

The Municipal World

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In the interests of every department of the Municipal Institutions of Ontario.

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ST. THOMAS, NOVEMBER 1, 1897.

A decision of great interest to township councils was recently given by the courts in Toronto, in connection with an application by the trustees of school section No. 6, in the township of McKillop for a mandamus requiring the council to pass a by-law authorizing the issue of debentures to raise money for the erection of a school-house, such sum to be repaid out of the school section rates. The council refused the demand of the trustees because it was not shown that the ratepayers of the section had assented to the amount required, though they had at a school meeting assented to a requisition being made for funds to erect the school-house. The motion was refused. This is in accordance with opinion previously expressed in these columns, which stated that the resolution of the ratepayers should specify the amount to be borrowed and rate of interest. See questions 171 and 318 (1897.)

The remark is often made that the time of the Legislature is too much taken up with special municipal legislation in the interests of large cities, and that more consideration should be given to the municipal acts applicable to all municipalities. The modern city offers an essentially new problem of government. They must be self-governing, and to that end their requirements must receive the special consideration of the central authorities. Uniformity of local government is at all times desirable, but the mere existence of a city confounds this. The lines of county, township and school districts are blotted out by the essential conditions of city life, and it is clear that government of cities cannot be uniform with that of a township or county, and while the special legislation so often asked for appears new, a closer examination will show that it provides for nothing more than the old problems of local government so intensified in cities that they become essentially new problems.

The Ontario Legislature will meet on the 30th of November, and the General Elections will no doubt, follow early next year. This will have its effect on the municipal elections, and contests may be looked for in most of the municipalities where the politicians will endeavor to test their strength as a preliminary to the race for control of the Provincial Government.

It sounds well and seems reasonable to urge that Municipal Government is a matter of business administration, and therefore, that elections should not be contested on party lines, but simply on local and personal issues. Fitness, honesty and fearlessness are the essential qualifications; and fidelity to local interests according to his conceptions and convictions, is the test by which a municipal candidate should be judged.

Let men differ if they will over questions of Provincial policy, only do not let their differences enter into Municipal elections. Let that expression of the electors be encouraged which, unhampered by party affiliations, seeks to insure the conduct of municipal government on business principles. Whether as a remedy for municipal evils, it is practical and effective, or whether it is impracticable and visionary is a subject for discussion.

It is thought by many that anything approaching disinterested and successful non-partisanship in municipal elections however well intended, is, under present conditions, almost impossible.

There would be more to commend in non-partisanship in local affairs if the sentiment for it were more generally honest. The fact is, however, that sincerity in the cause is wanting, and the no politics cry is generally found to come from disaffected politicians and minorities who are endeavoring to secure election.

Party divisions are desirable in Provincial and Dominion politics, and the best way to keep alive organizations for the success of political principles is by encouraging party activity in municipal affairs. Behind any defense of municipal government by party, must stand the imperative condition that the party organization be intelligent, honest and broad minded.

The success of a municipal administration must be measured by the same standard that would be applied to any large business enterprise. It should not be determined by the actual expenditures themselves, but by an intelligent comparison of the results achieved, whether greater or less than in a former year.

A final settlement of the defalcations of the late county treasurer of Brant has been arranged. The township accepted \$16,000, and the county \$6,500 in full of all claims.

Subscribers are making good use of the privileges extended through the Question Drawer, and it is now the most interesting feature of the WORLD. We think that questions of municipal engineering could very properly be considered in this department, and we would invite councils to submit their difficulties to us with plans, etc., and we will endeavor to give them the best information available.

The Provincial Municipal Auditor.

The disgraceful bookkeeping of the late treasurer of the county of Frontenac leads the *Kingston Whig* to call attention to the appointment of a provincial auditor at the last session of the Provincial Legislature, and to remark, that, despite the criticism which existed at the time, there is perhaps not a more necessary appointment in Ontario. The *Whig* adds:

"He has done a great deal of good already in correcting some of the abuses to which the councils have been blinded. It is understood that the revelations in Frontenac were due to his attention, to the fact that the books of the county treasurer were not in presentable shape, and that anticipating what a critical examination would lead to, he left his office." Such cases will do good, notwithstanding embarrassments that attend them. They will be a warning to county councils — if anything can be a warning — to see to it that the annual audits are most searching, and that the men who make these audits are competent and exacting. They will make the bondsmen or guarantee companies more careful, and the probability is that these will withdraw their bonds if there is any evidence that the public accounts are not balanced and thoroughly checked by the auditors before they give certificates as to their correctness.

Publications Received.

Proceedings January and June Sessions, County Council of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. A. I. Macdonell, Clerk.

City and State, published weekly in Philadelphia, Pa., in the interests of municipal reform and good government. \$1.00 per annum.

The appearance of this high-class publication has been very much improved. It is an encouraging sign of the times that such an able advocate of good citizenship has found a remunerative field of usefulness.

Voters' List of Streetsville. W. J. Pinney, Clerk.

Voters' List and Auditor's Report, Township of Sarawak. J. McKenzie, Clerk.

Voters' List, Belmont and Methuen. Porter Preston, Clerk.

Voters' List, Nepean. F. W. Harmer, Clerk. An interesting summary of Voters' occupations is included.