

# The Canadian Engineer

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## THE TORONTO HYDRO-ELECTRIC COMMISSION.

The method of handling departments of municipal utilities by means of a commission has, during the past few years, received comment, both favorable and otherwise. There is little doubt that a commission composed of capable, energetic men is a most excellent instrument for directing and supervising the manifold items incidental to the carrying on of large undertakings. If a commission, however, is not well balanced and composed of individuals who have the time necessary to follow closely the daily routine, adjusting as occasion requires the work of the subordinates new vitality and enthusiasm, the work of such commission will not be the most efficient. Efficiency in these days of hurry is a prime requisite. The outlays of capital used in large constructional undertakings demand that work should be expedited as quickly as is consistent with a due regard for good construction, in order that interest charges may not accumulate, and that the period of income may quickly arrive.

The Toronto Hydro-Electric Commission was formed by act of the Ontario Provincial Legislature, and is composed of three men, one appointed by the Hydro-Electric Commission of Ontario, one by the city of Toronto, and the third the mayor of Toronto ex-officio. The work laid out for this commission is a large one, and it has only begun. Before it is finished there will have been a total expenditure of four and a half millions, of which only two millions have been already used. As we have noted in these columns before, the Toronto Hydro-Electric System has a strong competitor in the Toronto Electric Light Company. This company, with its affiliated interests, has the control of a large generating plant of its own at Niagara Falls, and it has its own transmission system. Its present heavy contracts with the Toronto Street Railway and other companies, place it in an enviable position for a strenuous fight. Every day the Toronto Electric Light Company is taking on a new business which the Hydro-Electric, if it were in a better and more advanced position, could handle. Every contract the Hydro-Electric loses means a lengthening of the time before the system will be on a paying basis, which time must come before there is a lowering of rates.

The mayor is too busy a man to be saddled with the duties incidental to the work of the commission. Who would ask that the mayor be a member of the Harbor Commission or of the York County Good Roads Commission? Yet the duties of this body are far more onerous than either the Harbor or the Good Roads Commission. The mayor's duties are too many and too varied to force him to act on this body. Mayor Geary would be justified under the circumstances in withdrawing from the commission and appointing another who will devote his whole time to the work. By an amendment to the Act this could easily be done. Mayor Geary has proved himself in the past to be too broad and big a man to stand in the way of efficiency in the handling of the city's work, and we feel sure that sooner or later he will come to the conclusion that the interests of the city will be best served by an amendment to the Act as it now stands.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING COSTS.

The engineer of the present, to give the maximum of efficiency to his clients for expenditures on new work, must have a thorough knowledge, not only of the theoretic part of the design, but also of the methods of con-