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## STREET RAILWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

**T**HE conference between the management of the Montreal Street Railway Company and the special

committee of the City Council, has not brought out anything definite in the way of a plan for relieving the congestion of the streets and preventing the overcrowding of the cars. The City's schedule of improvements is turned down flatly and decisively on the ground that it would involve an expenditure of \$3,000,000 and a yearly maintenance of \$600,000 and that ninety per cent. of the extensions would not pay for five years or more. The new President, Mr. Robert, hints pretty broadly that any radical scheme of extension must be contingent upon a new contract, and the City Council is not disposed to take the question of a new contract into consideration at the present time. Mr. Robert does not go so far as to say that no improvements will be made until a new contract is granted, but he declares in so many words that to carry out the wishes and the needs of the city, the contract must be upon a new basis. The Company will "do what it can" under the present contract, but Mr. Robert does not hold out any great hope that this will be any more than the Company is bound to do under the contract. Even the St. James Street tunnel, for which it obtained legislative sanction, is still held to be matter for future consideration. The only definite pledge given is to study the conditions, which is about equal to a Government's promise to give something its most careful consideration. That the City's proposition includes many unreasonable suggestions especially from the new wards is altogether probable. Wards on the ragged edge of the City are very apt to want car lines not to serve existing traffic needs, but to create traffic and boom building lots. There are two sides to every question, or it would not be a question. This one is no exception to the rule. There is at the same time, no doubt that many improvements in Street Railway equipment are a pressing necessity, and should receive attention.

**WHAT** the City of Montreal seems to need just now about as much as anything is a superintending engineer or engineer in chief, who would have a general supervision over all the departments, having to do with public works. A fearful lot of money is

wasted through one department undoing the work of another. Short of some such arrangement as we suggest there seems to be no hope of preventing the Water Department or some other department constantly destroying the work of the Road Department. Take for instance the case of the new intercepting sewer on Sherbrooke Street. At a cost of about a million dollars, a tunnel has been dug from one end of the city to the other, to a depth of about fifteen feet, and it was nobody's business to realize that here was an opportunity for putting wires underground at a minimum cost. Next year the street will be paved, and the following year in all probability the paving will be ripped up, for some unconsidered water pipe, gas pipe, or wire conduit. Some one capable and careful should be held responsible for all such enormous leaks. The existing departments could maintain their independence. All that the new official would have to do, subject to the City Council and Board of Control, would be to ensure harmony of action. He would have to take a comprehensive view of the whole city, and all its public works; and his salary would be a good investment.

## REDISTRIBUTION OF WARDS.

**S**PEAKING generally, gerrymanders are to be regarded with suspicion; but the proposed redistribution of the aldermanic representation has unquestionably much to recommend it. The idea of a small number of big districts, each with three, four or five aldermen is an excellent one. This is the only system under which minorities can get any representation at all. Even more important is the fact that it would make it possible to greatly reduce the size of the City Council; a consummation devoutly to be wished.

## FIRE ALARM SYSTEM.

**T**HE placing of the Montreal fire alarm system under the control of the Chief of the Fire Brigade, seems such an obvious thing to do, that it is a wonder it was not done long ago. Nobody has a more intimate knowledge of the practical working and defects of the alarm system, than the firemen; nobody has a more direct interest in its successful operation; and nobody suffers more from false alarms. Naturally the system requires the superintendence of an expert electrician; and this responsibility still rests with Superintendent Ferns.