

NEWS OF MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Burnaby, B.C.—The tax rate has been reduced this year from 25 to 24 mills on improved lands, and from 50 to 48 mills on wild lands.

Guelph, Ont.—The tax rate of the city as struck by the finance committee will be 29¼ mills for the current year. This is a mill less than the combined general, school and patriotic tax of last year, but it is four mills more for civic purposes, now that the tax rate is cut off.

Middlesex County, Ont.—A levy of one and three-quarter mills for county roads construction and maintenance in Middlesex has been recommended by a special committee appointed to revise the county road system. Under this by-law it is specified that the money raised in each municipality shall be expended in that particular municipality under the direction of officers appointed.

Vancouver, B.C.—A tax rate of 27 mills net is the lowest the ratepayers may expect this year, according to the opinion of Mayor Gale. The rate last year was 24 mills net. Alderman Kirk, chairman of the city finance committee, is proposing a drastic cutting of the civic estimates in an effort to bring the rate down to 25 mills net. To do this a reduction of the estimates to the extent of some \$600,000 is proposed by Alderman Kirk. The mayor, however, takes the view that the best that can be looked for is a reduction of approximately \$300,000.

Ontario.—According to an announcement made by the Hon. Finlay MacdIarmid in the Provincial legislature, the Ontario government has decided to contribute towards the maintenance of county highways upon the same basis as toward construction, which is forty per cent of the total outlay. The government has had the matter under consideration for some time, and had finally reached the conclusion that it was in the interest of better highways generally that the counties should be further assisted in keeping their roads in first-class shape once good roads had been constructed.

North Vancouver, B.C.—The council has decided to increase the tax of freight on the ferries. A petition signed by over fifty auto owners has been received protesting against the new schedule of rates that was put in force last week. The members of the council stated that additional revenue was absolutely necessary and the only way that it could be increased was by either charging the pleasure cars a higher toll or taxing freight on the ferries. The council had gone fully into the matter before raising the fares on the autos, and in their opinion they had placed the increased rate on the traffic that was able to bear it best. It was pointed out that it costs nearly as much to run a car on the road per mile as the ferries charged for transporting it. For the last four years the ferries had been costing North Vancouver about \$40,000 a year, counting the deficit and the depreciation.

Calgary, Alta.—It has been recommended that the city give the treasurer instructions to protect any of its mortgages in arrears, which are liable to come under the hammer. By this order the city will pay up arrears of taxes on property covered by sinking fund loans and redeem the property from the sale. The city has the right to take such action, as its position in the matter is that of a mortgagee.

The separate school estimates for 1919 have been prepared and the city is asked to contribute \$73,475 to the board's funds. The increase over last year is \$6,000, and is made up chiefly of increases in teachers' salaries, school doctor's salary, apparatus and repair work.

The annual financial statement of the electric light and waterworks departments, has been completed. The electric light wound up 1918 with a deficit of \$29,170, while the increase made in water rates last year was responsible for that utility having a surplus of \$24,406 on revenue earnings. In discounts the two departments lost \$39,944. The latter surplus will be applied on deficits that have accumulated from previous years in the waterworks.

With a balance of \$6,791 in the bank, the city ends the first three months of the year. Included in the receipts is

the amount of \$256,725 from taxes, of which 1916 and arrears taxes were \$65,795; 1917 arrears, \$36,139; 1918 arrears, \$84,906; tax suspense account, \$58,072, and interest on taxes amounting to \$17,169.

South Vancouver, B.C.—There will be no increase in the tax rate in South Vancouver this year, Commissioner Gillespie has announced. Last year's rate of 41.40 will be the rate that will be charged again this year. The commissioner decided on this course of action after another session with the advisory committee, when the estimates were pruned in order to allow the rate to remain the same. Reductions in the estimates amounting to \$94,558 were made, bringing the estimates down to \$771,849. A 50-mill rate will be charged on wild land which will produce a revenue of \$78,230, and improvements will be assessed at the 41.40 rate on the basis of one-third of their value.

A visit will be made to Victoria by a committee to urge upon the government the necessity of making a loan of \$100,000 to be used in permanent road work for the main thoroughfares.

At a meeting of the delinquent taxpayers held in the municipal hall recently, it was decided to try and make arrangements with the creditors of the municipality to allow the corporation to take advantage of the recent amendment to the Municipal Act giving municipalities power to consolidate the arrears of taxes. If this is done it will enable a great many ratepayers to save their property from the tax sale which it is proposed to hold this year. The arrears will be payable in 10 instalments, the first one to be made this year. As the arrears of taxes have been given as security for loans made to the municipality by the Provincial government and Spitzer, Rorick & Company, it will be necessary to secure the consent of these creditors to the consolidation.

Regina, Sask.—The city council has struck a tax rate of 35.5 mills on the dollar for the 1919 municipal levy for public school supporters, or an increase of 5½ mills over last year. Separate school supporters will be required to contribute 41.3 mills as compared with 36.8 mills last year. The full general rate this year is 22.35 mills as compared with 18.95 mills last year. The annex rate is 14.8 mills. The computation of the requirements and the striking of the rate was complicated this year by the new legislation, limiting the income tax rate to 30 mills on the dollar. While the city solicitor ruled that this limitation applied only to the general rate, which is 22.35, and that therefore the income taxpayer would be required to pay the full 35.5 mills, the city commissioners, on the other hand, interpreted the legislation to include the rate for all purposes. The city commissioners' interpretation was accepted by the council and incorporated in the by-law.

The total amount to be provided for this year for all purposes is \$895,550, including last year's deficit, as compared with a total estimated expenditure last year of \$1,257,349. The total amount required for general municipal purposes this year is estimated at \$895,000, including the 1918 deficit, as compared with an actual expenditure last year of \$872,641, an increase of \$23,000 for 1919. Without the deficit the general municipal estimated expenditure for this year is \$63,000 less than last year, which is principally due to an anticipated surplus on utilities of \$13,300, as compared with a deficit of \$76,000 last year. The estimated expenditure for 1919 totals \$1,114,484, compared with the actual expenditure of \$1,093,172 last year. The estimated receipts total \$329,355, compared with \$311,515, for actual receipts last year.

The Dominion government has decided to grant the claim of the city for \$60,000, representing the loss incurred by the destruction of the winter fair building, when occupied by the military authorities.

The current estimates for the city, while making provision for a loss on the street railway of between \$20,000 and \$25,000 will, it is understood, anticipate a joint surplus on the operation of the three utilities of approximately \$15,000 for the year 1919. It is expected that the waterworks and electric light departments will be able to make more than enough to offset the anticipated street railway loss.