

The Municipal World

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

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THE MUNICIPAL WORLD,

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ST. THOMAS, MAY 1, 1896.

Many different opinions have been expressed in reference to the new county council bill, some going so far as to say that it was entirely unnecessary. As far as we can learn, this feeling is confined principally to representatives in the present councils whose chances of election in a district are doubtful, and to the small village municipalities which, in all cases, will be merged into adjoining districts for county council purposes. The idea of the new bill is that every member of the county council should be a representative of the whole county, and although some municipalities may not have a resident representative, we do not think they will have cause for complaint. The bill is a legislative response to public opinion, and the failure of the present county councils to meet the requirement of existing conditions.

A few years ago a special committee was appointed to consider the reform of the county council system. The great majority of those interested at that time were in favor of the reduction, and that legislation on the subject should be compulsory.

In 1892 the Legislature submitted a draft bill to the councils of the province, and many valuable suggestions were received. During the past ten years as many different bills, dealing with this question, have been introduced, so that the new bill is not a piece of hasty legislation, but an important enactment which has been forced upon the Government after years of careful consideration.

It is not right to condemn a new measure until it has been thoroughly tried. If it is not found to work satisfactorily it

can be repealed or amended, and in this way it will no doubt receive as much attention as the other municipal acts.

* * *

The division of the counties into districts will soon occupy the attention of all. Every municipal officer should take an interest in securing the best possible division of his county. Broad and independent ideas should take the place of the petty spirit of localism and prejudice. The dual vote with the power of any voter to cast both votes for one candidate will protect the smaller municipalities, and enable them or other minorities to secure a proportionate representation whether the minority be that of locality, politics or creed.

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The election of county councils by districts may have a deteriorating effect on the membership of local councils, many of whose members now look forward to the periodical holiday at the county town as the only pleasant duty they have to perform. We would suggest that, notwithstanding this, the efficiency of the local councils may be improved by electing councillors for a term of years, to retire in rotation.

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The preparation of voters' and statute labor lists will occupy the attention of most clerks during this month. Although many prefer to re-write the voters' list each year from the assessment roll, we recommend the correction of a copy of last year's list, to save time and avoid errors. This is quite a consideration with the clerks of the larger municipalities.

We have, at different times, published communications from clerks who have systems of their own for the preparation of the voters' list, but we have yet to see a plan that we would care to adopt in preference to the one we recommend.

In the preparation of the statute labor lists some knowledge of the situation of the roads of the township and of the various divisions is necessary; no suggestions that we could make would be of any assistance. A map of the township, showing the roads in the statute labor divisions, is most desirable, and no matter how the work is done, it generally occupies more time than the preparation of the voters' lists.

The collector's roll can very properly be commenced as soon as the court of revision of the assessment roll is over. The first duty of every township clerk should be to check the assessment roll and see that each lot is in the proper school section. The total of each section should then be ascertained. Our plan of doing this work is to transfer on separate sheets the assessed value of each lot in the different school sections, leaving a space between the columns for entering the school rates before transferring them to the collector's roll. Some clerks prefer to prepare their collector's roll according

to school sections but the great majority of the clerks make a copy of so much of the assessments as is required for the information of the collector and enter the school rates in the manner we have referred to.

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It is the duty of the county councils this year to equalize the rolls of 1895, and when apportioning the county rates for 1896 to use as a basis the rolls of 1894 as equalized by the council of 1895. The valuation of assessed property is to a great extent a matter of opinion, and a just relation is needed so that county rates may be levied in an equitable manner in all local municipalities. This is left to the judgment of those who are to conduct the equalization, and who, owing to their local knowledge, are best qualified. The equalization report, as adopted, should be confirmed in the form of a by-law. If any municipality is dissatisfied they may appeal from the decision of the council within ten days.

Courts of Revision.

After the return of the assessment rolls, which should be on the first of May, or as soon after as possible, all parties assessed have fourteen days in which to enter appeals against their assessment. The first requirement of a valid assessment is that the assessor in assessing must leave for every person named on the roll as resident or having a place of business within the municipality, and send by post to every non-resident who has his name on the roll, a notice of the sum for which his real and personal property has been assessed. After the expiration of the fourteen days from the date of the return of the roll the clerk is required to give ten days' notice of the date on which the court of revision will hold its first sitting, and also to leave at the residence of the assessor a list of all complaints made against his roll and notify all persons in respect to whom a complaint has been made. When considering other appeals the members of the court may find that the assessor has, in their opinion, made errors in the assessment. For the purpose of correcting these they may extend the time for making complaints ten days later. All persons whose assessment they intend to consider should receive six days' notice, and for this purpose the assessor may be the complainant.

THE GAME LAWS.—The killing of deer is prohibited. A license to hunt must be obtained, the fee for which is to be \$2. Attached to the license are to be two shipping coupons, one of which is attached to each deer or part of deer on shipment, and cancelled by the carrier on arrival at point of destination. Although the hunting season commences on 20th October, no venison is to be shipped until 1st November, and not without a coupon attached. Counties or parts of counties may be set apart in which it shall be unlawful to kill deer. Settlers are prohibited from shooting moose, elk, reindeer or cariboo before 1st November, 1900.

BAKESHOPS.—Provision has been made for inspection and regulation of such.