

The Municipal World

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THE MUNICIPAL WORLD,

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ST. THOMAS JUNE 1, 1901.

Kingston council proposes to tax Chinese laundrymen \$50 each.

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Ottawa has \$400,000 back taxes standing on its books. There is an opening for a good live collector.

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The rate of taxation for the town of Welland for the current year, has been fixed at 23½ mills on the dollar.

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A plebiscite will be taken of the people of Renfrew County, on the question of building a House of Industry of their own, at the next municipal elections.

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Corporations in the habit of allowing roads and sidewalks to remain out of repair will do well to note the fact that the township of Caledon has had to pay Mrs. McEnany \$760 damages and about \$900 costs, for injuries sustained by a defective highway.—Cardwell *Sentinel*.

* * *

Auditor F. H. Macpherson, as a result of an official audit of the books of the town of Amherstburg, recently found the collector short in his accounts in the sum of \$1,800. At a meeting of the town council held in April, a settlement was effected with the collector and his bondsmen, the council accepting \$901 in full payment of the shortage.

* * *

A riot has occurred at Bienne, in the Valley of Chamonix, owing to the municipal council selling land on which the people had enjoyed grazing rights. The inhabitants tried to set fire to the town hall, and a fierce conflict ensued between the rioters and the gendarmes. Ten persons were killed and fifteen injured.

Important Official.

At a meeting of the council of Smith's Falls, recently, C. Williscraft was appointed water rates collector, inspector of sewer and water works connections, general overseer of the water system, bookkeeper, tax collector, canvasser for water subscribers, etc. His office is in the council chamber, town hall, and adjoining the residence of Chief McGowan. His hours are from 9 a. m. till 11 p. m. and at the call of the public between times.

The town of Barrie has a council of seven members, selected, like Peterborough's, from the whole town. The people are dissatisfied with the plan and are about to petition the legislature for permission to return to the ward system and larger council.

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In a township in Western Ontario, according to the report of the auditors for the current year, the collector of taxes for 1896 and 1897 still owes the township \$296.27; the collector for 1898, \$495.90 and the collector for 1899, \$1,249.79. At a recent meeting of the council, a resolution was passed with a view to obtaining payment of these arrearages. A proper system of book-keeping, checking and auditing would have led to an earlier discovery of the defaulting, and rendered its occurrence practically impossible.

* * *

The Eastern Ontario Good Roads Association is making preparations to start their "good roads" train in about two weeks. This will consist of several carloads of road machinery, which will be taken to different points, and in the hands of experts be used to construct samples of proper highways. The Grand Trunk, Canadian Pacific, Canada Atlantic and Ottawa & New York Railways have agreed to assist the movement by giving transportation. The campaign, which is purely for educational purposes, will embrace the seven counties, and will last fourteen weeks.—Hawkesbury *Standard*.

* * *

Some of the municipal corporations of Leeds and Grenville are this year, going to do their road work without statute labor. Most of the farmers in the townships where the road work is to be done under the supervision of commissioners, without recourse to the unsatisfactory method of statute labor, are confident that the work, when performed, will be better done and at no greater cost than ever before. There are a few farmers, however, who cling to the idea that the roads could be kept in repair more cheaply by resorting to the system of statute labor. We believe that one year's experience will convert this latter class of farmers to believers in the efficacy of the abolition of statute labor.

In two instances of late our attention has been called to the fact that on the return of his roll, and apparent completion of his duties, the council has cancelled and delivered up his bond to the collector and his sureties and released them from all further obligation thereunder. This course is wholly at variance with the legal duty of the council in the matter. As soon as the collector delivers up his bond to the council and it is accepted, it becomes a record of the municipality and should be retained by the clerk as such, for all time to come. If the collector has collected and paid over all moneys on his roll, and otherwise faithfully performed the duties of his office, the retention of the bond by the municipality can prejudice no one, on the other hand, frequently it is discovered, long after the return of his roll, that the collector is a defaulter—wilfully or otherwise—and if the bond has been delivered up and cancelled, the strong probability is that the corporation will be the ultimate loser.

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In a letter published in a recent issue of the *Ottawa Journal*, Mr. D. O'Connor, K. C., comments on the palpable unfairness of the present method of assessing and collecting from the ratepayers of municipalities, the cost of making and maintaining streets and sidewalks. Amongst other things, he says:

"The unfortunate pedestrian class which pay for nearly the whole of the cost of the sidewalk, will also have to pay in the same proportion for the roadbed which they very seldom use, and what use they make of it does no injury. This is not just or equitable. If the pedestrian ratepayer pays for the sidewalk which he uses, why should not the owners of horses and vehicles be made to pay in the same, or nearly the same, proportion for the roadbed which they exclusively use and wear out?"

I think they should, and the question is how best to reach them. My idea is that a special tax should be imposed on every horse and vehicle used in the city, to create a fund for the maintenance of our roads. The amount so collected to form a separate fund, the corporation to have no power to divert it to other uses."

He cites the city of Montreal as an instance, where the system he suggests has been introduced and tested, with a considerable degree of success and satisfaction.

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Glasgow, Scotland, the mother of municipal control, is among the few municipalities that have made a success of running city industries. The city provides its own gas, electricity and street car service, and it is now talking of taking control of the dispensing of the intoxicating liquors drunk by its people, and the municipal saloon is freely advocated. A committee appointed to consider the question has reported in favor of the experiment.