

Editorial

NEW ESTIMATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE TORONTO-HAMILTON HIGHWAY.

Going into the history of the question as far back as the inception of this great work in the autumn of 1914, we find that the main object of the undertaking was at that time to give work to thousands of unemployed who otherwise would, to a greater or less extent, become a public charge. It was also thought that the work, which had been talked of for some time, could be done much cheaper at this stage owing to the abundance of labor. The latter, however, proved a fallacy, as the cost of labor, which was expected would have been less than 20 cents an hour, amounted to much over this.

The type of construction chosen originally was a two-course concrete centre, 16 feet wide, with shoulders of stone 4 feet wide on each side, making 24 feet of roadway.

The estimate of \$600,000, as called for in the original pamphlet, did not take into account expenses of management, and plainly stated so. This item has been estimated at \$56,000. In reference to the original pamphlet, one also notes the extremely low estimate for grading and ditching. Such an estimate could only have been approached in actual construction cost by a mere skimming of the surface.

The provincial highways engineer, when reporting on the original scheme, stated that the road could possibly be built for \$650,000, exclusive of the cost of bridges and culverts, which item in the new estimate amounts to \$88,000.

The Workmen's Compensation Act, which came into force since the work was started, is responsible for an additional \$14,000. An item of \$90,000 due to the employment of relief labor has been the cause of considerable discussion in the daily press, which is entirely uncalled for and not fair to either the employers of the labor or the laborers themselves, who for the most part were men who had been used to almost any other kind of work than pick and shovel work, and who, as before stated, would have been receiving help from the municipalities and not doing any work in payment if they had not been employed on the construction of the road. This item for \$90,000 also accounts for the extra grading occasioned by cutting down the gradient and eliminating curves. Losses due to the inclemency of the weather are also chalked up to this account. Such additional costs as these would have been incurred by any contractor.

It was decided, after careful investigation and study, to change the concrete centre of the road to 18-foot width in place of 16 feet, as originally allowed for, and to substitute a 3-foot earth shoulder in place of a 4-foot stone shoulder. For this the commission accept the full responsibility. The estimated cost of this increase of 2 feet is \$72,000.

These added items bring the estimated cost of the road up to \$920,000. Admittedly it is high, being approximately \$23,000 per mile, but if it means a really good road, and there is no good reason to doubt that, then it fulfils its purpose, and all interests should be satisfied.

The foregoing briefly accounts for the added cost of the road.

Up to October 31st, 1915, over \$275,000 was paid out for labor, of which almost 50 per cent. went to citizens

of Toronto. It is altogether likely that a goodly proportion of this is money that otherwise would have been expended in relief to these same citizens, not only of Toronto but of all the interested municipalities.

The commission has proposed a deviation of the road through part of York county. The reason for this is to leave undisturbed a 2-mile section of concrete roadway which would have to be torn up, as it could not withstand the heavy traffic of an inter-city road. Another reason is that the Lake Shore Road is not wide enough between the Humber and Etobicoke, being only 38 feet wide in some places where a width of 66 feet is required. This was not known at the time the Lake Shore route was decided on, and it would not be fair for the citizens of other municipalities to have to pay for this extra land. If the municipalities interested do not purchase the extra land then the commission should be allowed to choose an alternative route.

HYDRO-RADIALS IN PERIL.

The success of the hydro-electric railway scheme which was voted on this year seems to be somewhat in jeopardy, at least it will be if bills for extension of franchise of several Ontario electric railways are passed. One of these roads—the Toronto and Hamilton Railway—was incorporated in 1903 with a capital stock of half a million dollars. The company was given the right to construct a line of railway from a point in or near the city of Toronto to a point located near Hamilton. Among other concessions, the road was given power to buy or make agreements with a number of smaller companies. The road had bonding powers of \$35,000 per mile.

The time for completion of the road was later extended to two years to commence and five years to complete. In 1906 the name was changed to the Toronto, Niagara and Western Railway, and capital was increased to six million dollars. It was given further power to enter into agreement with the C.P.R., G.T.R., and half a dozen Mackenzie lines. Time for construction was extended two years and again in 1909 a further extension of five years to complete the road was granted.

Another road—the St. Catharines and Toronto Railway—was incorporated in 1899 with a capital of one million dollars. In 1902, extensions of time were granted to several of its branches, and in 1905 the Toronto end of it was granted a further three years. This company also increased its capital to three million dollars and several more extensions were granted, bringing the time of completion up to 1915.

Now both companies are pleading for further extensions, their arguments being that they are unable to commence construction owing to the financial depression. But the same government granted them extension after extension before the war was on and they had no such excuse, so why should they be granted it now? The rights of the people should be respected; they have voted for hydro-radials and they are entitled to them. If the companies had built their lines as empowered by their franchises it is altogether likely that the hydro-radial scheme would never have been brought up.