

Rochester's Epidemic of Fires.

Rochester, N.Y., was on Tuesday visited by a fire which assumed almost conflagration proportions. Buffalo and Syracuse fire brigades were called upon for aid, but the fire was fortunately got under control before their arrival. About fifty residences were destroyed in addition to the large Palmer Building, and several churches. The loss is estimated at well on to half a million dollars.

Because of the numerous fires which Rochester has had lately—many of apparently incendiary origin—the Board of Fire Underwriters has raised rates there on buildings, except dwellings, 25 cents on every \$100. The increase went into effect this week.

The county authorities have undertaken an investigation into about sixty recent fires, and between 300 and 400 witnesses are to be examined. Were it not for this investigation, all of the cases would have to be submitted to the May Grand Jury for consideration, as the insurance companies insist that the authorities probe them to the bottom. It is stated that after all the cases have been investigated the evidence will be carefully gone over; those cases where the evidence tends to show some basis for a direct charge against an individual will be submitted to the Grand Jury for its action while the others will be dropped.

Ontario Legislature.

At the prorogation of the Ontario Legislature, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was able to allude to a remarkable number of useful and practical enactments which have become law during a short and active session. The Ontario House has a reputation for businesslike, common sense methods. In the Speech from the Throne, His Honour referred to the difficulties that have arisen through federal interference with provincial jurisdiction and suggested that a permanent understanding be arrived at, to prevent a recurrence of these troubles. The grievance is by no means a new one, and Ontario has been remarkably successful for many years in asserting provincial rights before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It will be difficult to devise any scheme that will altogether avert occasional conflicts of this kind.

The Pole Nuisance.

The Fire Underwriters have sent a formal protest to the City Council against the erection of any more poles in the streets of Montreal. There is not a man in Montreal who does not recognize that from every point of view, the multiplicity of poles is becoming an intolerable nuisance. They disfigure our most important streets and they great-

ly increase the fire hazard. Unquestionably the Legislature is primarily to blame for the existing state of affairs. While giving the Corporation of Montreal theoretical control of its own streets, it freely gives to other corporations the right to invade the streets and ignore the municipal authority. Inconsistency is the key-note of provincial legislation regarding Montreal, one act conferring powers notwithstanding anything in another act withholding them.

Grand Trunk's Half-Year.

The Grand Trunk Railway Company's recently published half-yearly report shows gross earnings of £3,382,841 as against £3,763,246 during the previous half-year; working expenses were £2,422,413, against £2,710,934; net earnings, £960,427, against £1,052,312; further net revenue credits bring the total to £1,094,312. The total amount available for dividend purposes was £443,078. A half-year's dividend was recommended on the 4 per cent. guaranteed stock, 5 per cent. for the full year on first preference, and 2½ per cent. on second preference; £12,226 was carried forward as amount at debit for engine and car renewal, and suspense account, £544,149.

The Canada Atlantic net revenue deficiency was £43,378, against £60,365 for the previous half-year. Grand Trunk Western, however, had net earnings of £123,510, against £104,955. Net revenue charges were £99,187, so there was a net revenue credit of £24,323, to be carried forward. The Detroit, Grand Haven had a net revenue surplus of £3,139, against £5,785 the previous half-year.

With returning business activity throughout Canada, the Grand Trunk outlook would seem now to be steadily improving.

An Automobile Tax.

The New York Legislature is considering a bill to tax automobiles for road-making purposes, it being assumed rather than estimated that the machines have damaged the roads in the State to the extent of \$1,500,000. There is no reason why the automobile owners should not contribute their fair share towards the cost of the roads they use and wear out. Nor is there any good reason in law or justice why they should pay the whole cost. It is admitted that the automobiles and the roads are not suited to each other, and this is one of the troubles that will have to be put right. Whether we like automobiles or not, we may as well recognize that they have come to stay as surely as the telephone has come to stay and we must make the best of them. If they lead to a general improvement of the roads, it will be some compensation for the mischief and annoyance they cause to the general public.