

News of Municipal Finance

**Alberta and British Columbia Municipalities Seeking New Sources of Revenue—
Montreal Tax Collections Proceeding Satisfactorily—Redemption of Calgary Tax
Sale Property Produced Poor Results—Athabasca Wants to Realize on Arrears**

SOME western municipalities, notably in Alberta and British Columbia, are endeavoring to obtain permission from their respective provincial governments to increase their revenue. At the Union of Alberta Municipalities' convention, which is to be held next week, a special committee will submit a resolution, asking the province to permit cities and towns to collect considerable of the taxes paid to the government to be placed to their own account. The resolution will ask that the municipalities be allowed 50 per cent. of the automobile licenses collected, 50 per cent. of the police court fines which the government collects, and that they be granted the right to collect a 5 per cent. increment tax in addition to the 5 per cent. collected by the government at the present time.

Victoria, B.C., which has repeatedly brought before the provincial government the question of new sources of revenue for the city, but without success, will again demand that the government take some action in this matter. It is not the council's intention to exactly increase the civic revenue, but to relieve the present taxpayers, who are feeling the strain, by drawing on other sources. Alderman Sargent, chairman of the finance committee, has made the following comment in regard to the situation:—

"Some people have criticized us for our tax sale policy. I think it has been the best we could devise under the conditions we have had to accept, but, apart from its other merits, I believe that the tax sale we have just concluded will be of value in convincing the government that the municipalities cannot any longer be neglected. This tax sale, which resulted in the city having to take over some 600 lots, which will not be revenue-producing until they are sold, has been a demonstration that there has got to be a big revision in the tax system. It has conclusively proved that taxation of land has been overdone, that the property-holders are overburdened, and that the onus of maintaining the financial obligations of the city rests unfairly on the shoulders of one section of the population, namely, those who pay the taxes on land and improvements. Long ago we reached the parting of the ways when the government would have been justified in making it possible for the municipalities to extend their scope of taxation and draw upon new sources of income. I feel that we are now close to the point when there simply must be a revision, and I am hoping that this tax sale will make as strong an impression on members of the government as it has on myself and other members of the council."

Vancouver will shortly be engaged in finding out just where they can draw more revenue from, and how much they can draw. It is understood that a committee of fifteen has been formed, and will be assisted in their efforts by Dr. H. Brittain, of the Bureau of Municipal Research, Toronto.

Should these municipalities be able to convince the governments of their rights, they will be in a position to greatly strengthen themselves, and will also be able to reduce their debt and improve their credit standing in the money markets. The provincial governments, it is hoped, will do all in their power to help them achieve this end.

Edmonton, Alta.—City utility departments show a net loss of \$122,895 for the nine months ended September 30th. City officials realize the seriousness of the situation and are now considering an adjustment.

Vancouver, B.C.—The city will purchase \$50,000 of its own 1933 debentures, which carry 7 per cent. interest. To make the purchase, some unexpended by-law balances now in the bank and drawing only 4 per cent. interest will be used.

Brockville, Ont.—According to the report of the assessors, the city's assessment for 1921 reaches a total of \$7,078,705, an increase of \$461,045 over this year. The in-

crease is largely in land improvements and \$75,000 income assessments.

Athabasca, Alta.—The municipality has applied for action by the commission in regard to twenty subdivisions on which there are arrears of taxes amounting now to some \$70,000. A full investigation into the standing of each of the subdivisions will be made by Mr. Martin, commissioner. He will then give decisions either in the direction of reducing the tax arrears or cancelling the subdivisions, the effect of the former action being that the municipality will be able in many cases to realize on the delinquent property by putting it up for tax sale.

Calgary, Alta.—The city is in a rather unfortunate position regarding property redemptions. Less than \$150,000 out of approximately \$1,500,000 had been received by the city treasurer's department on property redemptions up till October 22nd, the last day set by law for the redemption of property included in the tax sale lists.

This means that property upon which nearly a million and a half of taxes is due will go under the hammer at the tax sale on December 4th, or has already passed into the hands of the city by virtue of failure to pay tax sale dues. It means that four million dollars' worth of property is likely to come into possession of the city, some of which is very valuable vacant property in the heart of the city, property which, in the boom days, would have sold for anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000 a foot. The policy of the commissioners is to retain valuable property until something like value can be received for it, but the problem of meeting the loss in revenue from taxes on this property will be one to be faced by the incoming council, though some effort has been made by this year's finance committee to make provisions for new revenues as far as possible.

Montreal, Que.—Assistant Treasurer Collins has given out some interesting figures regarding tax collections. On the 1919 arrears the amount collected was \$2,397,838; on the 1918 arrears, the amount collected was \$1,577,584. There is a big falling off for the collection of the 1917 arrears, the sum being \$33,724; on the 1916 arrears the amount collected was \$7,530, and on the 1915 arrears the collections amounted to \$2,027.

Despite the heavy collections on the 1918 arrears, there was still due on October 20th last, for the year in question, the sum of \$469,625. In October, 1919, the amount due for the property taxes of 1917 was \$303,878. The amounts outstanding for 1918 are composed largely of contested assessments, and also the taxes due on properties sold by the sheriff at the recent sales, for which returns have not yet been made.

At the present time the collections on the 1920 tax rolls continue to come in well, and these collections of the realty tax will continue, as in past years, to be paid in at the city hall in fairly large amounts. On October 20th, 1920, the amount outstanding in the realty tax for 1919 was \$2,357,171, and on October 20th, 1919, the amount due on the same tax was \$2,603,274 on the 1918 accounts, by which it may be seen that the collection of this revenue is more satisfactory than it was a year ago.

COBALT ORE SHIPMENTS

The following are the shipments of ore, in pounds, from Cobalt Station for the week ended October 29th:—

Dominion Reduction Co., 65,000; Temiskaming Mining Co., 106,857; Coniagas Mine, 60,619; O'Brien Mine, 64,033; Mining Corporation of Canada, 66,938; McKinley-Darragh, 94,496; H. F. Strong, 60,000; Nipissing Mine, 279,680. Total, 897,623. The total since January 1st is 23,261,620 pounds, or 11,630.8 tons.