

May 17, 1917.

ROAD LAWS OF ONTARIO.*

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THE twentieth century is pre-eminently an age of rapid transportation and intercommunication. The advantages of modern railway, steamship, cable, telegraph and telephone systems would have seemed like Arabian Nights tales to those of our ancestors who crossed the Atlantic less than one hundred years ago. Auspiciously, the advanced road legislation of Ontario had its inception in 1901, thereby taking its proper place in "The Century of Transportation" in which we live.

The road laws of Ontario are based on the excellent municipal system which grew up in the 19th century, and which has created excellent and progressive local self-government throughout the province. Towns, villages and cities are responsible for the up-keep of streets within their boundaries; but the care of roads in the open country constitutes one of the chief duties of township and county councils.

Provision for municipal organization is made by the Municipal Act; which Act defines the general authority of municipal councils with respect to roads. Township councils usually consist of a reeve and four councillors. A county comprises a group of townships, and the county council is composed of the Reeves (and deputy Reeves) of the townships, towns and villages included within the area of the county.

Township Roads.—Township councils, in the earlier history of the province, depended largely on statute labor for road improvement; this system having been created by the first parliament of the province (then Upper Canada) in 1796. Money expenditure, raised by general levy on the township assessment, has been steadily increasing. At the present time townships are spending annually over \$1,400,000 in cash and 1,100,000 days of statute labor, having a total estimated value of \$2,500,000 annually.

Township councils have authority to pass by-laws to abolish statute labor. About one-quarter of the townships have done so, while the number is steadily increasing.

The Highway Department is encouraging all townships to place their road expenditure in charge of a permanent road superintendent or foreman, and to this end will pay (under the Ontario Highways Act, 1915) one-quarter of the salary of such an official, the provincial grant not to exceed \$150 annually.

County Roads.—Provincial aid to road construction is given principally through county road systems, under the Highway Improvement Act. Twenty-five counties, out of thirty-seven which are eligible, are carrying on construction; having assumed over 5,000 miles of road, of which over 2,000 have been substantially built. Expenditure to the end of 1915 has amounted to \$6,000,000 including \$1,200,000 for bridges. Work is now being carried on at the rate of \$900,000 annually. It is anticipated that all counties will be operating under this plan within a few years, and that the annual expenditure will be doubled. The chief features of this Act are as follows:

A county council is authorized to assume by by-law a system of roads for construction and maintenance, the province contributing 40 per cent. of the expenditure on construction and 20 per cent. of the cost of maintenance.

*Abstract of paper before Canadian and International Road Congress, Ottawa, April, 1917.

A by-law adopting such a system may be passed by a two-thirds majority of a county council representing at least one-half of the total equalized assessment of the county.

The roads assumed are usually such as will accommodate the greater part of local market travel, creating a system of main market roads. They are the roads radiating from local market centres and shipping points. They should be connected as far as practicable to serve the needs of through traffic of the locality.

The mileage of roads assumed by a county is usually from 12 to 18 per cent. of the total mileage of the county.

The direction and superintendence of the work is placed in charge of a county engineer or capable superintendent appointed by the county council. A committee of the county council should co-operate with, advise and direct the road superintendent.

Roads are to be built in accordance with the regulations of the Department of Public Highways. The construction should be suited to local material and traffic. A standard type is regarded as a roadway well drained, graded to a width of 24 feet between ditches, with broken stone or gravel in the centre to a width of from 9 to 18 feet, and consolidated by rolling. The cost varies with local conditions, but is in general proportionate to the width and kind of metal. The system of roads assumed, and the by-law fixing the plan of improvement, are subject to approval of the Provincial Department.

When roads are assumed by a county council under this Act, township councils cease to have control over them, nor should they make any expenditure on them. The county council is thereafter responsible for construction and maintenance.

The provincial grant is paid annually, and is based on a statement of expenditure for the year, submitted to the Minister of Public Works and Highways by the county council, and includes all costs of labor, material, engineering services, salary of road superintendent, machinery, and bridges on the designated system of county roads.

The county council may finance their work by issuing debentures for a term not exceeding thirty years; or by sums raised from year to year in the annual county rate. The cost of purchasing and reconstructing toll roads may be included in the expenditure. The county council may by by-law make grants to towns and villages not separated from the county, for the improvement of extensions or connecting links of county roads in such towns and villages, and certain of such grants may be included in the statement of annual expenditure. Grants eligible for a provincial subsidy are those made to villages having a population of 1,500 or less; and those made to municipalities with a population of over 1,500, provided the improvement is carried out on suburban streets.

Suburban Roads.—Provision is made under the Ontario Highways Act, that a city may co-operate with the county council in improving the leading county roads adjacent to the city, and thereby obtain a more substantial type of construction for such suburban roads. The procedure is as follows:

A county council, by resolution, makes application to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council asking that a commission be authorized to deal with the suburban roads or portions thereof in the county system adjacent to the city and towards the construction and maintenance of which the city in question should contribute.

The Department of Public Highways submits the application to the city in question and considers their views in the matter. Should the commission be recommended