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ST. THOMAS, FEBRUARY 1, 1894.

The addresses delivered by many of the newly elected mayors and Reeves throughout the province at the opening sessions of the various councils show that these chief executive officers take a deep interest in their various municipalities.

The numerous reforms proposed, together with suggestions as to the proper enforcement of municipal by-laws, the passage of new by-laws in the interests of the citizens, the more important being those relating to public works, such as waterworks, sewage and improvement of streets, all go to show that Ontario municipalities are keeping up with the times. The growing desire for improvements of this class is suggestive of increasing intelligence and a higher regard for the public welfare.

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The article on direct municipal taxation concluded in this issue draws our attention to some municipal expenditures which may be avoided by doing away with the county courts and quarter sessions. This would materially lessen the fees payable by counties to the officials referred to, and probably result in greater benefits than many of the plans suggested. The administration of justice expenses being payable in part by counties and the Government, many are not in a position to suggest what should be done to decrease the municipal expenditure. Let the discussion continue, and probably in the near future some radical changes will be the result.

The question of election of county officials and the fee system is receiving considerable attention from the provincial press. The *St. Thomas Journal* states:

What we urge as necessary in the public interest is a thorough reform of the civil service, so far as it relates to the class of public servants now known as county officials. The present system is not a business-like system. Those sound business principles which we generally apply in the management of our schools and of our civic affairs are not applied to the branch of the public service under consideration. As the outgrowth of years of development of the country, we have too many officials, enjoying too large salaries. There are certain of these offices which could be safely amalgamated, one efficient man, with the necessary clerical assistance, doing the work as well as two or three now perform it, and at a considerable saving to the public.

The Provincial Prisoners' Reform Association, in a circular recently distributed, said, in reference to care of the poor in counties: "The establishment of poorhouses is in the hands of the county councils, and as an encouragement to the counties, the Ontario Government has offered a bonus of \$4,000 for the erection of every such poorhouse. We are very sorry to learn that in many of our rich counties the jails are used as poorhouses and that the aged destitute poor, however respectable, are compelled to end their days in association with the degraded, the vicious, and the criminal. This is out of harmony with the spirit of the age, with common humanity, and with the dictates of religion.

Referring to this blot upon our county municipal system, the inspector of prisons for Ontario, in his annual report for 1891, makes use of the following language, which, to our mind, is not at all too severe:

"It is a disgrace to the people of this province to allow their aged poor, who have committed no crime against the laws of the land, to be incarcerated within prison walls, clothed in the distinguishing garb of prison criminals. In most cases, these people have lived honest and respectable lives, and perhaps, have reared and educated large families, but from circumstances over which they had no control, have lost children, property and health. It is inhuman, unchristian, and unpatriotic, and should be prevented by most stringent legislation, if not immediately remedied by the authorities of the various counties.

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The *Globe* recently published a statement in reference to the loose manner in which the affairs of the township of York have been conducted in the past. Charges of misappropriation of sinking fund, excessive allowances to members of the council and other illegal expenditures of considerable extent are said to be sufficient to demand an official investigation, which the council for 1894 have ordered. In conclusion the article states:

This, then, is the case of York township. The lessons which it may contain for other municipalities are not new, but in some rural localities it may serve to emphasize the necessity for closer scrutiny, even when councillors cannot be suspected of "overdrafts," and of greater care and method in the keeping of municipal finances. It has been suggested in connection with this subject, that the provincial legislature should exercise a supervision over municipal sinking funds and finances generally. The legislature is in the habit of imposing strict conditions and regulations upon municipalities that come to it for power to consolidate their debenture debt; but there is no system of examination or inspection by which it can be insured that these conditions and sinking funds are being properly attended to. It is suggested, therefore, that a system of provincial inspection would find a useful and valuable work to perform.

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A majority of the ratepayers of the city of Chatham voted in favor of a by-law to make all improvements to streets, etc., on the frontage plan.

As we have before announced, a meeting for the formation of the Provincial Good Roads Association will be held in Toronto on the 9th February. It is to be hoped that at least every county will appoint a delegate, and that the meeting will be representative.

We consider it very necessary that the rural municipalities should be well represented, as they are more particularly interested in the movement, and will, in any event, be the authorities controlling the expenditure of the money necessary to make the desired improvements on whatever plan may be proposed.

One of the most important duties of the association should be the appointment of a strong executive committee that will be representative. On this, municipal delegates should be given the preference. The executive committee should wait upon the government with a view to having such legislation enacted at the approaching session as will assist in carrying out the aims and objects of the association. The government should also be requested to provide for the expenses of the association for future meetings.

It is not to be expected that an association of this description can be carried on in the public interests without a contribution from some source sufficient to pay the actual expenses. This, for the first meeting, has been assumed by the Canadian Institute, merely for the purpose of bringing about the meeting, which, from discussions through the press, appeared to be desirable in the interests of the province as a whole. Further than this, the Institute and its officers have no interest in the movement, other than as private citizens.

The proceedings of the meeting after the election of officers will consist in the reading of papers, containing the experience of practical roadmakers, together with plans, specifications and estimates showing the cost of improved roadways, with suggestions as to how money should be raised by municipalities desiring to make improvements, and also a comparative statement showing the increased cost and the resulting benefits as compared with the present system of roadmaking.

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The mayor of Chatham, in his opening address at the first meeting of the council, stated:

I would strongly recommend, that such of our officers as are compelled to furnish bonds to the corporation, should, in their own interests, and for the complete safety of the municipality, obtain their security from one of the Guarantee Companies doing business in Canada, similar to the methods adopted by our banking institutions.

It would be only right if every municipality furnished guarantee bonds for its officers, the improved systems of accounting required to be adopted before these companies will furnish the securities, should more than repay municipalities for the expense, to say nothing of the additional security.