the custom in many Manitoba municipalities to assess all lands at a flat rate, regardless of their actual value. Thus the owner of the poorest piece of land in the municipality would be assessed as much per acre as those who held the most valuable lands in the district. This made a great injustice to the individual.

GOOD ROADS IN QUEBEC.

In the undeveloped rural districts of the province of Quebec an effort to improve the highways is to be stimulated by material aid from the government. The Hon. F. G. M. Dechene, Commissioner of Agriculture, announces by a letter that, being excelled by neighboring governments, the province should adopt a vigorous policy of improvement, and that the government offers to each county \$300, to be divided in sums of \$125, \$100 and \$75 between its first three municipalities who purchase improved road-repairing machines and repair at least two miles of road this year. The object is praiseworthy, and probably the improvements are extremely necessary, judging from the unprogressive character of the typical inhabitant. It is to be hoped that this bonus will be supplemented with some system of adequate instruction and supervision of the work, which is more necessary than the cost or amount to make the improvement effective.

STREET MACADAMIZING IN EASTON, PA.

Under a system introduced in 1896 by Mr. Harrison R. Fehr, City Engineer of Easton, Pa., streets there are macadamized as follows. The roadway is excavated and graded to a depth of 10 inches below the grade of the finished pavement, and after being well compacted with a five-ton horse-roller, is covered with a 5-inch layer of crushed limestone. This limestone layer after being sprinkled is well rolled, and then a 5-inch layer of gravel is put on. This gravel layer is also sprinkled and rolled, the amount of rolling being estimated at 10 hours for each 1,000 square yards of surface. Under this system in 1896 about three miles of streets were macadamized at a cost of \$8,410, the price per square yard ranging from 13½ to 48 cents. For light traffic this makes a smooth and fairly satisfactory road, but the gravel used, known locally as the Glendon, is of such a quality as to render it a complete failure under a heavy traffic, and Mr. Fehr recommends that the 5 inches of gravel be replaced by 4 inches of trap rock on all new work. He also advises that the present method of repairing streets by throwing crushed stone on a hard surface and allowing them to scatter about the street be abandoned and the old surface be picked up slightly before the new material is spread.

ONTARIO HEALTH OFFICERS.

The annual meeting of the Association of Medical Health Officers was held in Toronto on Monday and Tuesday last. Among the papers presented were the following: "The Propagation and Prevention of Rabies," by Dr. J. J. Cassidy; "Water Supply," by Dr. Hall of Chatham, and "Treatment of Sewage," by W. F. Van Buskirk, Stratford, and others.

Officers of the association were elected as follows. President, Dr. McCrimmon, Palermo; vice-president, Dr. Cassidy, Toronto; second vice president, Dr. Hutchinson, London; secretary-treasurer, Mr. J. J. Mackenzie, Toronto; executive committee, Dr. Holmes, Goderich; Dr. McLeay, Waterford; Dr. Wardlaw, Galt; Prof. Shuttleworth, Toronto; Mr. Van Buskirk, Stratford. Much of the afternoon of the second day was taken up in suggesting amendments to the Medical Health Act. The effect of these amendments would in all cases be to facilitate the work and augment the authority of health officers. The principal changes desired are, first, to oblige householders and attending physicians to notify the health office as soon as they have reason to believe contagious disease is present, and, second, to confine to the health officer the authority to say when a person or house may be free of quarantine regulations.

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