

EXTRACTS FROM THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
ONTARIO ASSESSMENT COMMISSION

*First meeting 30th October, 1900, and daily thereafter
until the conclusion of the enquiry*

Mr. A. E. KEMP, M.P., President of the Toronto Board of Trade. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Assessment Commission: I am here with my colleagues to represent the interests and the membership of the Toronto Board of Trade. There are three or four other gentlemen who would also like to speak in reference to this question of personalty tax. I suppose, in speaking for the membership of the Toronto Board of Trade, I speak also largely for the commercial interests not only of this city but of other places in this Province, other incorporated towns and other cities. We are here to represent those who do not seek to hide their capital, but whose endeavour it is to invest money in mercantile and industrial pursuits. I think I may say that those of us who represent the Board of Trade of Toronto will not disagree with what our friends have said, who have spoken on this subject, so far as the evils and inconsistencies of the personalty tax are concerned. I think we will pretty much agree with reference to that part. We will, however, differ from them with respect to remedies. They take the view that the remedy should be to tax everything in sight and not bother with that which can be hidden. Now, I submit that if that principle were carried out in its entirety that in a very short time there would be very little in sight left to tax, that the merchandise and plant which is in sight would go elsewhere, or would be confiscated; that real estate would depreciate in value, because places that were occupied would have broken windows, and they would be vacant, and they would rot. I think it would be a great step in the wrong direction. I am well satisfied that such a law could not be enforced. In discussing it, I think the gentlemen have not taken into consideration the important question—that of the law of supply and demand and competition. It would lead to a condition of affairs more strict and stringent than the conditions which exist in the city of Paris in France, which is surrounded by a wall, and in addition to the Government revenue the civic authorities also get a revenue, and demand to inquire into the values of all kinds of merchandise that comes into the city of Paris. All of us who have had practical experience know what that means. We would have to shut this city up by a wall. We would have to have officers to watch the train loads of merchandise that come in here. If a man brought in a train load of nails—the profit I think on a keg of nails to a wholesale merchant is so small that he considers himself pretty well off if he makes a profit of five cents—if the rate of taxation in Toronto was about twenty mills on the dollar—it is near that figure now—it would take more than the merchant's profit on the nails which he brought in here to pay this tax. (Hear, hear). Now, we are advised this morning that inasmuch as we receive municipal protection that that is the excuse for taxing everything in sight. That is the reason why the argument is advanced. The protection referred to by Mr. MacKelcan is fire protection and waterworks; that was the only kind of protection he referred to in discussing the personalty question—the question of police protection arose in refer-