

# THE CANADA CITIZEN

AND TEMPERANCE HERALD

Freedom for the Right Means Suppression of the Wrong.

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## The Canada Citizen

AND TEMPERANCE HERALD.

A Journal devoted to the advocacy of Prohibition, and the promotion of social progress and moral Reform.

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TORONTO, FRIDAY, AUGUST 15TH, 1884.

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### THE MUNICIPAL REVENUE.

We hear frequently the assertion, that if the Scott Act be carried, or if, by any means, prohibition should become the law of our communities, there would be serious difficulty experienced by our municipal councils in meeting the deficit in their annual income that would be caused by the withdrawal of the present revenue from license fees. In order that our electors may fully understand this matter, we here place before them a few facts in relation to the present revenue and its probable diminution under the Scott Act system.

As a matter of fact the total amount paid over from the license fund to all municipalities in the province of Ontario during the year 1882-3 was \$284,379.79, and this was the net revenue derived in this province by all our municipal treasuries from the license system.

There were issued during the year named 4,104 tavern and shop licenses. Let us assume that the business done by these places amounted to an average of only \$12 each per day. Let us assume that none of the dealers sell on Sundays or other days upon which sale is prohibited, there will remain about 310 selling days in the year, 4,104 liquor shops, each selling liquor daily to the amount of

\$12 for 310 days would abstract from the pockets of the people of this province the sum of \$15,266,880.00. This estimate is moderate, falling really somewhat short of Ontario's fair proportion of the annual drink expenditure of Canada.

Out of this large sum of money taken by our liquor-sellers there was paid into our municipal treasuries only the comparatively small amount named, so that the account stands as follows:—

Amount collected by the liquor-sellers.....\$15,266,880.00

Paid over to municipal treasuries ..... 284,379.79

Cost of collecting .....\$14,982,500.21

The folly of the policy of paying out over \$150 for the sake of securing a revenue of less than \$3 is too patent to need comment. Will not a people richer by over \$15,000,000 be able to pay the extra \$300,000 and still be vastly better off.

If the enormous sum of money thus absorbed by the liquor business remained in the hands of the taxpayers of the community it would no doubt be found in the shape of taxable property, and there would thus be added to our aggregate assessment an amount that would at once furnish the whole revenue now derived from the liquor system, by a taxation rate less than what Toronto at present pays. This result, it must be noticed, would be attained even if there were no material progress in the community as the results of the more temperate and industrious habits that would inevitably follow the abolition of the drink system.

If we closed up all our liquor shops to-day, we would have in one year a community so much richer, that the increased wealth would more than make up for the lost municipal revenue at the present rate of taxation.

The choice between prohibition and license is, to this province, simply the choice between paying annually in hard cash fifteen millions of dollars, or only paying taxes upon property of that value and keeping the property still in our possession, earning for us probably five times as much as we pay.

We have examined carefully the accounts of many municipalities in the province of Ontario, and almost invariably found the following to be the exact state of affairs:—If the local pauper and police expenses, be added to the municipality's proportion of county criminal and indigent expenses, the sum will be more than double the revenue received by the municipality from the license fund. If we assume that only one half of our criminal and poor expenses are fairly chargeable to the liquor traffic, it will still be seen that we are losing from the very start, in our license system: even if we ignore the whole line of argument already gone over, and assume that we get the revenue as a clear income from the liquor traffic.

It is sometimes argued that taking away the license from hotel property would diminish the value of such property, that the assessment of such property would be reduced and other property would have to be taxed at a higher rate to level up. A careful examination of a number of assessment rolls, and information given directly by assessment commissioners and assessors show that in no case is a license considered as enhancing the actual value of a piece of hotel property. Nor could it be fairly so considered. It is merely a temporary affair, must terminate in a few months, and consequently could have none of the qualifications of permanent worth entitling it