

Mr. Forman, the Assessment Commissioner, of the city of Toronto, in his annual report for the year 1912, gives certain estimates of the effect upon the taxation of various classes of property in the city of Toronto in the event of a reduction in the assessment upon improvements, business and income of 25%. He estimates the assessed value on the home of the average artisan at \$2,400, land \$600 and building \$1,800. On this valuation, with a tax rate of 18 mills on the dollar, the taxes would amount to \$43.20. With 25% off building, the workman would save \$2.78 on his annual tax bill. Without questioning the basis upon which Mr. Forman has proceeded, I have carried his calculations two or three steps further, and I find that if in the city of Toronto the assessment on buildings were reduced 50%, it would mean an actual saving in taxes to the workingman of \$6.60, if we take 75% off the buildings, it would mean a saving in taxes of \$12.01; if we took 100% off the building, as they have in a number of western cities in Canada, it would mean a saving of \$20.37, or would cut his taxes practically in half.

In view of the present high cost of living, what a boon that would be to every working man. But this would not be the largest benefit which such a system of taxation would bring to him: The largest benefit would be that the increased burden put upon unoccupied land would tend to force that land into the market for sale at prices which would be within the reach of the working man; or would force the owners to improve it, which would increase the housing accommodation so urgently needed in the city of Toronto. For the Medical Health Officer has told us that there are ten thousand new houses needed in the city of Toronto at the present time to provide proper housing accommodation for our citizens.

INCREMENT TAX

I am not sanguine enough, Mr. Speaker, to think that simply local option in taxation would solve the whole difficulty in land speculation or high-priced land, but I am sanguine enough to think that it would be a valuable contribution toward the solution of this problem. But speaking for myself, I believe we should go further and in addition to permitting the reduction of taxation on improvements, I believe the time must come—I believe, in the public interest, the sooner it comes the better—when the community will take for public purposes a direct percentage of the increased selling value of building land which the community has itself created. They are doing it in Great